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XXVIII Olympiad – Athens 2004

An unprecedented eleven (or maybe it's twelve) Belgravians have been selected to represent their countries in athletics at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.

Having ransacked our athletics annuals and trawled the web, we have pulled together a little information about each of them to help you enjoy your armchair spectating. And having done so we can't help thinking what a talented crowd they are.

Will any of them come back with a medal? There are certainly a few long shots in the list.

We wish every Belgravian in Athens a most successful and memorable Games and will bring you news of their exploits – on the web and through this newsletter – in due course.

Information obtained from British Athletics Annuals 1987-2004, Australian Athletics - www.athletics.org.au, British Olympic Association www.olympics.org.uk, the official website of the 2004 Olympics www.athens2004.com

Abbreviations used:- CG=Commonwealth Games, EC=European Champs, ECp=European Cup, EI=European Indoor, EICp=European Indoor Cup, EJ=European Junior Champs, EU23=European Under 23 Champs, OG=Olympic Games, WC=World Cup, WI=World Indoor, WJ=World Junior Champs, WU=World University Champs, WY=World Youth Games.

Sean Baldock – 4x400m relay

The World Indoor Champs of 1997 saw Sean make his international debut and before long he was a regular in UK four lap relay teams.

In 2000 he emerged onto a higher plateau, taking the silver medal in the AAA Champs after a terrific heat time of 45.20 which remains his best time to this day. This earned him selection for the Sydney Olympics where he was 5th in his heat. It was another silver in the AAA of 2002 but this was followed by Commonwealth relay gold in England's colours with Sean clocking 45.4 on second leg.

A great supporter of the Belgrave team, the club highlight of 2003 was his 45.99 clocking to win the Golden Jubilee Cup 400m.

This year Sean placed 3rd in the AAA Champs/Olympic Trials but without the A standard of 45.55 to fall back on was unable to claim a place on the team for the individual one-lap event. Nevertheless, once again he has been named in the relay squad and with such a solid record of carrying the baton for England and the UK over the last seven years, one can only hope that he is given his chance to play a part in that team's fate once again.

Age 27. Coached by Nick Dakin and Mark Gregory.

Best performances:

| | |
|------|---|
| 100m | 10.9 (1998), 10.6w (1997). |
| 200m | 21.50 (2001), 21.43w (2001). |
| 300m | 32.88 (1997). |
| 400m | 45.20 (2000), 4x400m relay split 44.9 (2003). |

Major games record:

| | |
|------|--|
| 1997 | WI 4x400m 5th. |
| 1998 | EI 400m 6th, WCp 4x400m 2nd, EC 4x400m 1st, CG 4x400m 2nd. |
| 2000 | ECp 4x400m 2nd, OG 400m 5th. |
| 2002 | CG 400m 6sf, CG 4x400m 1st, EC 400m 4ht. |
| 2003 | WC 4x400m 5th |
| 2004 | ECp 4x400m 5th |

Tim Benjamin – 400m and 4x400m relay

The relentless progress made by Tim, still only 22 years old, has already marked him out as the next in line in Britain's long tradition of world-class 400m runners.

Success came to Tim early when he won the AAA U17 200 metres as a 14 year-old and by the end of that year, 1997, he was the fastest in the world for his age with 21.74.

Bydgoszcz in Poland has been a happy hunting ground for him and in 1999 he became World Youth Champion there, again over 200 metres, running 20.98. By the time the European Junior Champs came around he was down to 20.60 to take the silver medal but also won a 4x100m relay gold. At the World Juniors in 2000 it was relay gold again as the GB team ran 39.05 for a European Junior record. Tim also took bronze in the 200m.

Named as British Junior Captain in 2001, he set an example to his European Junior team by striking gold in the individual 400 metres and then earning another in the sprint relay and silver in the long relay.

In 2002 he was a member of the winning European Cup long relay team with a 45.2 split and took his first AAA senior title in 45.73. More relay glory came at the Commonwealths where as a member of the Welsh team he took silver behind the English but having qualified for the final of the European Games, a hamstring injury ruled him out.

