

EVENT-BY-EVENT PREVIEW

Women's Swimming 200 METER BUTTERFLY

BY JOHN LOHN

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Defending Champion: Otylia Jędrzejczak, POL, 2:06.05

World Record Holder: Jessicah Schipper, AUS, 2:05.40 (2006)

Most Titles: United States (4): Karen Moe (1972), Mary T. Meagher (1984), Summer Sanders (1992), Misty Hyman (2000)

Notable: When Misty Hyman won gold in Sydney in 2000, her victory was one of the biggest upsets of the Games. Aussie Susie O'Neill was considered the heavy favorite to defend her title, while Hyman was expected to contend for silver or bronze. Instead, the American blasted to a personal-best 2:05.88 for an Olympic record and a gold medal.

MEDAL CONTENDERS

Jessicah Schipper, Australia: The world record holder is also the reigning world champion (2:06.39). This year, she went 2:06.82 at the Aussie Trials in March and will come to Beijing with the sixth best time this year. She also has a 2:05.65 from the 2005 World Championships, where she was beaten by Poland's Otylia Jędrzejczak by 4-hundredths of a second in a controversial finish. Schipper has consistently moved up the ranks and will be an overwhelming choice to medal.

Otylia Jędrzejczak, Poland: The former world record holder and defending Olympic champ has rebounded splendidly from a car accident in October of 2005 that claimed her brother's life. Although she won the bronze medal at the 2007 World Champs (2:06.90), Jędrzejczak posted the fastest time of the year with her 2:05.92 from the Paris Invitational. She has only been 2:07.12 this year, but look for Jędrzejczak to defend her

title with ferocity.

Elaine Breeden, USA: Breeden put herself in medal contention when she pushed the pace and qualified first at the U.S. Trials with a 2:06.75. She is one of six women who have swum 2:06 this year, led by Japan's Yuko Nakanishi at 2:06.38. With such a balanced field, the medal picture appears to be wide open. Knowing she won at the U.S. Trials under major pressure appears to be a good sign for Breeden, making her first Olympic trip.

Kathleen Hersey, USA: One of the bright spots among the American youth contingent, Hersey ranked sixth in the world in 2007, thanks to a best time of 2:07.19. The talented teenager also won a gold medal last year at the Pan American Games, and there's reason to believe that she is just tapping into her potential. Hersey, 18, was second at Trials, going 2:07.33.

Audrey Lacroix, Canada: The Canadian star had a huge year in 2007, finishing fifth (2:07.73) at the World Championships in March. Come August, she went even faster at the World University Games, clocking 2:06.83, the fourth-fastest time of the year. Her best in 2008 is 2:08.87 at the Canadian Trials in April.

Yuko Nakanishi and Natsumi Hoshi, Japan: This Japanese tandem is solid, with Nakanishi turning in a 2:06.38, an Asian record and the top



time swum this year. She ranked seventh in the world last year (2:07.65) and was the sixth-place finisher at Worlds. As for Hoshi, she placed first at the test event at the Water Cube (2:07.35). Her best this year is 2:07.04 in June.

Other Challengers: The second Australian will be **Samantha Hamill**, who went 2:07.61 at her Olympic Trials, denying **Felicity Galvez** a berth by 6-hundredths of a second. Slovenia's **Sara Isakovic** (2:07.05) will also be in the mix for a spot in the championship final, along with **Aurore Mongel** (2:06.59) of France and **Jemma Lowe** (2:06.64) of Great Britain. Also keep an eye on **Emese Kovacs** of Hungary, who has been 2:06.71. ♦