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revival in Water

By Karen Allen
USA TODAY

SYDNEY — As soon as Tom Dolan saw that he had defended his 400-meter individual medley title with a world record, he pumped his fists and punched the water.

Then he began screaming, exactly what he won't say — "I should apologize. I think they might have to edit the tape," he said.

The demonstration was part celebration that he'd finally lowered his 6-year-old world record, and part relief that the lung virus that had him breathing off an oxygen tank this week hadn't slowed him.

But it was mostly an indication of the huge momentum shift that is taking place in swimming's medal race.

The Aussies knocked the USA back on its heels on opening day Saturday, handing the men's 4x100 freestyle relay its first loss in Olympic history, celebrating Ian Thorpe's no-doubt win in the 400 freestyle and setting three world records.

But Dolan and Brooke Bennett, who won the women's 400 freestyle, brought the USA roaring back Sunday, and Tom Malchow continued the trend this morning with an Olympic-record 1 minute, 56.26 in the 200 butterfly preliminaries.

youngest U.S. man to make an Olympic swimming team since 1932, was not far behind, qualifying third in 1:57.30.

The semifinals are Monday morning (ET), the finals Tuesday morning (ET).

"I'm not really concerned about time," said Malchow, who holds the world record (1:55.18). "What I want is that medal."

But Malchow said he wouldn't mind matching Dolan by both winning and lowering a world record.

"It would be great to keep the momentum going. Last night was just unbelievable," he said.

That was Dolan's intent. He said he was determined to help turn the U.S. team around.

"Losing that relay was a huge motivating factor," Dolan said. "We had to come back."

Erik Vendt and Diana Munz took silvers behind Dolan and Bennett. Ed Moses added a silver in the 100 breaststroke and Dara Torres, a bronze in the 100 butterfly, and the USA took a commanding 9-2 lead in the medals race. The USA has three gold medals. Both of Australia's medals are gold.

Josh Davis figures into one of two key finals.

In Sunday's 200 freestyle semifinals, Pieter van den Hoogenband won his semifinal in a world record 1:45.35, making it clear that Thorpe's second individual gold might not come as easily as the first. Thorpe followed with a 1:45.37 in his semifinal, and both say it might take another world record to win.

"I figure it will be me and (Italy's) Massimiliano Ro-

But van den Hoogenband is downplaying his chances.

"If Thorpe can swim 1:44.90 or lower, he will be the Olympic champ," he said. "Because I don't think I can go that fast."

Lenny Krayzelburg cruised into the 100 backstroke finals as the top qualifier, finishing in 54.32, well above his 53.60 world record. But he said he won't be able to take it as easy in the final with Australians Matthew Welsh and Josh Watson sitting in second and third place.

"I believe it will take a sub-54 to win, and I wouldn't be surprised if it will take a world record to do it," he said.

Australia's Susie O'Neill set herself up as a favorite to win Tuesday's 200 freestyle gold — she was the top qualifier into the semifinals by almost a second.

She said she wasn't trying to "make a statement" but just take it "nice and easy," building into the semifinals and finals.

The USA's Lindsay Benko qualified fourth, and Rada Owen was 15th. The top 16 make the semifinals.

Cristina Teuscher and Gabrielle Rose both made it safely into the semifinals of the 200 individual medley, with Teuscher, a relay gold medalist in Atlanta, qualifying fifth, and Rose, who swam for Brazil in Atlanta, in eighth place.

► Rivalry in the pool, 1A

Knowing the score doesn't stop fans' fervor

Will getting event results on the Net as many as 24 hours before actually viewing the event on television ruin the magic of the games?

Or is there an Olympic aura that transcends cyberspace?

An initial impression: The Web could tease you, the viewer, into watching the telecasts.

My first Olympic moment came just before 1 p.m. ET Thursday, when an e-mail arrived from NBC's Olympic Web site telling me that the U.S. women's soccer team had beaten Norway 2-0.

I clicked the link in the e-mail and, transported to the home page (nbcolympics.com), came to a well-crafted photo story of the team's burden of repeating as Olympic champs and star Mia Hamm's personal goal to improve upon her one-goal performance in the 1996 Games. Photos showed the team celebrating after Hamm scored the second goal. Other top sports sites also reported scores immediately.