Personal records, championship medals and a further AAA Championship win in 2003 have been followed by reductions in his best 400 metre time and retention of his AAA title in 2004. Now on the verge of cracking 45 seconds we may well see the Du'aine Ladejo owned Belgrave record for 400m (44.66) under pressure in Athens.

Age 22. Coached by Tony Lester

Best performances:

| | |
|------|------------------------------|
| 60m | 6.75 (2000) |
| 100m | 10.48 (2000), 10.36w (2001). |
| 200m | 20.67 (2001), 20.60w (1999). |
| 300m | 32.61 (2002). |
| 400m | 45.04 (2004). |

Major games record:

| | |
|------|---|
| 1998 | WJ 200m 6sf, WJ 4x100m hts |
| 1999 | WY 200m 1st, EJ 200m 2nd, EJ 4x100m 4th |
| 2000 | EI 200m 5sf, WJ 200m 3rd, WJ 4x100m 1st |
| 2001 | EJ 400m 1st, EJ 4x100m 1st, EJ 4x400m 2nd, WJ 4x100m 1st, WC 4x400m 6th |
| 2002 | ECp 4x400m 1st, WCp 400m 7th, WCp 4x400m 5th, CG 400m 7sf, CG 4x400m 2nd, EC 400m 3sf |
| 2003 | WI 4x400m 3rd, ECp 4x400m 1st, EU23 400m 2nd, EU23 4x400m 6th, WC 4x400m 2ht |
| 2004 | ECp 400m 1st, ECp 4x400m 5th |

National titles:

| | |
|------|--------------------------------|
| 60m | AAA U20 – 2000 |
| 200m | AAA U17 – 1997, AAA U20 – 2000 |
| 400m | AAA – 2002, 2003, 2004. |

Justin Chaston – 3000m steeplechase

Justin's international career stretches back to 1987 when, as a Junior, he competed in the World Cross Country Championships for Wales. Seven years later he won his first AAA title in the steeplechase and set a personal record for his favoured event, which remains under threat a decade later.

A huge part of Belgrave's push through the British League divisions in the '90s, he eventually moved to the USA but still made occasional forays to the UK to boost the BAL team and he even turned up unannounced to run in the B team in the 1999 Southern 12-Stage Relay at Milton Keynes where he proceeded to run our fastest long stage of the day.

Having twice proved that he can make the grade in Olympic years, Justin, now living at altitude in Colorado Springs, set out to make the British Olympic team for a third time. He set a UK age-best for 35 year-olds while winning a 'chase at Walnut, California, in April and within a fortnight narrowly missed the Olympic A standard with an amazing 8:24.88 at Stanford, also in California, which for a while was the 2004 world leading mark – and is the UK age-35 best.

No Belgravian has ever been a three-time Olympian before but Justin will not be in Athens just to make up the numbers. His running this year has been so positive that he must have a chance of making the final. Wouldn't it be wonderful if at long last that John Bicourt owned 28 year-old club record of 8:22.82 was superseded.

Age 35.

Best performances:

| | |
|---------|-----------------|
| 1500m | 3:46.58 (1995) |
| 3000m | 7:59.97 (1994) |
| 5000m | 13:51.86 (1995) |
| 3000mSC | 8:23.90 (1994) |

Major games record:

| | |
|------|--|
| 1994 | ECp 3000mSC 3rd, EC 3000mSC 11th, CG 3000mSC 7th |
| 1995 | ECp 3000mSC 5th, WC 3000mSC 8sf |
| 1996 | ECp 3000mSC 3rd, OG 3000mSC 9sf |
| 2000 | OG 3000mSC 7th |

National titles:

3000mSC AAA – 1994, 1996, 2004.

Sarah Claxton – 100m hurdles

A star at the English Schools Championships where she won the long jump on four occasions, Sarah has carried her winning ways through to senior competition and is still improving, year by year. Not yet 25 years of age, she has already built up a huge string of national titles both indoors and out.

She remains a very strong long jumper, gaining selection for the Commonwealth Games at that event in 2002, but it is the sprint hurdles that has become the event which will probably take her to her greatest successes.

