

Media criticise Rogge

INTERNET, Beijing

Jacques Rogge should have kept his mouth shut. That, at least, was consensus of much of the world media Friday, a day after the International Olympic Committee President criticized the wild celebrating style of Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt.

"Rogge, who is 66 and competed in the Olympics as a yachtsman three times between 1968 and 1976, suddenly sounded like a very old (man)," said Richard Williams in the British newspaper The Guardian.

Rogge had criticized 22-year-old Bolt's exuberant outbursts after winning Olympic golds in 100m and 200m, in both cases setting new world records.

"I have no problem with him doing a show," Rogge said - but added that it would have been better also to acknowledge his fellow competitors in the immediate aftermath.

"I think he should show more respect for his competitors and shake hands, give a tap on the shoulder to the other ones immediately after the finish and not make gestures like the one he made in the 100 metres."

Bolt had a huge lead in Saturday's 100m final, in which he covered the distance in an impressive 9.69 seconds. Before the finish line he slowed down and turned his head to eye his rivals, in a gesture that Rogge

perceived as "catch me if you can."

"You don't do that," Rogge said. "But he'll learn. He's still a young man."

Peter Foster, writing in another British newspaper, the Daily Telegraph, rejected the criticism.

"Of course, whatever your views on Bolt's conduct, it's hard to listen to the chief of an organisation as ethically bankrupt as the International Olympic Committee, delivering lectures on good behaviour and Corinthian ideals," he wrote.

Sally Jenkins at The Washington Post just teased Rogge in a piece in which she made as if Rogge had written a letter on the subject.

"This is truly an Olympic crisis," the fake Rogge says. "It's one thing for the Chinese government to jail dissidents, to forge the passports of underage gymnasts, and to set up official protest zones and then arrest anyone who applied to use them."

"These are matters that I met with disciplined silence, or as I so adroitly put it, with 'quiet diplomacy.' But I cannot ignore Bolt's disturbing spontaneity. Him, I feel compelled to rebuke."

The Spanish daily El Mundo also agreed that criticism on Bolt was out of place. "It stands out that such observations have been made on, of all people, the man who has spiced up the Games the most, and who has

put on a display of sublime athletic prowess," Ruben Amon said in the paper.

He continued: "The Games' problem does not lie in their geopolitical dimension, Rogge says. Nor in the way that Russia has mocked the Olympic truce with regard to Ossetia."

"Nor in the velvet alibi that Beijing's tyranny has been granted. Nor in the scientific sophistication that has allowed the anti-doping laboratory to be dodged."

"The problem, Rogge says, lies in the fact that Bolt's tribal dance could be perceived as an offence to his rivals. Would that be the reason why the athletes themselves regarded him as a bullfighter? Where was Rogge when that happened?"

The Guardian was tough on the IOC president: "The only person who could possibly have been offended was a Belgian bureaucrat who has done some good things during his time at the head of the IOC but would have done well to bite his tongue on this occasion and let youth have its day."

Asked about Bolt's celebrations Friday, the Namibian Frankie Fredericks - president of the IOC athletics commission and a former sprinter himself - was clear.

"We cannot tell a guy who's run 9.69 seconds how he needs to react," he said in remarks contradicting his boss. "He's making history."



Brazil's Maurren Higa Maggi goes airborne during the women's long jump final of the Beijing Games 2008 at the National Stadium on Friday.

Maurren wins by one cm

INTERNET, undated

Brazilian Maurren Higa Maggi won the Olympic women's long jump gold medal by one centimetre from defending champion Tatyana Lebedeva of Russia on Friday.

The 32-year-old recorded a best jump of 7.04 metres on the first of her six attempts and had to watch nervously as Lebedeva, the world champion, leapt 7.03 with her last effort to take the silver.

The bronze medal went to Nigeria's Blessing Okagbare with 6.91, 21 centimetres more than her previous best.

Okagbare had initially failed to make the final when she finished 13th in qualifying but was promoted into the top 12 when Ukraine's heptathlon silver medalist Lyudmila Blonska was kicked out of the Games for a doping offence.

Portugal's world indoor champion Naide Gomes failed to qualify for the final, and Sweden's Carolina Kluff, who won the heptathlon gold medal in Athens, finished only ninth.

"It wasn't that good today, my run-up was not working," Kluff told reporters.