NBC Sports chairman Dick Ebersol considers the Web site, a joint project with Quokka Sports, as a way to "really add another layer to NBC's comprehensive coverage," says Tom Newell, general manager of NBC/Quokka Ventures.

Later that night I watched some, but not all, of the soccer match on MSNBC. Would I have stayed totally tuned in if I hadn't known the score? Possibly, but I'm not a gung-ho soccer fan and after awhile may have surfed over to a baseball game or grabbed the new Tom



E-world
By Mike Snider

Clancy novel.

Nonetheless, if you are like many sports fans, your periodic love affair with the Olympics is heating up.

Typical sports junkies subsist on a seasonal parade of mainstream games such as baseball, basketball, football and, for some, auto racing, soccer, hockey, tennis, golf and boxing (don't even talk to me about pro wrestling).

Normally, gymnastics, track and field or weightlifting won't make us skip a channel-surfing beat, although I will admit to occasionally lingering when I happen upon women's beach volleyball.

But when Olympics frenzy hits, we cheer and tear up at performances and stories from athletes such as Kerri Strug, Mary Decker and, during the Winter Olympics, Dan Jansen and the U.S. hockey teams (men's in 1980 and women's in 1998.)

In the past, watching the games on TV has created a national experience that is unparalleled. It happens in other countries, too.

One of my vivid memories of covering the 1998 Winter Games involved watching the climax of the 120-meter ski jump with some locals. Tension filled the air as the athletes made their final jumps. The sport is a favorite of the Japanese and, as hosts, they felt tremendous pressure to perform.

Americans celebrated and sighed in relief with fans as their countrymen, Kazuyoshi Funaki and Mashahiko Harada, landed jumps that won them gold and bronze medals, respectively.

It is such moments that make the Games such a special happening. Will the coverage on the Internet add or detract from this summer's Olympic experience?

Even though the results had been reported, I watched a videotape of the women's triathlon early Sunday morning after returning from a dinner party. No one at the party asked to have the TV turned on, by the way.

I grimaced at a crash during the bicycle portion of the race and was moved by the grit shown as they approached the finish line.

As more medals are on the line how will fans behave? For some, that competition may prove just as compelling as the Games themselves.

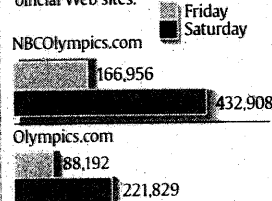
"This is a battle between old and new media," says Allen Weiner of Nielsen/NetRatings, which is tracking global Web traffic to Olympic-related sites. "We're interested to see where people will go for their information about the Olympics."

Time is on my side?

This time difference — the 15-hour difference between Sydney time and Eastern time — is really a pain. E-mail services are offering help, but even they

Games sites clicking

Internet traffic has increased with the start of the Olympics at the official Web sites.



Based on behavior of 56,201 U.S. home Internet users. The numbers represent unique audience visitors who visited the site at least once.
Source: Nielsen/NetRatings. No margin of error.

By Suzy Parker, USA TODAY

can't always get it right.

Early last week, I signed up for the NBC Olympics site's Insider e-mail service, which lets you choose sports you are interested in and get a daily alert.

My first delivery came last Tuesday and confused me even more. It said that the U.S. men's soccer team was scheduled to play the Czech Republic at 5 p.m. ET Tuesday. So I clicked on the link to the events schedule

just to help me get accustomed to the time shift.

NBC's schedule said that the men played at 8 p.m. Sydney time Wednesday, which — I did the math on this three times — is actually 5 a.m. ET Wednesday.

A Quokka spokesperson had heard of no complaints and there have been no new errors in successive Insider e-mails, which are actually being delivered for NBC by Mountain View, Calif.-based Annuncio Software.

IBM's olympics.com site also offers an e-mail newsletter. It is distributed by Lifeminders, a Reston, Va.-based company that sends reminders for birthdays, engagements and other important dates. The daily e-mail includes brief details about top stories and Web links to more on the site, plus scores, results and other updates on favorite sports.

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