Talking of her expectations in Athens, Sarah tells us, "I just want to do my best and take each round as it goes."

Currently no. 9 on the UK all-time list and with a crop of personal best times set this season, it will only take a small improvement to allow her to join the select band of Britons who have gone sub-13.

Age 24. Coached by Lloyd Cowan

Best performances:

| | |
|-------|-----------------------------|
| 100m | 11.69 (2004). |
| 100mH | 13.01 (2004), 12.99w (2004) |
| HJ | 1.65 (1995) |
| LJ | 6.60 (2003) |
| TJ | 11.35 (2002) |

Indoors

| | |
|------|-------------|
| 60m | 7.63 (1996) |
| 60mH | 8.11 (2004) |

Major games record:

| | |
|------|---|
| 1996 | WJ LJ 17th Q |
| 1997 | EJ LJ 5th |
| 1998 | ECp LJ 7th, WJ 100mH 6th ht, WJ LJ 4th |
| 1999 | ECp LJ 6th, EU23 100mH 4th ht, EU23 LJ 10th |

| | |
|------|---|
| 2001 | WI 60mH 6th ht |
| 2002 | CG LJ 12th |
| 2003 | WI 60mH 6th ht |
| 2004 | EICp 60mH 7th, WI 60mH 6th, ECp 100mH dnf |

National titles:

| | |
|-------|---|
| 60mH | AAA Indoor – 2003, 2004 |
| 100mH | AAA U20 – 1998; AAA – 2004 |
| LJ | AAA U23 – 1999; AAA U20 – 1996, 1997, 1998; AAA U20 Indoor 1997 |

Matt Douglas – 400m hurdles

One of the staunchest supporters of our BAL team, Matt can be found at the heart of our activities whether on the track (in hurdles, relays and even the odd long jump), in the hotel lobby (leading the banter with Geoff Dearman while awaiting transport), or in a scam (racing away from the field to win the football mascots' Grand National while dressed as Freddie the Fox).

Matt started out as an U17 by winning the AAA multi-events title and surely now could put together an impressive decathlon score. He became a junior international in 1995 and in the European Junior Championships of that year placed 3rd in the 400m hurdles. In the Commonwealth Games of 1998 at Kuala Lumpur he competed in both hurdles events for Northern Ireland. He went sub-50 in his speciality in 1999 and then ran brilliantly to reach the semi-finals in the Sydney Olympics of 2000. The Manchester Commonwealth Games saw him reach the final, now representing England, but 2003 was even better as, although unable to qualify for the World Championships, he delighted us with his World Student Games silver medal and an astounding 48.54, recorded in the semi-finals. Held back by a few niggles this season and unable to match the Olympic A standard, the selectors have nevertheless kept faith with him and hopefully he will be in top form just when it counts.

Age 27. Coach Gary Jones

Best performances:

| | |
|--------|--|
| 100m | 10.99w (1994) |
| 200m | 21.68 (1997) |
| 400m | 46.65A (2000), 47.5 (1998), 47.64 (1997) |
| 110mH | 14.00 (1999) |
| 300mH | 35.25 (2000) |
| 400mH | 48.54 (2003) |
| 4x400m | 3:07.27 |

Major games record:

| | |
|------|---|
| 1995 | EJ 400mH 3rd |
| 1997 | EU23 400mH 4th |
| 1998 | CG 110mH 5th, CG 400mH 4th, CG 4x400m 7th |
| 1999 | WU 400mH 4th |
| 2000 | OG 400mH 6sf |
| 2001 | WU 400mH 5th |
| 2002 | CG 400mH 8th |
| 2003 | WU 400mH 2nd, WU 4x400m 3rd |

National titles:

400mH AAA U17 – 1993; AAA U20 – 1995.

Phillips Idowu – triple jump

The extrovert Phillips Idowu has become one of the best known characters in UK athletics but beneath the colourful exterior lies a steely resolve to become one of the all-time greats in our sport. Always excelling at triple jump since his first appearance in a Belgrave vest back in 1995, with his perfect athletic physique he could so easily have been sidetracked into other sports, let alone other events in athletics. We've seen him handle a 400 metres race with ease and feel sure that 8 metres is not beyond him at long jump.

