

EVENT-BY-EVENT PREVIEW

Men's Swimming 100 METER BUTTERFLY

BY JOHN LOHN

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Defending Champion: Michael Phelps, USA, 51.25

World Record Holder: Ian Crocker, USA, 50.40 (2005)

Most Titles: United States (5): Doug Russell (1968), Mark Spitz (1972), Matt Vogel (1976), Pablo Morales (1992), Michael Phelps (2004)

Notable: During the 1988 Games in Seoul, Suriname's Anthony Nesty won an epic battle with the USA's Matt Biondi. Nesty covered his two-lap effort in 53.00, with Biondi touching in 53.01. Nesty is the only athlete from Suriname to win an Olympic medal.

MEDAL CONTENDERS

Michael Phelps, USA: The defending Olympic champion prevailed in dramatic fashion four years ago as he furiously rallied on the final lap to touch in 51.25, just ahead of Ian Crocker's time of 51.29. Phelps also defeated Crocker at last year's World Championships (50.77) and at this year's U.S. Trials (50.89), and is the second-fastest man in history—but the only one under 51 seconds this year.

Ian Crocker, USA: Making his third trip to the Games in this event, Crocker holds the world record at 50.40, set at the 2005 World Championships. Crocker captured world titles in 2003 and 2005 and is expected to duel with Phelps throughout the two laps in Beijing. Crocker will set the early pace, as has been his trademark, and then try to hold off the charge of Phelps. However the race unfolds, a gold-silver sweep for the United States is there for the taking.

Fred Bousquet, France: The Frenchman is best known for his sprint freestyle, but Bousquet did not qualify to swim either the 50 or 100 free in Beijing. So, his individual medal hopes hinge on the fly, where he holds the third-fastest



time in the world this year at 51.50.

Andriy Serdinov, Ukraine: He held the world record for a few minutes in this event in 2003, only to be surpassed by Phelps on the same day, then Crocker the next. Serdinov still holds the European record in 51.36 when he captured the bronze medal in Athens. He was timed in 52.11 in June, but must drop that time to take home another Olympic medal.

Milorad Cavic, Serbia: The sixth-place finisher at last year's World Champs, the Serbian dropped a personal best of 51.65 earlier this year to put himself firmly in the medal equation. The sprint star has a huge upside, and a run at the bronze medal would not be startling.

Albert Subirats, Venezuela: The University of Arizona speedster, who was an NCAA champion in the 100 yard fly, is the South American record holder with a 51.81 from the semifinals at Worlds last year. The next day, his 51.82 earned him the bronze medal.

His best this year is 53.47 in May.

Masayuki Kishida and Takuro Fujii, Japan: Japan's top Olympic qualifier is Kishida, who set an Asian record of 51.86 in April, which was later broken by countryman Kohei Kawamoto in June with a 51.77. Kawamoto did not qualify for this event at Trials; instead, Fujii finished second with a 52.14.

Other Challengers: The Brazilian duo of Gabe Mangabeira (52.01) and Kaio Almeida (52.20), as well as Australians Andrew Lauterstein (51.91) and Adam Pine (52.13) will try to make the championship final. Also keep an eye on veteran Thomas Rupprath (52.05) of Germany and Slovenia's Peter Mankoc (52.07). Others worth tracking are Spain's Rafael Munoz (52.09), along with Russian Evgeni Korotyshekin (51.89). South Africa's Lyndon Ferns (52.66) is another established star in the international circuit. ♦