

# Heart and Soul

USA claimed the No. 1 spot as the world's swimming superpower with its Pan Pac blowout in Japan.

By Stephen J. Thomas and Phillip Whitten

YOKOHAMA, Japan—Swimming fans around the world were rubbing their hands with gleeful anticipation as the USA and Australian national teams headed for Yokohama, site of the 2002 Pan Pacific Championships. For a year, partisans of the world's two top aquatic nations had been talking buckets full of trash. The showdown in Japan, Aug. 24-29, would settle the issue—for this year, at least.

Neither powerhouse was quite at full-strength: the Aussies were sorely missing Michael Klim, world record holder in the 100 meter fly and former WR-holder in the 100 free, who was still recovering from back surgery, as well as middle-distance ace Daniel Kowalski, who has retired; the U.S. was competing without the services of triple Olympic champion Lenny Krayzelburg, double WR-holder Ed Moses, and Olympic sprint gold medalist Gary Hall Jr. Still, most of the "Big Guns" were here.

Billed as the Battle of the Titans, the meet turned into a rout, a good old-fashioned massacre, with the U.S. playing the role of the Indians and the Aussies assuming the flowing locks of the hapless General Custer. When all the events had been swum and the scores toted up, it was a Red-White-and-Blue blowout.

The U.S. outscored Australia 21-11 in gold medals, 52-28 in the overall medal count and 476-366 in the FINA point score. It wasn't even close. But it didn't start out that way.

## Day One

Day One belonged to Australia: "Aussie, Aussie, Aussie; Oi, oi, oi."

"Oy," however, would best describe the Americans' performance.

Golden Boy Ian Thorpe got the ball rolling for the team from Down Under, stroking to a relatively slow 400 meter free—by his unique standards, at least. At the wall, it was the usual 1-2 Aussie sweep with Thorpe touching in 3:45.28 and teammate Grant Hackett right behind in 3:45.99.

The men's 400 freestyle relay was the kind of battle that we have come to expect between these two great superpowers. In the end, both Jason Lezak and Ian Thorpe split identical 47.92s for the anchor leg, but Australia emerged on top in 3:15.15 to USA's 3:15.41.

The women's 400 IM was supposed to be a "gimme" for the



Photo by Kimimasa Mayama, Reuters

Diana Munz

USA's Maggie Bowen, but no one bothered to tell Australia's Jenny Reilly. Taking the lead on the backstroke leg, she stroked to a new Australian record of 4:40.84. Bowen was a distant second.

The U.S. finally got into the win column when Diana Munz had an all-the-way win in the 1500 free, clocking 16:07.86, easily beating Japan's Sachiko Yamada (national record 16:16.28).

American joy, however, was short-lived when, in a stunning upset, the Aussies took the women's 400 free relay. The team of Jodie Henry, Alice Mills, Petria Thomas and Sarah Ryan clocked 3:39.78, marking the first time in Pan Pac history that the U.S. had lost this event.

## Day Two

After a silent, hour-long bus ride back to their hotel, the resilient Yanks regrouped and showed up on Day Two with a new determination. At day's end, the Americans had collected four gold and five silver medals. It was a turning point that was never reversed.

Michael Phelps and Erik Vendt went 1-2 in the first event, the 400 IM. Phelps set a Pan Pac record of 4:12.48, with Vendt at 4:13.15.

Local hero Kosuke Kitajima brought the home crowd to their feet when he won the men's 100 breast in 1:00.36, just off the 1:00.34 he swam in the semis. The USA's Brendan Hansen took silver in an excellent 1:00.84.

In the absence of world record holder Ian Thorpe, Grant Hackett had no trouble with the field in the 800 free. He went

out under world record pace for 300 meters, then cruised to a 7:44.78, a new championship record and the fifth fastest all-time performance. Sixteen-year-old Californian, Larsen Jensen, took silver in an American record 7:52.05 (seventh all-time performer), breaking the oldest American men's record.