Very soon in his career he was among the top jumpers in Europe, finishing just out of the medals in the European Junior competition of 1997, and by 2000, now a 17 metre man, he was among the very best in the world, placing 6th in the Sydney Olympics after a massive 17.12 leap to lead the qualifying rounds. 2001 was even better. Phillips' personal record went up to 17.23 while winning the European Cup. He improved again in a minor meeting in Crete and then rode a

2.6mps breeze to launch himself to a windy 17.38m at Glasgow. His performance in the World Championships was mediocre but with Phillips there is always the feeling that there is a massive leap just waiting to pop out and sure enough, at the following year's Commonwealth Games, he uncorked a monster to take the lead, only for rival Jonathon Edwards to go 18 centimetres better when the pressure was on.

The decision to undergo a knee operation deprived the British team his presence in 2003 and this year, possibly due to that hiatus in his career, his performances have been a little below par - until the London Grand Prix that is, when his 17.47m eclipsed the opposition. If he can launch one like that in Athens he has a strong medal chance – and if ever there was a man with the potential to produce a shock result, surely it's Phillips.

Age 25. Coach John Herbert

Best performances:

TJ 17.68 (2002)

Major games record:

1997 EJ TJ 4th
1999 EU23 TJ 5th
2000 OG TJ 6th
2001 ECp TJ 1st, WC TJ 9th
2002 CG TJ 2nd, EC TJ 5th
2004 ECp TJ 3rd

National titles:

TJ AAA U20 – 1997; AAA U23 – 1999, 2000, 2002

Julien Kapek (France) – triple jump

Frenchman Julien Kapek caused a stir in 2002 when, whilst at college in the USA, he broke the USC Trojan's 27 year-old triple jump record and then went to 8th best in the world at the Mt. Sac Relays. Julien was subsequently named as the 2002 Pac-10 Track and Field Newcomer of the Year with a best leap of 17.04m.

In 2003 he took the French title with a massive 17.24m wind aided jump. He has yet to reach out to 17m in 2004, his best outdoor mark being 16.87m at Rouen where he took silver medal in the French Champs. The Olympic final looks a strong possibility and if he can reproduce his 2003 form then the medals would not be too far away.

Age 25.

Best performances:

TJ 17.12 (2003), 17.24w (2003).

LJ 7.35 (2004)

Major games record (detail may be incomplete):

2002 EC TJ 7th
2003 ECp TJ 2nd
2004 WI TJ 8th

National titles (detail may be incomplete):

TJ France 2003, AAA Indoor 2004

Chris Lambert – 200m and 4x100m relay

It seems such a short time ago that we watched Chris Lambert sweeping all before him in the NYAL competitions as a 14 and 15 year-old, and then doing the same again in the junior age group where he mixed club competition with junior international events in Europe. He always looked as if he'd go all the way and now is surely on the verge of taking his place among the very best sprinters in the world.

By 1999 at the age of 18 Chris was making a global impact as he medalled at the European Junior Champs and topped the world junior rankings with 20.63. An academic scholarship at Harvard University meant coach John Powell making frequent Atlantic crossings to keep an eye on Chris's athletic progress and during this time he won 100 metres bronze at the World Student Games, qualified for the Manchester Commonwealth Games 200 metres (where he was unable to do himself justice through illness) and won European Under 23 gold at 200

metres last year in Bydgoszcz, Poland and World Student Games 100 metres gold in Daegu, Korea.

In spite of these successes he has often been held back by the odd hamstring niggle and illness – but now graduated and settled into athletic life in the UK, his form looks more dominant even though, in 2004, he hasn't matched times of earlier years. The heat of Athens should be just the thing to remedy this and we look forward to something very close to 20 seconds.

Age 23. Coached by John Powell

Best performances:

100m 10.19w (2002)

200m 20.34 (2003)

Major games record:

1998 WJ 4x100m 1st
1999 EJ 200m 3rd, EJ 4x100m 4th
2001 WU 100m 3rd, WU 200m 5sf
2002 CG 200m 6sf
2003 EU23 200m 1st, EU23 4x100m 1st, WU 100m 1st

National titles:

200m AAA U20 – 1999 (indoor); AAA U20 – 1999; AAA – 2003, 2004.