"I didn't get the speed over the board and when I don't get the speed I cannot jump far."

Maggi, who holds the South American records for long jump and 100 hurdles, did not compete for two years after failing a doping test at the 2003 Pan American Games.

She said the positive test came from a hair removal product she had been using.

Good day for Belarus, Germany

CANOE / KAYAK - FLATWATER

INTERNET, undated

Belarus and Germany both claimed two gold medals Friday at the Shunyi Olympic Rowing-Canoeing Park. Germany was successful in the women's kayak four (K4) 500m and the kayak two (K2) 1,000m, while Briton Tim Brabants won the kayak single (K1) over 1,000m and Attila Sandor Vajda from Hungary took gold in the canoe single (C1) over 1,000m.

There was joy for Andrei Bahdanovich and Aliaksandr Bahdanovich in the men's C2 1,000m canoe as the Belarus pair took gold ahead of Germany's Christian Gille and Tomasz Wylenczek. Hungary's Gyorgy Kozmann and Tamas Kiss claimed bronze.

"We felt good and were prepared for the race. We were not afraid of Germany going ahead at the beginning," said Bahdanovich. "We were physically fit in this final and now we have achieved our goal."

Belarus also secured gold in the men's K4 1,000m kayak, with silver going to Slovakia and Germany having to be satisfied with bronze.

Raman Piatrushenka, Aliaksei Abalmasau, Artur Litvinchuk and Vadzim Makhneu claimed the win in a time of 2 minutes 55.714 seconds.

Brabants, who is the reigning world champion in the K1, but only has an Olympic bronze medal from Athens to his credit, won his event in 3:26.323 minutes ahead of Norwegian Eirik Veraas Larsen, who was the defending champion and Ken Wallace from Australia.

Brabants said his strategy had worked out. "It's incredible, absolutely incredible. The race went one hundred per cent to plan. I need to thank my coach and now I am an Olympic champion."

"I have had a great season and to finish it up with the most enjoyable race I have ever had is fantastic. When you realise you have crossed the line first you don't feel tired."

He said he was already thinking of the next Olympics. "London is definitely on the cards now, don't be surprised to see me in London ready to represent Great Britain again."

In the C1, Vajda beat Spain's David Cal and Canadian Thomas Hall to the gold. The Hungarian won in 3:50.46, beating Cal by 2.284 seconds, while Hall took bronze.

Vajda was proud to be the first Hungarian gold medal winner in Beijing. "Hopefully I will not be the last."

"For the first 500m my aim was just to keep the pace with the others then my real race started. I knew David Cal couldn't keep up with me," the Hungarian said.

Cal though, said he was disappointed.

"I could have done better. I have given my best but I am very sad. I was fighting for the gold medal. I am not satisfied."

The German four of Fanny Fischer, Nicole Reinhardt, Katrin Wagner-Augustin and Conny Wasmuth clinched the women's K4 over 500 metres, with Hungary taking silver and Australia bronze.

It was the fourth Olympic gold medal for Wagner-Augustin, who won gold in Athens in the K4 and in the K2 and K4 in Sydney, while Fischer followed a family tradition, as her mother Sarina Huelsenbeck won two gold medals at the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow as part of the East German swimming relay team.

"We won easily, that was just incredible," said Wagner-Augustin, while Wasmuth, who got a chance to compete in place of Carolin Leonhardt, who had to withdraw ill, said that she could not believe it.

"Going from a spectator to becoming an Olympic champion is just incredible."

The Germans won in a time of 1:32.231, beating Hungary by 0.740 seconds.

Germany added a second gold as Andreas Ihle and Martin Hollstein won the K2, beating Kim Wraae Knudsen and Rene Holten Poulsen from Denmark into second place.

Andrea Facchin and Antonio Scaduto from Italy took the bronze.

Blonska faces life ban

INTERNET, Beijing

Lyudmila Blonska of Ukraine was on Friday stripped of her heptathlon silver medal and kicked out of the Beijing Games, the International Olympic Committee said. Blonska also faces a life ban from the ruling athletics body, as she is a second-time offender.

The IOC said that Blonska, 30, tested positive for the steroid methyltestosterone after the completion of the Olympic heptathlon on August 16 where she finished second behind compatriot Natalya Dobrynska.