The women's 100 fly saw USA's Natalie Coughlin come from behind on the second lap to break Jenny Thompson's championship record with a swift 57.88, moving her to fifth all-time performer, just ahead of Mary T. Meagher. Aussie world champ Petria Thomas came home powerfully, winning the silver in 58.11.

The USA's Amanda Beard won a hard-fought 100 breaststroke race, coming from fourth at the turn to beat teammate Tara Kirk and China's Luo Xuejuan, the 2001 world champion. Beard clocked 1:08.22, not far off her 1996 PR and Olympic silver-winning swim from Atlanta, 1:08.09.

One day after her 1500 win, Diana Munz led again from start to finish, going 4:09.50 to win the 400, with teammate Lindsay Benko taking silver in 4:10.28.

## Day Three

The USA continued to run roughshod over the rest of the nations on Day Three, taking three of five events. But first, "The Thorpedo" crafted another brilliant freestyle performance, coming within 69-hundredths of his record and clocking the fourth fastest swim in history over 200 meters. Looking for history's first sub-1:44 swim, he settled for a new championship record, 1:44.75. Grant Hackett got as close to Thorpe as he's ever been with a PR 1:45.84, only the third man to swim under 1:46.

Team USA went 1-2 in the 50-meter splash-and-dash. Jason Lezak (22.22) had the better finish to beat Olympic gold medalist Anthony Ervin (22.28).

With Aussie world champion Matt Welsh DQ'ed for breaking the 15-meter rule in the semis, the 100 back became a battle between Americans Aaron Peirsol and Randall Bal. Peirsol, the world record holder for the 200 back, had the goods on the night to record a fast 54.22, while Bal stroked a PR 54.45.

In the women's 100 back, the USA's Natalie Coughlin broke the magic minute for the second time this month, but fell short of her own world record by 14-hundredths to record a championship mark of 59.72. Coughlin showed a clean pair of heels to the field, leaving Aussie Dyana Calub to take silver in a PR 1:01.49.

Tomoko Hagiwara brought the home crowd to fever pitch when she won the 200 IM in 2:13.42, earning Japan's first women's gold of the championships in a fight to the finish with the USA's Gabrielle Rose (2:13.93).

## Day Four

It was more of the same on Day Four, with the U.S. winning four events to Australia's two. In a dramatic "upset," Olympic



Tom Malchow

Photo by Eriko Sugita, Reuters

champion Tom Malchow beat Boy Wonder Michael Phelps in the men's 200 fly, 1:55.21 to 1:55.41.

Aussie Jim Piper broke the championship record in qualifying for the final of the 200 breast in a fast 2:11.54. But it's the final that counts, and world champ Brendan Hansen, USA, proved his worth with an all-the-way win in 2:11.80, pulling away from Piper at 2:12.53.

The Aussie men have made the 800 free relay their own in recent big meets. The outcome was the same in Yokohama, as two newcomers, Craig Stevens and Jason Cram, teamed with Thorpe and Hackett for the 7:09.00 win. The U.S. actually led after 600 meters, but Thorpe put his size 17s down, splitting 1:44.80 to anchor the Aussies, and that was all she wrote. The U.S. followed in 7:11.81.

Experience often comes to the fore in the one-lap dash, and Jenny Thompson demonstrated just that when she put together an excellent race to win the 50 free in 25.13 over Aussie Jodie Henry (25.32). To make it all the more special, it was a PR for the 29-year-old, breaking her previous best she set as an 18-year-old—back in 1992.

A determined Lindsay Benko built her 200 free effort on a strong first 100 and held her form to touch in 1:58.74, just 18-hundredths outside her PR. Benko held off fast-finishing Aussie rivals Elka Graham (1:59.72) and world champion Giaan Rooney (1:59.82) to win her first individual Pan Pac gold.

