

# EVENT-BY-EVENT PREVIEW

## Women's Swimming 100 METER FREESTYLE

BY JOHN LOHN

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

**Defending Champion:** Jodie Henry, AUS, 53.84

**World Record Holder:** Libby Trickett, AUS, 52.88 (2008)

**Most Titles:** United States (8): Ethelda Bleibtrey (1920), Ethel Lackie (1924), Albina Osipowich (1928), Helene Madison (1932), Jan Henne (1968), Sandy Neilson (1972), Carrie Steinseifer and Nancy Hogshead (tie, 1984)

**Notable:** Due to injury, defending Olympic champion Jodie Henry of Australia did not get the chance to compete at her Trials and, therefore, will not get the chance to repeat her title. However, the possibility of an Australian keeping the medal Down Under is quite strong with Libby Trickett and Cate Campbell on the scene.

### MEDAL CONTENDERS

**Libby Trickett, Australia:** The reigning world champion is currently the only woman under 53 seconds, having done it in April 2007 (as Libby Lenton) and again last March at the Australian Trials. While she figures to be pushed, Trickett is the definitive favorite in the two-lap freestyle. It's one of three events in which she could mine individual gold, along with the 50 free and 100 fly.

**Cate Campbell, Australia:** The rising star on the international sprint scene, Campbell is the other Australian entered in the 100 free. Originally known for her speed in the 50, Campbell has become equally efficient in the 100. Earlier this year, Campbell swam 53.30, and a performance in the sub-53 range is within reach. Improving at a rapid rate, it would not be surprising to see Campbell with another improvement

in Beijing, maybe one of sizable proportions.

**Britta Steffen, Germany:** The former world record holder (53.30, 2006) produced a career-best 53.20 in April, followed by an even faster 53.05 European record in July. Like Campbell, dipping into 52-second territory is hardly out of the question, and such a performance would certainly put Steffen in the chase for the gold medal.

**Natalie Coughlin, USA:** At the U.S. Trials, Coughlin had the fastest time (53.64), swum in prelims, but finished second to Dara Torres by a slim margin. The bronze medalist at the Athens Olympics and the American record holder at 53.39, Coughlin is still the top American hope for a medal and figures to make a run at a sub-53 performance.

**Lacey Nymeyer, USA:** Third at the U.S. Trials, Nymeyer was awarded a spot in the 100 free when Torres decided to withdraw from the event and focus on the 50 free. Nymeyer was consistent in qualifying for Beijing, going 54-low throughout Trials. She enters the Games with a best time of 54.02.

**Marleen Veldhuis, Netherlands:** The Dutch star won the silver medal at the World Championships in Melbourne last year. Veldhuis went 53.58 last December and could be faster in Beijing, a requirement if she wants to win a medal. Veldhuis will play a key role in the Netherlands' search for a medal in the 400 free relay.

**Inge Dekker, Netherlands:** Dekker, a regular fixture on the international stage, is certainly within reach of qualifying for the final. She swam 53.77 earlier this year to rank among the all-time top-10 performers in the world.

**Erica Morningstar, Canada:** The Canadian stalwart had a major breakthrough at last year's Worlds, where she finished fifth. Morningstar nearly cracked the 54-second barrier in 2007, going a best of 54.08 to rank fifth in the world.

**Other Challengers:** A few other names to watch in China include France's **Malia Metella** (53.99) and Great Britain youngster **Francesca Halsall** (54.53). Finland's **Hanna-Maria Seppala** (54.00) and China's **Pang Jiaying** (54.17) also have the ability to make some waves. ♦



ABOVE » Britta Steffen, GER

[PHOTO BY WOLFGANG RATTAY, REUTERS]