The IOC said that the results are to be modified. American champion Hyleas Fountain was third in the heptathlon and Tatiana Chernova of Russia fourth, with Fountain now to receive silver and Chernova bronze.

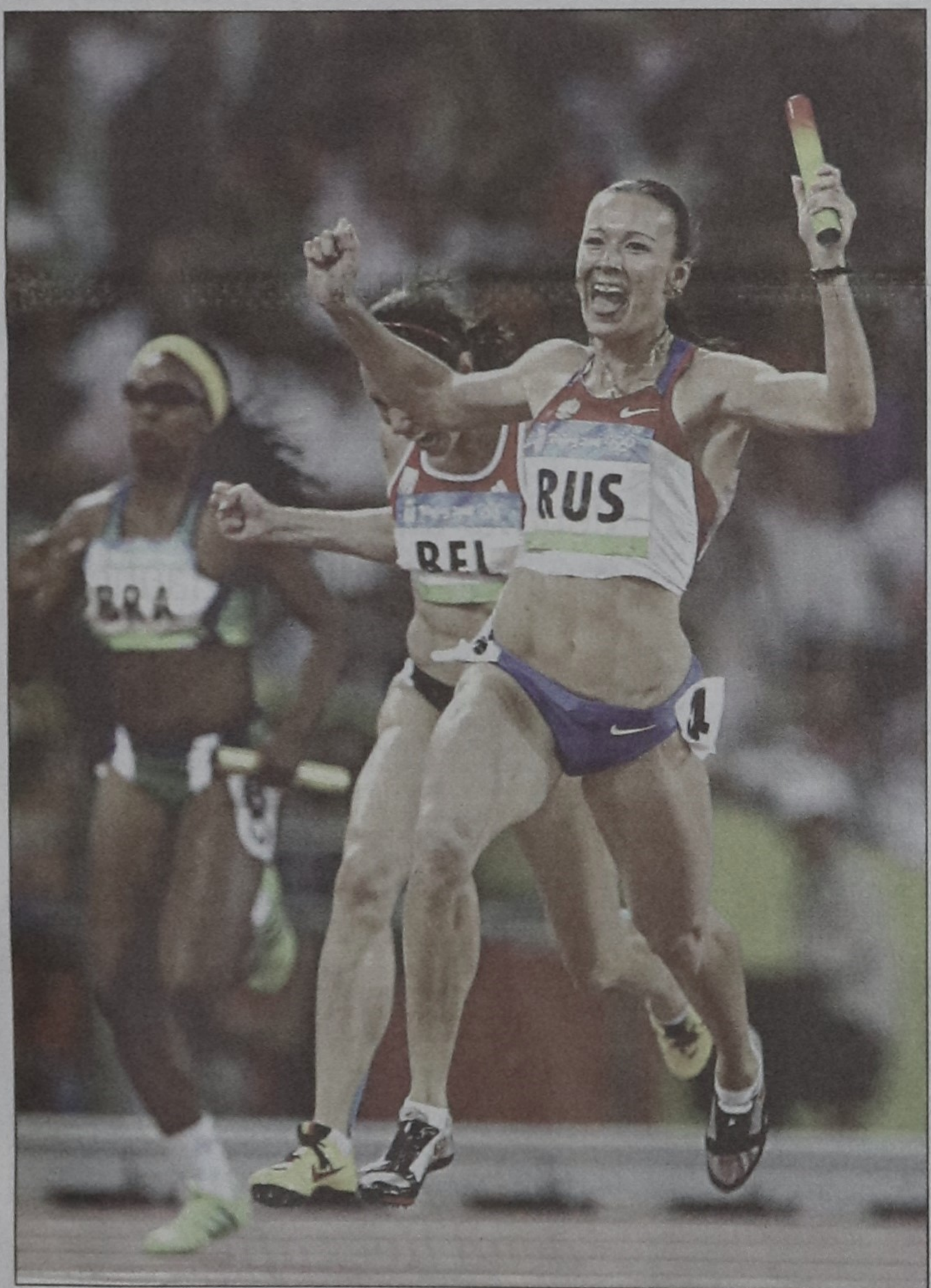
Blonska was banned 2003-2005 after being caught using the steroid stanozolol and as a result of this first offence faces a life ban.

She was provisionally suspended on Thursday in order to prohibit her from competing in Friday's long jump final.

The IOC also said that it will look into the role of Blonska's coach, Sergei Blonsky.