Australia's Petria Thomas led at every turn to win the 200 fly in a solid 2:08.31, well outside her winning 2:06.73 from the World Champs in 2001. The USA's Mary Descenza was second, Emily Mason third.

## Day Five

Only the incomparable Ian Thorpe, who won his fifth gold medal, prevented an American sweep on Day Five.

"The Thorpedo" played it cool in the 100 free, his "weakest" event, turning in fourth place. But then he cranked up his familiar six-beat outboard motor kick to touch in 48.84, just outside his PR 48.73. It was 1-2 for the Aussies with world short course

champ, Ashley Callus, finishing just behind in a PR 49.26.

Aaron Peirsol, the world record holder in the 200 back, added the Pan Pac title to his growing collection, leading at every turn, to notch a stylish victory in 1:56.88—the eighth fastest all-time. Australia's Matt Welsh was second in 1:57.69.

If Peirsol's win was expected, Amanda Beard's was not as she completed the breaststroke double, holding off Aussie teen Leisel Jones. Beard clocked 2:26.31 to Jones' 2:26.42.

Diana Munz won her third individual gold medal by taking the 800 free with a so-so time of 8:30.45. On the final lap, Japan's Sachiko Yamada passed USA's Hayley Peirsol to take silver in 8:31.89.

The women's 800 freestyle relay was another classic battle between the two archrivals—Yanks versus Aussies. The United States had lost its first-ever freestyle relay on the first night—the 400 meters—so there was plenty to prove here. That's just what Team USA did, clocking a Pan Pac record 7:56.96 to Australia's 7:59.25.

## Day Six

The 2002 Pan Pacific Championships came to a spectacular close, with the U.S. winning five of seven events. The Americans saved the best for last, setting a world record in the men's 400 medley relay—the only world mark set in Yokohama.

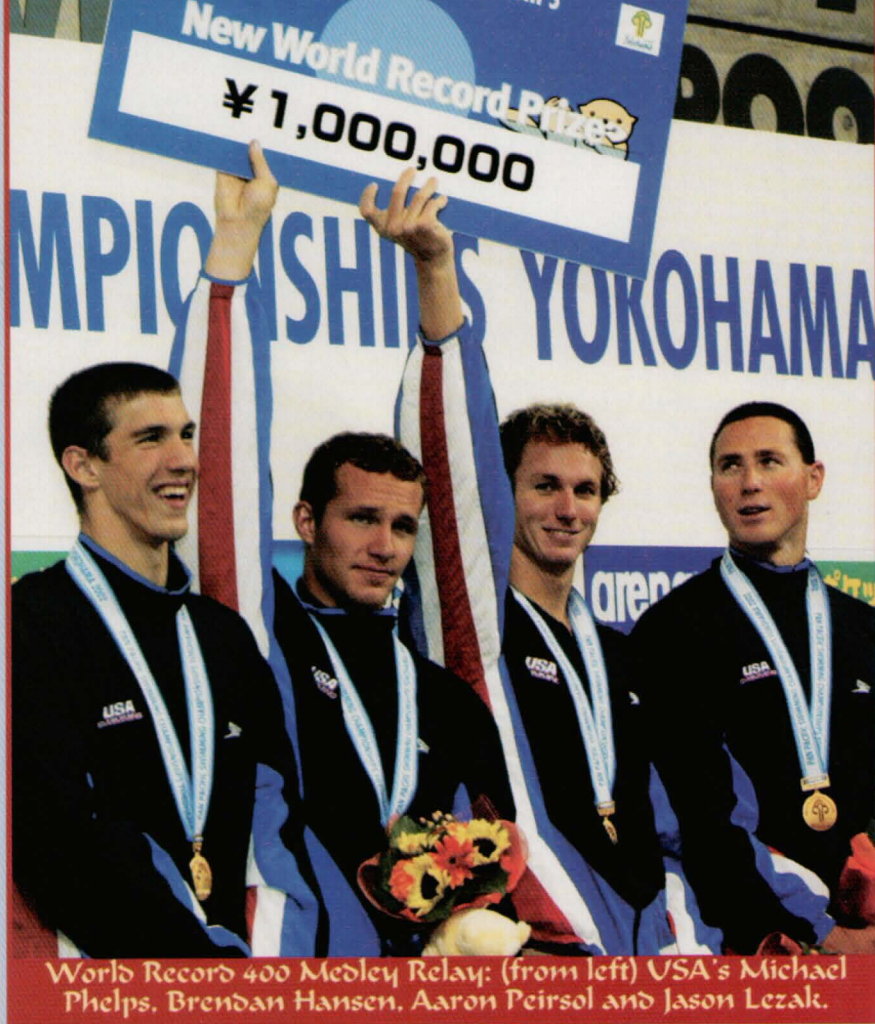
Grant Hackett reinforced his claim as the greatest distance swimmer in history, clocking the second fastest 1500 ever with his 14:41.65. He now owns six of the top ten times. The USA's Erik Vendt grabbed the silver in 15:02.24.

