



CAT OSTERMAN — Catherine Leigh Osterman is easily the highest-profile player on a U.S. softball team full of high-profiles. Her stellar career began at the University of Texas where Osterman, as a freshman, threw the first perfect game in Longhorn history. She went on to lead her college team to 136 Division I wins, threw 2,265 career strikeouts (second all-time). As a member of the 2004 Olympic team, Osterman's 23 strikeouts led Team USA on its historic run toward gold. She returns in 2008 — along with uber-MILF Jennie Finch — as part of a veteran team looking to dominate again on the world's biggest stage.

— **BRIAN MELTON**

EDITED BY BRIAN MELTON & GREG HENRY

THE LOCATION MAY HAVE PROTESTERS UP IN ARMS, BUT THERE IS NO DENYING THAT THIS YEAR'S CROP OF OLYMPIC TALENT HAS US SEEING GOLD.

CONQUERING CHINA

They arrive at the Olympic complex in Colorado Springs from across the nation, each athlete eager to etch his or her name into the record books along with countless other Americans who have pushed themselves in pursuit of Olympic gold. The numbers are staggering; 202 nations; 10,500 athletes; 4.8 million spectators witnessing 302 events. In 2004, American athletes laid claim to 103 pieces of hardware, the most of any competing country, and are expecting nothing less in Beijing.

When the opening ceremonies are held on Aug 8 at Beijing National Stadium — what many refer to as the “Bird nest” because of its unique skeletal structure — more than 500 of our nation’s greatest athletes will compete at the Games of the XXIX Olympiad. And as the world looks to China, its many controversies and the grandiose spectacle that is the Olympic stage, we focus our sights on the stars — and stripes — of Team USA.



Beijing 2008



JERRY LAI — US PRESSWIRE



BOB DONNAN — US PRESSWIRE

CARMELO ANTHONY — So far, 2008 has been rough for ‘Melo, Denver’s tattoo-wielding small forward. His scoring average during the 2007-08 NBA season dropped from 28.9 to 25.7 points per game (yet still above mere mortal status). His Denver Nuggets team became the only 50-win team in league history to be swept in the first round of the playoffs. Just four days before the playoff series ended, he was picked up on suspicion of drunk driving. However, USA’s leading scorer at the 2006 World Championships hopes to erase the nation’s memory and return to form in Beijing, as the squad — comprised of NBA superstars LeBron James, Dwight Howard and Dwyane Wade — hopes to erase the memory of a third-place finish in 2004.

— BRIAN MELTON



ALAIN MOUNIC/PRESSE SPORTS VIA US PRESSWIRE

TAYLOR PHINNEY — With nerves of steel, 17-year-old Taylor Phinney races against some of the best cyclists in the world, yet doesn't blink when he looks across the tight starting lineup on the steeply sloped velodrome. You've got to hand it to him — the youngster has great genes. Taylor's dad, Davis Phinney, was the first American racer to win a road stage of the Tour de France, and his mother, Connie Carpenter-Phinney, won the women's road racing gold medal in the 1984 Olympics. Two years ago, Taylor was a young Boulder High School student — chasing girls and attending classes — until he felt the compulsion to follow in the family tracks. He started competing in individual and team time trials, qualifying for Beijing by ranking third in the world after a recent performance in Manchester, England. In China, he might make a few tracks of his own, adding his name to the Phinney championship roster. — **ILAN BARIL**



ELI BREMER — With five extremely varied disciplines of competition, the Modern Pentathlon is perhaps the most difficult Olympic event to train for. Designed to mimic the challenges facing a 19th century cavalry soldier behind enemy lines, the pentathlon tests athletes in horse riding, fencing, shooting, swimming and running. New Hampshire-born, Colorado-raised Eli Bremer will take on the ultimate Olympic challenge in Beijing after missing out on the 2004 Olympics because of a broken foot. As America's No. 1-ranked pentathlete, two-time national champion and three-time Pan American champion, Bremer carries high promise for picking up some Olympic hardware in the event — something that has eluded the U.S. team since the 1960 Games in Rome.

— **LAUREN HARVEY**

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ALEXANDER ARTEMEV — Born in Minsk, Belarus, gymnast Alexander "Sasha" Artemev moved to Morrison in 1994, where he still lives and trains. Alexander's father, Vladimir, was the Soviet Union's all-around champion and considered a shoo-in for the 1984 gymnastics team. But his Olympic dreams were devastated when the Soviet Union boycotted the Games. Vladimir coaches his son to aspirant Olympic glory. Unfortunately, at the U.S. Olympic Trials in June, Artemev failed to make the team but will be traveling to Beijing as one of three alternates. Alexander is certainly an all-around contender, but he specializes in the pommel horse, in which he won a bronze medal at the 2006 World Championships, the first U.S. pommel horse medal winner since Kurt Thomas in 1979. — **LAUREN HARVEY**



MARK J. REBILAS - US PRESSWIRE



GEPA PICTURES VIA US PRESSWIRE

KERRI WALSH AND MISTY MAY-TREANOR — This American duo is considered the greatest women's beach volleyball team. The prohibitive favorite to bring home the gold, they had a 38-0 record in their first year on the AVP Tour, winning 89 straight matches from 2003-04 — including the gold at the 2004 Sydney Olympics. They met in 2000, oddly, the same day Walsh met her husband-to-be, Casey Jennings, himself a four-time AVP winner. Walsh and May-Treanor dominated the Hermosa Beach Open, winning five of six matches. — **ILAN BARIL**



TOM FLUEGGE – US PRESSWIRE

NATASHA KAI — The 25-year-old Kai is the first Hawaiian member of the U.S. women's soccer team and feels as if she carries the hopes of the entire state with her as she plays. Along with teammate and fellow forward Abby Wambach, Kai is one of the team's most prolific scorers, netting two second-half goals to ensure the U.S. team a spot in Beijing with a 3-0 victory over Costa Rica in the 2008 Olympic qualifying tournament. Adorned with nearly 20 tattoos — many of which are of the traditional Maori variety usually found on the male warriors of the Micronesian island culture — expect Kai to be one of the most memorable faces on a team with high hopes for gold in Beijing.

— ILAN BARIL



PHIL CARTER – US PRESSWIRE

MICHAEL PHELPS — This Maryland-born superstar's name is synonymous with Olympic swimming after a record-tying performance in 2004, which garnered him eight medals in Athens. For Beijing, the 23-year-old Phelps has bulked up — his last reported weight was 199 pounds — and hopes to make history as the first athlete to earn gold medals in eight separate events. Fresh off one of the most spectacular swimming performances, at the 2007 Worlds — he won seven gold medals and set five world records — Phelps will be the focal point of the U.S. swim team, which knows it has heavy competition. — BRIAN MELTON

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