The IOC said it has already carried out 4,600 doping tests and that the final number would be around 5,000. The IOC had originally spoken of conducting 4,500 tests in the Olympic period July 27-August 24.

Blonska is the fifth athlete to fail a doping test at the Beijing Games, after the Spanish cyclist Maria Isabel Moreno, North Korean shooter Kim Jong Su, Vietnamese gymnast Do Thi Ngan Thuong and the 2004 Olympic 400m hurdles champion Fani Halkia of Greece. Kim lost his 50-metre air pistol silver and a 10-metre air pistol bronze.



Russian sprinter Yuliya Chermoshanskaya celebrates after crossing the finish line ahead of competitors from Belgium and Nigeria during the 4x100m relay final of the 2008 Beijing Olympics at the Bird's Nest yesterday.

Russia roar in relay

ATHLETICS

AP, Beijing

Someone finally beat Jamaica in the sprints. The Jamaicans.

The Jamaican women spoiled the country's shot at sweeping the Olympic sprints Friday when Sherone Simpson never got the stick to Kerron Stewart between the second and third legs of the 400-meter relay.

That opened the door for Russia to win the gold in 42.31 seconds, followed by Belgium and Nigeria.

Jamaica was the prohibitive favourite in the race, with two gold and five overall sprint medals already won by its four-woman

lineup, and without any competition from the United States, which botched a handoff in preliminaries the night before.

Simpson was pushing Jamaica into the lead near the end of her leg. Stewart took off, reached her arm back and never received the baton.

Simpson ran into Stewart and stopped running, which left Veronica Campbell-Brown, who ran the fastest 200 meters in a decade the night before, without a chance to run her anchor leg.

"I can't find nothing to say," Stewart said. "I did what I was supposed to do, she did what she was supposed to do, but I guess it wasn't God's will."

With only the men's 400 relay remaining, Jamaica fell to 4-for-5

in the Olympic sprints, leaving the United States in 1984 as the only country to sweep all six Olympic sprints.

Earlier, Tirunesh Dibaba of Ethiopia completed an unprecedented women's distance double by adding the 5,000 meters to her 10K victory.

In the long jump, Maurren Higa Maggi of Brazil won with a leap of 23 feet, 11 1/4 inches (7.04 meters). The silver medal went to Tatyana Lebedeva of Russia and the bronze to Blessing Okagbare of Nigeria, who only got into the final when Ukraine's Lyudmila Blonska was kicked out of the Olympics for doping.

"I could not believe that I was out, and when I heard last night I was in the final, it was my time," Okagbare said.

BMX starts off strong

INTERNET, Beijing

The Olympic debut of BMX cycling in Beijing can claim complete success, with Friday's semifinals and finals at the Laoshan circuit attracting a large, enthusiastic crowd and plenty of media coverage, particularly from television. BMX races have everything that the Olympic movement longs for in its wish to attract young people.

They are fast. Eight cyclists simultaneously take part in each of the series, and take a maximum of 45 seconds to cover some 300 metres on dirt, flying rather than riding.

The men's and women's semifinals and finals held Friday in Laoshan included a total of 14 series, and the champions were known in under two hours.

And most of the competitors are young. The "grandmother" of Friday's racing was 30-year-old Frenchwoman Anne-Caroline Chausson, who claimed the first-ever women's Olympic BMX gold medal.

Several riders showed piercing

and tattoos. Australian Jaime Hildebrand has legally changed his name to just Kamakazi.

An additional attraction for television lies in the many crashes and falls. Usually they are not serious, and within seconds riders are back on their bikes - and with few complaints of being pushed.

"In the second semifinals series the French guy (Damien Gode) pushed me, but it was a clean touch, there is no reason for me to complain," said the Argentine Cristian Becerine after failing to reach the final eventually won by Latvian world champion Maris Strombergs.

Between one series and the next, there's loud rock music, teenage girls dance on the circuit bumps and competitors show-ride their bikes for the fans while waiting to return to the circuit. It's all cool - and also very lively.

Crowd and media enthusiasm indicate that BMX is here to stay, just as happened 12 years ago after beach volleyball's debut in Atlanta in 1996, going on to be one of the most popular Olympic sports.



Argentina's Gabriela Diaz crashes during the women's semifinal at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games at the Laoshan BMX venue yesterday.