

# EVENT-BY-EVENT PREVIEW

## Women's Swimming 200 METER FREESTYLE

BY JOHN LOHN

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

**Defending Champion:** Camelia Potec, ROM, 1:58.03

**World Record Holder:** Laure Manaudou, FRA, 1:55.52 (2007)

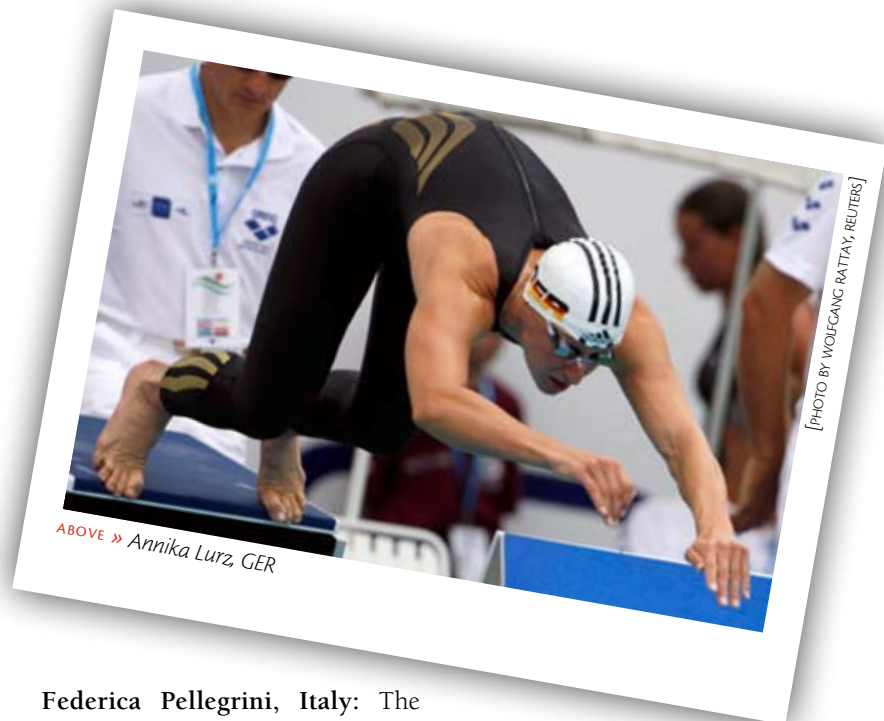
**Most Titles:** United States and East Germany (3): USA—Debbie Meyer (1968), Mary Wayte (1984), Nicole Haislett (1992). GDR—Kornelia Ender (1976), Barbara Krause (1980), Heike Friedrich (1988)

**Notable:** The winning time produced by Camelia Potec in 2004 would have barely advanced the Romanian to the championship final at last year's World Championships in Melbourne. Seven of the qualifiers at that meet dipped under 1:58.

### MEDAL CONTENDERS

**Katie Hoff, USA:** She's been long established as the world's premier medley performer. Now, she's among the world's elite in freestyle. Fourth in the event at Worlds, Hoff clocked an American record 1:56.08 in February, then lowered the standard to 1:55.88 at the U.S. Trials. With Laure Manaudou deciding to scratch the 200 free from her program, Hoff will have to settle for chasing Manaudou's world record rather than meeting her head-on. It's unquestionably an achievable feat for a woman who is changing the face of the sport among females.

**Annika Lurz, Germany:** If not for Manaudou, the German would have been lauded for producing one of the premier swims of last year's Worlds. In the 200 free final, Lurz clocked 1:55.68, the second-fastest mark in history. Obviously, it took a world record to deny her the gold medal. Although Lurz has been relatively quiet this year, she is a certain medal favorite and can't be discounted from the chase for gold.



**Federica Pellegrini, Italy:** The bronze medalist at the World Champs last year, the Italian briefly held the world record after swimming 1:56.47 in the semifinals at Melbourne. She has since gotten down to 1:56.10, and she is also the world record holder in the 400. Pellegrini is on the verge of breaking into the 1:55 realm and will be in the mix for a medal.

**Allison Schmitt, USA:** A rising star on the American scene, the teenager is coached by Bob Bowman and had a breakthrough meet at the U.S. Trials. After placing third in the 400 free, Schmitt took second in the 200 with the second-fastest time in American history (1:55.92). Schmitt's upside is huge, and more time drops can be expected in Beijing.

**Bronte Barratt and Linda Mackenzie, Australia:** The Australians received a huge boost from this tandem at their Olympic Trials, as both women joined the sub-1:57 club. Barratt clocked 1:56.60 and has turned

in several strong showings throughout the year that suggest she'll be faster. Mackenzie has been 1:56.99, and it looks like a slot in the championship final is firmly in her grasp.

**Jo Jackson and Caitlin McClatchey, Great Britain:** The resurgence of British swimming has revolved, at least in part, to the steady efforts of these two women along with Rebecca Adlington. Jackson, who set the British record of 1:56.61 two months after Trials, was a late replacement for Adlington (1:56.66). McClatchey owns a best time of 1:57.09 from Trials.

**Other Challengers:** You're going to start hearing **Sara Isakovic's** name more frequently, what with her impending college career with Teri McKeever at Cal. Of course, the fact that she turned in the fourth-fastest time in history, July 14, can't hurt either. She went 1:55.90 to better her 1:56.93 from April. ♦