Tamsyn Lewis (Australia) – 800m

Carolyn Wright won seven Australian high jump titles and competed at the 1962 Commonwealth Games while Greg Lewis took six Australian national sprint titles and competed at the Olympics, Commonwealth Games and World University Games. With parents like these it's no surprise that Tamsyn became an athlete. Between them the Lewis family have won 18 Australian titles and 40 medals. The Australian Commonwealth Games team has seen a Lewis in the line-up on no less than six occasions.

At the age of 16 Tamsyn was selected for the 4x400m squad in the Commonwealth Games but did not get to compete. Nevertheless, she was soon a regular in Australian colours, gradually moving up to 800m but still playing a part in national relay teams. In 2000, after reaching 4th in her semi-final in the Sydney Olympic 800m, Tamsyn joined Cathy Freeman, Melinda Gainsford-Taylor and Nova Peris-Kneebone to finish fifth in the final of the 4x400m setting a new Australian record of 3:23.81.

Currently based in the UK she has 2004 bests of 53.75 and 2:02.93 – both are Belgrave records.

Age 26. Coached by Sebastian Coe (previously Peter Fortune, Neville Sillitoe)

Best performances:

400m 51.51 (2000)

800m 1:59.21 (2000)

Major games record:

1994 WJ 400m 6th.
1996 WJ 400m ?th sf, WJ 4x100m 6th, WJ 4x400m 3rd
1998 WCp 800m 8th, WCp 4x400m 6thCG 800m 6th, CG 4x400m 1st
1999 WI 800m ?th sf, 4x400m 2nd, WC 800m ?th ht WC 4x400m ht
2000 OG 800m 4th sf, OG 4x400m 5th
2001 WI 800m ?th sf, WC 800m ?th sf
2002 WCp 800m 8th, CG 800m 5th, CG 4x400m 1st
2003 WC 800m 8th sf

National titles (Australia):

100m U16 – 1994

200m U16 – 1994

400m U20 – 1994, U20 – 1995

800m 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003.

Shelley Newman – discus

A regular with the men's BAL team, shot and discus man Lee Newman had already given the club great service, but his marriage to Shelley Drew in 2001, who also became a Belgravian that year, gave us our most successful ever husband-wife duo.

Shelley was highly successful as a junior and by 1997 she was a major force in British senior discus throwing as she broke the English record with 60.80 and won the UK Championships. A year later the AAA title fell to Shelley, the first in a line of victories that extends to 2004, broken only in 2002. That loss in 2002 was more than made up for at the Manchester City Stadium where she took bronze medal in the Commonwealth Games. Just a couple of weeks later Shelley reached the final of the European Championships in Munich.

Shelley's current personal record of 61.22 came in 2003 and in an international career that now stretches over 13 seasons there is not yet any sign of a let-up as she breached the 60 metre barrier again in July this year. A similar throw in Athens could see her reach the Olympic final.

Age 31. Coached by Lee Newman

Best performances:

DT 61.22 (2003)
SP 12.34 (1996)

Major games record:

1992 WJ DT 12th
1997 WC DT 22nd, WU DT 11th
1998 ECp DT 6th, EC DT 25Q, CG DT 4th
1999 ECp DT 5th, WU DT 11th
2000 ECp DT 8th
2002 ECp DT 6th, CG DT 3rd, EC DT 10th
2003 WC DT 19th

National titles:

DT UK – 1997; AAA – 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003

Goldie Sayers – javelin

Over 60 metres for the first time when she won the Inter-Counties competition at Bedford this season, Goldie was so close to the Olympic qualifying mark, her 60.10 falling just 40cm short. Wins in the Loughborough International and her third AAA U23 title followed and then – exactly what she wanted! Goldie's 6th and last throw in the AAA Championships/Olympic Trial saw her javelin spear the Manchester turf at 60.85 and her team slot was booked. At the subsequent television interview a delighted Goldie was introduced to a public who will now be looking for more of the same in Athens.

