

# EVENT-BY-EVENT PREVIEW

## Men's Swimming 100 METER BREASTSTROKE

BY JOHN LOHN

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

**Defending Champion:** Kosuke Kitajima, JPN, 1:00.08

**World Record Holder:** Brendan Hansen, USA, 59.13 (2006)

**Most Titles:** United States (4): Don McKenzie (1968), John Hencken (1976), Steve Lundquist (1984), Nelson Diebel (1992)

**Notable:** Prior to this year, only three men had cracked the one-minute barrier in the event: Roman Sloudnov, Kosuke Kitajima and Brendan Hansen. Now, six men are part of that elite group, with Alexander Dale Oen, Hugues Duboscq and Chris Cook accomplishing the feat in 2008.

### MEDAL CONTENDERS

**Brendan Hansen, USA:** When Hansen is “on” in the 100 breast, he’s in his own realm. The defending two-time world champion owns the five fastest times in history, including a 59.24 semifinal effort (No. 2 all-time) at the U.S. Trials. Four years ago, Hansen lost to Kitajima in a controversial finish. The Asian record holder was seen performing a dolphin kick off the start and turn—at the time an illegal maneuver. No doubt Hansen would love redemption in Beijing.

**Kosuke Kitajima, Japan:** The reigning Olympic champion had a stretch after the Athens Games in which he wasn’t in top form. But Kitajima has regained his pop and is expected to defend his gold medal vigorously. At the Japanese Trials in April, he turned in a 59.66 and 59.67, faster than his No. 2 world ranking of 59.74 from 2007. He followed that with a 59.44 in June, his fastest time ever, and only 2-tenths of a second behind Hansen’s 2008 best. Kitajima may have lost to Hansen at the last two World Championships in 2005 and 2007, but the Japanese star would

rather have two Olympic gold medals.

**Hugues Duboscq, France:** The bronze medalist at the Athens Games, Duboscq joined the sub-minute club at the European Championships in March, going 59.78. The Frenchman has been a staple on the international scene for the past few years, and he has clearly advanced a level with his 59-point performance.

**Alexander Dale Oen, Norway:**

Norway isn’t exactly known for producing many international stars in the pool, but Dale Oen is certainly an international standout, having won the gold medal at Europeans earlier this year in 59.76. It figures that he can drop his time even further, and a run for the bronze medal is very realistic.

**Chris Cook, Great Britain:** At the British Olympic Trials, Cook registered a breakthrough performance with a 59.88. Cook has supplanted James Gibson as his country’s premier performer in the event and should be in contention for the final step on the podium.

**Brenton Rickard, Australia:** Although he has yet to break the minute mark, Rickard has to be considered among the elite challengers for the bronze medal. Rickard was timed



[PHOTO BY PETER H. BICK]

ABOVE » Brendan Hansen, USA

in 1:00.04 at the Aussie Olympic Trials in March, and he captured the bronze medal at last year’s World Championships (1:00.58).

**Other Challengers:** The second Australian to qualify for the event is **Christian Sprenger**. In February, he delivered a personal-best time of 1:00.15. However, if he plans on challenging for a medal at the Olympics, he’ll have to drop his time. Also, look for **Mark Gangloff** to try to move up into the medal equation after a fourth-place finish four years ago. The American was timed in 1:00.24 in 2007—No. 3 in the world—and improved at the U.S. Trials by going 1:00.10 in the prelims. ♦