

The 2008 Beijing Olympics: What to Watch For

The Olympic Games have always been a captivating event for spectators to behold. Each edition of the Summer Olympic Games presents its own storylines, memorable moments, heroes, and inspirational events. This year, there will be many great stories that come seemingly out of nowhere, but there are also great stories that have already been set up, that will keep the attention of viewers worldwide as the 2008 Beijing Olympics join sports history as one of the biggest events ever.

With all the events taking place and athletes competing, it can be hard to even know what to follow. Here's a beginner's guide to a few of the stories to watch as the Beijing Olympics draw progressively nearer.

In 2004's Summer Olympic Games in Athens, one of the biggest surprises was the collapse of the U.S. men's basketball team. The team started out with a loss to Puerto Rico, and would go on to lost two more games en route to a bronze medal. The three losses in the 2004 Olympic Games surpassed the number of losses that the U.S. team had endured in Olympic history before that point.

After another disappointing third place finish at the 2006 World Championships, the 2008 U.S. men's basketball team will look to reclaim their former glory. The team is taking a different direction, as coaches and USA Basketball have attempted to form a cohesive team that will play as a unit rather than yet another thrown together roster of NBA All-Stars. Only time will tell if the team will win the gold against an emerging world of basketball superstars that continue to grow in talent.

It will also be fun to watch China's athletes compete in the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Athletes always compete a little harder in their home country, and the Chinese athletes are certain to be ready when the Olympics commence in Beijing this summer. In 2004's Olympic Games in Athens, China finished second overall with 32 gold medals, so they have set the stage for Olympic dominance. With strong athletes in nearly every Olympic sport, it will be interesting to see what kind of effort China's athletes can put together as they host athletes from all over the world in the 2008 Olympic Games.

Track and field events are always among the most anticipated, but this year there may be an unprecedented newcomer to one or more events. Oscar Pistorius, born without fibulas in either of his legs, is a double-amputee athlete who runs with the use of carbon fiber "blades" nicknamed "Cheetahs" that help him run like an able-bodied athlete. After initially being told he couldn't compete in this year's Olympics because a German scientist believed that the blades gave

Pistorius an unfair advantage, Pistorius successfully appealed the ruling and will be free to qualify for this year's Olympic Games in Beijing.

If Pistorius can better his time in the 400 meters (which is one second off of Olympic qualifying pace), he will make history when he lines up on the track this summer. Even if he does not meet the required time, he may still be selected to race as part of his native South African relay team. If Pistorius does compete, you won't want to miss it.

Finally, 41-year old Dara Torres is spicing up the swimming world with her possible participation in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Torres would set a number of records, including most Olympic appearances by a swimmer (5) and oldest swimmer to compete in the Olympics, if she is able to successfully qualify. Her road to doing so appears to be pretty certain, as she is actually swimming faster than she did years ago when she was an Olympian! You'll want to follow this amazing and inspirational athlete in Beijing, whether you're a fan of swimming or not.

These are just a few of the intriguing stories that have presented themselves already as the Olympics get closer. Make sure to catch the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, China so that you won't miss out on any of the historic events that are sure to happen.

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