

# EVENT-BY-EVENT PREVIEW

## Men's Swimming 200 METER INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY

BY JOHN LOHN

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

**Defending Champion:** Michael Phelps, USA, 1:57.14

**World Record Holder:** Michael Phelps, USA, 1:54.80 (2008)

**Most Titles:** Hungary (3): Tamas Darnyi (1988-92), Attila Czene (1996)

**Notable:** At the 2004 Olympics in Athens, four of the eight finalists in the 200 IM managed to crack the two-minute barrier. With tremendous improvement over the past four years, it will likely take a sub-2:00 performance this summer just to reach the championship heat.

### MEDAL CONTENDERS

**Michael Phelps, USA:** The defending champion and world record holder will be the favorite in Beijing—hardly a surprise. At last year's World Championships, Phelps delivered a spectacular global standard of 1:54.98. He was even better at this year's U.S. Trials, taking his record down to 1:54.80. Phelps and Ryan Lochte are the only men in history to break the 1:56 barrier, and Phelps has won the past three world titles to go with his Olympic crown. It would be shocking to see Phelps and Lochte anywhere but on the first two steps of the medal podium.

**Ryan Lochte, USA:** In Athens, the American picked up the silver medal, and another podium finish is expected in Beijing. Lochte is the second-fastest performer in history and was the silver medalist at the 2007 Worlds. At the U.S. Trials, he gave Phelps a battle to the wall and clocked a best time of 1:55.22. Lochte has closed the gap between himself and Phelps since the 2004 Olympics, but whether he can beat Phelps remains to be seen. Lochte will have the final of the 200 backstroke not long before the 200 IM, and will have expended considerable



ABOVE » Laszlo Cseh, Hungary

energy in his duel with Aaron Peirsol.

**Laszlo Cseh, Hungary:** Widely considered the best medley swimmer in the world outside of Phelps and Lochte, the Hungarian finished fourth in Athens. At the World Champs last year, Cseh won the bronze medal in 1:56.92, a time that ranked third in the world. Cseh, who has a 2008 best of 1:57.43, is a leading challenger for medals in both medley disciplines.

**James Goddard and Liam Tancock, Great Britain:** If it weren't for Phelps and Lochte, Great Britain could lay claim as having the top duo competing in the 200 IM. Instead, it'll have to settle for a distant second. Goddard comes to Beijing with the Commonwealth record of 1:57.72 from the British Trials in April. Right behind him is Tancock at 1:57.79. In one year, Great Britain has gone from not placing anyone in the finals at Worlds to having the fourth- and a tie for fifth-fastest performers all-time.

**Thiago Pereira, Brazil:** Pereira is

the guy who's tied with Tancock as history's fifth-fastest performer in the 200 IM. The Brazilian is a multi-event standout, and just finished outside of the medals at last year's Worlds. He went 1:58.98 in the Melbourne final, but he dropped that time at the Pan American Games to 1:57.79, good for the fourth-fastest time in the world. Pereira, whose best this year is 1:58.74 in June, likely will need at least something in the 1:56-range for a medal.

**Other Challengers:** Canada's **Brian Johns** (1:59.45) and Hungary's **Tamas Kerekjarto** (1:59.51) ranked sixth and seventh, respectively, in the world last year, but haven't broken two minutes in 2008. At Europeans, **Dinko Jukic** of Austria finished second (1:59.65) behind Cseh (1:58.02) and ahead of **Vytautas Janusaitis** of Lithuania (2:00.17). Japan's **Takuro Fujii** clocked 1:59.28 at the Japan Open in June for an Asian record. ♦