

# EVENT-BY-EVENT PREVIEW

## Men's Swimming 100 METER FREESTYLE

BY JOHN LOHN

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

**Defending Champion:** Pieter van den Hoogenband, NED, 48.17

**World Record Holder:** Alain Bernard, FRA, 47.50 (2008)

**Most Titles:** United States (12): Charles Daniels (1908), Duke Kahanamoku (1912-20), Johnny Weismuller (1924-28), Walter Ris (1948), Clark Scholes (1952), Don Schollander (1964), Mark Spitz (1972), Jim Montgomery (1976), Rowdy Gaines (1984), Matt Biondi (1988)

**Notable:** Although the United States has won the most gold medals in event history, it's been 20 years since the Americans claimed victory. In 1988, Matt Biondi scorched a time of 48.63 to take top honors.

### MEDAL CONTENDERS

**Alain Bernard, France:** Bernard has had a rapid ascension up the international ladder, highlighted by his world record of 47.50 at the Europeans in March. He is one of the Big Four in the French sprint arsenal who is expecting big things in Beijing. A duplication of his Euro showing will place Bernard in the gold medal hunt.

**Eamon Sullivan, Australia:** The Australian has been a rising force on the global scene for several years and is history's second-fastest performer (47.52). Sullivan was the bronze medalist at Worlds. He's been plagued by some minor injuries this year, but if he's healthy, consider Sullivan a favorite for the gold.

**Garrett Weber-Gale, USA:** At the U.S. Trials, Weber-Gale had one of the biggest breakthrough meets. He won the 50 free with an American record and clocked a short-lived U.S. mark in the 100 prelims (47.78) before winning the event in 47.92. Obviously riding a wave of confidence, Weber-Gale

could be the guy who helps carry the U.S. to the next level in sprinting.

**Jason Lezak, USA:** The veteran sprinter heads into Beijing having popped the best 100 free of his life—an American record 47.58 in the semi-finals of the U.S. Trials. Still seeking his first individual medal in Olympic competition, Lezak will need to reproduce that mid-47 showing to stand on the podium.

**Pieter van den Hoogenband, Netherlands:** The defending two-time Olympic champion will try to become the first man in history to win the same event in three straight Olympiads. Grant Hackett will try to pull off the same feat in the 1500 free. Hoogie has gone a best of 48.37 this year, but must return to his 47-point ways to chase a medal.

**Cesar Cielo, Brazil:** The Auburn University star torched the NCAA Championships during his career, and he also should be a factor in Beijing. He was fourth at last year's Worlds and has gone 48.34 this year.

**Fabien Gilot, France:** The second French entry in the event, Gilot has been 48.02 this year and will also focus on helping his nation to gold in the 400 free relay.

**Lyndon Ferns and Ryk Neethling, South Africa:** Ferns (48.82) and Neethling (49.15)—who both won an Olympic gold medal in the 4 x 100 freestyle relay in Athens—will represent South Africa in the 100 free. Roland Schoeman, the silver medalist in the 100 free four years ago, had the fastest time at the RSA Trials (48.41s), but finished third in finals.

**Other Challengers:** Italy's **Filippo Magnini** shared the world title last year with **Brent Hayden** of Canada, with both touching in 48.43. Magnini also won the world crown in 2005 and has swum 48.35 this year. Hayden's 2008 best is 48.91. Also, keep an eye on Sweden's **Stefan Nystrand**, a member of the sub-48 club, Russia's **Evgeni Lagunov** and **Matt Targett** of Australia. ♦

