

## Female Athletes to Watch in the Beijing Olympics

Whether you're just a fan of the Olympic Games in general, a woman who has competed in sports herself, or a young girl who looks up to the athletes who perform on the grand stage of the Olympics, it's easy to admire the skills and determination shown by women athletes in the Olympic Games. The Beijing Olympics will put many talented female athletes at center stage, and many of these athletes will, in turn, inspire another generation of women to aspire to one day compete in the Olympic Games. Here are just a few of the female athletes you'll want to keep an eye on during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

Natalie Coughlin, a United States swimmer, is a favorite to win several medals at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. She already has experienced Olympic success, as she won 5 medals (2 gold, 2 silver, and 1 bronze) at the 2004 Olympics in Sydney, Australia. She has only continued her success since then, and her skill in the 100 yard backstroke is not even approached by other competitors. Look for her to make a big splash- no pun intended- at the Beijing Olympics.

As long as we're talking about swimming, we have to mention the inspirational and improbable story of Dara Torres, who has already competed in four Olympic Games (the first in 1984) and is 41 years old. Despite her age, she is swimming better than ever, and is actually swimming faster than she did when she was winning Olympic medals years ago. Torres is very likely to qualify for the Olympic Games, and will be one of the biggest stories of the Beijing Olympics due to her chance to set records for the most Olympic appearances by a swimmer and for being the oldest swimmer to appear in the Olympic Games.

Yelena Isinbayeva is a Russian pole vaulter who has already been the winner of eight major championships in her event of choice. She has set the world records for both indoor jumps (4.95 meters) and outdoor jumps (5.01 meters). Originally a gymnast, Isinbayeva left the sport when she became too tall to be very successful in it. However, her athleticism has allowed her to win a gold medal already in the pole vault, at the 2004 Sydney Olympics. It would be a tremendous shock if she doesn't repeat that feat in 2008 at the Beijing Olympics.

Nastia Liukin is a Russian-born gymnast who will star for the United States gymnastic team during the 2008 Beijing Olympics. As a winner of four national all-around championships, she has proven herself to be a versatile competitor, although she excels most on the balance beam and uneven bars. Liukin nearly won the all-around competition at the World Championships in 2005, and has nine World Championship medals to her credit so far. She's known for having outstanding technique, and you won't want to miss her performances in Beijing.

Marta, a Brazilian soccer player who is known by many as a female version of the great Pele, will compete in the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and you won't want to miss her when she does. Her team qualified by beating Ghana 5-1 to take the final spot in the Beijing Olympics, with Marta leading the way while playing a fantastic game. Widely considered the best women's player in the world, she was awarded as the outstanding player and leading scorer of the 2007 Women's World Cup, and her team finished second in the prestigious tournament. When she plays, don't blink!

As mentioned before, these are just a few of many outstanding athletes that will be competing at the Beijing Olympics this summer. You'll want to make sure to follow their performances and root them on, and you won't be sorry if you do. These women are the epitome of what athletics are all about, and they are going to Beijing for one reason: to win.

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