As with Sarah Claxton, Goldie was a winner of English Schools titles four times over. She has also represented her county, Cambridgeshire, at hockey, tennis and netball. Further early promise was shown in the World Youth Games of 1999 and the World Junior Champs of 2000. The following year, as Captain of the British Junior team, she won silver medal in the European Junior Champs but must have been disappointed with the result. She'd led until the last round of the competition with a British Junior record of 55.40, only to see Galina Kakhova equal her best throw with a superior second best already on the card.

2002 saw Goldie increase her best distance to 58.20m and she won BUSA, CAU and AAA U23 titles before solid but unspectacular form saw her reach 6th in the Commonwealth Games. AAA Senior Champion in 2003 and 2004, we could, injury and health permitting, be looking at the beginning of a long and illustrious career.

Age 22. Coach Mike McNeil

Best performances:

JT 60.85 (2004)

Major games record:

1999 WY JT 5th
2000 WJ JT 6th
2001 EJ JT 2nd
2002 CG JT 6th
2003 ECp JT 7th, EU23 JT 11th, WU JT 5th
2004 ECp JT 7th

National titles:

JT AAA U17 – 1997; AAA U20 – 2000, 2001; AAA U23 – 2002, 2003, 2004; AAA – 2003, 2004

Enee Udo-Obong (Nigeria) – 4x400m relay

We are not exactly sure of the situation regarding Enee. He represented Nigeria in the 2001 World Championships and competed for us in the British League in 2003 where he could only show the faintest hint of his best form. However, we hear that he is in good shape again so watch out for him in at least the Nigerian 4x400 metres relay squad.

People

The judging section at the final London Inter-Club Challenge match at Woodford Green threw up an amazing line-up – a trio of champion runners who, in their athletic prime, carried all before them in cross country races. Our own Pam Davies was judging field events (Pam was four times English National Cross Country Champion in Selsonia AC's colours 1965-68); Joyce Smith was also judging (on three occasions she was a "National" medallist for Barnet AC behind Pam and was a medallist on five other occasions including being the winner in 1973); Phyllis Perkins was track referee (as an Ilford Harrier she was three times a medallist in the "National").

The activities of Derek Crookes have been curtailed, at least for the near future. Two falls left him with a very painful knee which, when examined at hospital, was found to be caused by an almost completely ruptured tendon. Instead of taking the Surrey Road Running team to County Durham this weekend for the AAA 10k Champs., he is now laid up at home after an operation. No doubt he'll struggle up to Belgrave Hall next week to organise the Surrey Road 5k somehow.

Many of our track and road runners will recognise the face of Barry Tilbury who comes along to support the team at cross country, road relays, BAL matches and BMC meetings. More often than not he will sidle up to a runner after his race and present him with a list of his lap times. What they may not know is that Barry was coach to the great Steve Ovett at the beginning of his athletic career. Barry took Steve from 2:09 for 800 metres down to a UK age-15 record of 1:55.3 before Harry Wilson looked after him and is mentioned at length in the new book "The Perfect Distance - Ovett & Coe" by Pat Butcher.

Pete Sutton

Sadly we must inform you that Pete Sutton died in hospital on the morning of Monday 9th August. He was 80 years of age.

A stroke some weeks ago had caused him to be taken to Charing Cross Hospital. His only surviving relative contacted us through the website just the day before his death as, she knew the Club was a large part of his life and she hoped that some of his old friends would be able to visit him. Sadly time was not on our side and the day after we received this message, we learned of his death.

Pete joined Belgrave Harriers in December 1962 at the age of 38 and enjoyed cross country and road running, becoming a regular at our clubhouse over the next 40-odd years. Until very recently he was to be found behind the bar on a Saturday afternoon, helping Brian with the dispensing of tea and buns – and making sure that tea was served in a cup for his special customers!

All who attend Belgrave Hall will miss him greatly.

The funeral will take place at Putney Vale Crematorium, East Chapel, at 09:40am on Monday 23rd August.