Before the 200 IM final, Michael Phelps made it clear he wanted to take Finn Jani Sievinen's world mark away from him. He was under WR pace through 100 meters, but the second half was tough, and he finished in a championship record 1:59.70, the eighth fastest all-time performance. Japan's Takahiro Mori had a great swim for a national record 2:00.61, moving him to 13th all-time performer.

At last year's World Championships, Australia's Geoff Huegill beat the USA's Ian Crocker in the 100 fly. Crocker turned the tables on "Skippy" Huegill in Yokohama, clocking 52.45, with the Aussie just 3-hundredths behind.

The USA's Natalie Coughlin exploded off the blocks in the women's 100 free and just kept going. Turning in 25.98, she left the field in her wake to slap the pads under 54 seconds—53.99—the fourth fastest swim in history, and a new American and championship record. The Aussies' new sprint queen, Jodie Henry, took silver in a new Commonwealth record 54.55 (15th all-time performer).

The USA's Margaret Hoelzer was a surprise winner in the 200 backstroke when favorite, Japan's Tomoko Hagiwara,



World Record 400 Medley Relay: (from left) USA's Michael Phelps, Brendan Hansen, Aaron Peirsol and Jason Lezak.

Photo by Kiminasa Mayama, Reuters

scratched after her warm-up. Hoelzer swam a strong second half to take the race comfortably in a PR 2:11.00.

Team USA lost the women's 400 medley relay to the Aussies at the World Champs last year, so there was pride on the line in Yokohama. The U.S. held a comfortable lead through the 200, but the race changed its course in the third leg when Petria Thomas swam the fastest fly split in history—56.94—to get within 36-hundredths of the Yanks. Jodie Henry delivered the *coup de grace* for Australia, overtaking Lindsay Benko with a 54.07 split to give the Sheilas from Down Under the gold in a championship record 4:00.50. The USA touched in 4:01.15.

The Aussie women's win just made the U.S. men mad—as in "world record mad." Buoyed by Michael Phelps' 51.13 fly split—the fastest of all time—the U.S. foursome of Aaron Peirsol (54.17), Brendan Hansen (1:00.14), Phelps and Jason Lezak (48.04) blazed to a new world record of 3:33.48, taking a quarter of a second off the global standard set by the USA at the Sydney Olympics.

After the meet, U.S. National Team Director Dennis Pursley summed things up: "What pleased me the most was that after the first night, when we were humiliated, we did a 180. We won almost every close race. That's an indicator of the heart and soul of this team."

*Stephen J. Thomas is one of Swimming World's foreign correspondents from Australia who covered the Pan Pacs in Yokohama. Phillip Whitten is the magazine's editor-in-chief. For complete results and detailed day-by-day stories, click onto [http://www.SwimInfo.com/results/2002\\_PAN\\_PACs.asp](http://www.SwimInfo.com/results/2002_PAN_PACs.asp).*