

Can Bolt be beaten? Gay's golden Olympic goal

By Gary Morley and Alex Thomas, CNN

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Tyson Gay: Aiming for gold 6 photos

1 of 6

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2 of 6

Show Caption ▼

• • •

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3 of 6

Show Caption ▼

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4 of 6

Show Caption ▼

• • •

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5 of 6

Show Caption ▾

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6 of 6

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Story highlights

U.S. sprinter Tyson Gay is hoping to prove a point at the 2012 London Olympics

The 2007 triple world champion missed the Beijing 100 meter final after struggling with injury

He is hoping to prevent Jamaica's world record-holder Usain Bolt defending his three titles

Gay says he wants to be remembered as a clean runner, "someone who ran with his heart"

There's a fine line between success and failure in top-level sports, perhaps nowhere more so than in track and field sprint events.

Tyson Gay knows how true that is.

The American was a triple world champion in 2007, but since then has seen Usain Bolt usurp him in the most spectacular way with records and titles galore.

However, the difference between them is still only a few hundredths of a second.

"It's a huge difference -- not on paper, but in the race it is. In a race, a loss is a loss and you can see it clearly. So that's why I want to get what's on paper a lot closer," Gay told CNN's Aiming for Gold show.

His quickest time over the 100 meters is 9.69 seconds, set in China in 2009. That matched Bolt's effort in winning Olympic gold in Beijing the previous year.

Tyson Gay's Olympic ambition 03:34

Human to Hero: Tyson Gay 03:17

When they went head to head at the 2009 world championships, Gay clocked 9.71 -- good enough for second place only as the Jamaican took his title with a new record 9.58.

"If I do my best and I don't win then I have to be satisfied with that," the 29-year-old Kentucky native said.

"So when I ran 9.71, I was mad I didn't run 9.69, but it was so close that it was almost like I couldn't be mad because I knew that we worked to do what we tried to do, and I just took the loss."

Gay has only beaten Bolt once in a 100m final, in 2010, and also had the edge in the 200m final at the 2007 worlds.

But a hamstring injury suffered in the 2008 U.S. Olympic trials sent his performances into a spiral, and he did not qualify for the 100m final in Beijing.

Overcoming adversity

"It was like coming off a high and going to the lowest point of my life in a span of 12 months," he said.

"Being a champion I wanted to follow up with an Olympic medal, and after going through the trials and having the American record in the 100m dash I was feeling good, and then I pulled my hamstring in the 200m and that's when things just changed."

"I was down trying to rehab it, trying to go through a lot of things, ups and downs, struggles mentally trying to get my mind together."

"It was very tough. I believe when you run track and field, you're on that thin line between running too fast in practice, running too fast in meets, not having enough time to recover and so forth -- and that's just something I had to learn to deal with over the years."

Gay insists he is in much better shape to finally achieve his dream at this year's Olympics in London.

"I really believe that I'm going to be healthy this year and that's what I'm looking forward to," he said.

"Last year for me to run with basically one leg, I ran 9.7. I can be a lot more dangerous, as long as I stay healthy and get a lot stronger in the weight room."

Off-track issues

The Jamaican sprint team was hit by a doping scandal ahead of the 2009 world championships which saw five members -- not including Bolt -- under scrutiny, and last year their compatriot Steve Mullings was handed a lifetime ban after testing positive for a masking agent.

Gay's fellow American, former world and Olympic champion Justin Gatlin, is on the comeback trail after serving a four-year ban for steroid use.

With that context, London 2012 organizers have said that this Games will be heavily scrutinized to make sure illegal doping does not

occur.

"That's one thing I respect about having the Games here in London, they don't play no games and they were big on the anti-doping thing," Gay said.

"There's a possibility that they're a little bit less forgiving than America is when it comes to that and I really respect them for that."

Family man

Gay is only too aware that he is a role model for aspiring athletes -- including his daughter Trinity.

"She is not a little girl anymore and she is at the age when she understands what I'm doing, so now I'm at a point where I want to be involved in more of her sports," he said.

"Last year was one of the first times going to one of her track meets and it was pretty amazing to watch her run and compete and still keep her spirits up high you when she didn't win.

"In that sense I am trying to balance my time so I can watch her career and I can finish up my career."

With that in mind, Gay is aware that London may provide his best chance to achieve his Olympic goals and leave a golden legacy.

"I really believe this is going to be one of the most exciting Olympics ever in history, and I like a challenge. I want to run with the best, run against the best; that's how I've always lived," said Gay, who has strong ideas of how he'd like to be recalled in the history books.

"As a great runner, as a clean runner, someone who accomplished things without going the other route. Being remembered as someone who gave his all, who ran with his heart. I want to capitalize that with a medal in the Olympics -- a gold medal."

London 2012 Olympics

Eddie Izzard: Olympics bad for bigots

The moment that Team GB's Mo Farah won the 10,000 meters was a wonderful collision of electricity.

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Bolt wins social media race

His blistering pace and larger-than-life antics made him the king of the track in London, and bolstered his claims to be a "living legend."

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Olympics: Why Africa fell by the wayside

The Olympics are generally won and lost long before the opening ceremony cauldron is touched by fire.

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Trust the British to get it right

CNN's Richard Quest believes the London Games will be regarded as having brought the Olympics concept home.

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Olympics redefine Britain's view of self

Strategist Alastair Campbell says he never imagined London 2012 would be quite the triumph it turned out to be.

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Olympic closing ceremony in photos

Award-winning director Danny Boyle celebrates the best of British music in London 2012's Olympic Closing Ceremony.

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Olympics' top-10 sporting moments

From Usain Bolt's record-setting achievements to an unexpected Ugandan gold, London 2012 has provided a wide array of highlights.

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Looking back at London 2012

CNN's Amanda Davies recaps the London 2012 Olympics from the opening ceremony on July 27 to the finale on day 16.

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London Olympics: Queen to closing

It's been just over two weeks since the Queen parachuted into London's Olympic Stadium, her apricot dress flapping in the breeze.

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The greatest Olympic distance runner

When the world's top marathon runners bid to win Olympic gold, they would do well to draw inspiration from one of the greatest athletes in the history of track and field.

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Games redefine how Britain sees itself

Alastair Campbell always thought London 2012 would be a success, but never imagined it would be quite the triumph it has turned out to be.

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Genocide survivor's Olympic mission

Adrien Niyonshuti is unlikely to win an Olympic medal, and he will do well to even finish his event, but his story is surely one of the most inspirational.

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Games give London with a golden glow

Olympic fever has cheered up London and made it a more welcoming place, but will optimism be one of the legacies of the Games?

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London 2012: The women's Olympics?

London 2012 is the first Olympics to feature women in every national team, with Jacques Rogge hailing a "major boost for gender equality."

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Gymnast vaults from rags to riches

An impoverished South Korean gymnast has not only struck Olympic gold, but also reaped a \$444,000 donation in a veritable rags to riches tale.

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Golden girl Ennis: I'd do it for nothing

Britain's hero Jessica Ennis is set to cash in after winning heptathlon gold, but the poster girl of the 2012 Olympics says fame is not her motivation.

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China rallies around fallen hurdler Liu

China is rallying around fallen hurdler Liu Xiang after he failed to make it past the first-round heat for a second consecutive Olympics.

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The first Olympic speed queen

The first woman to win Olympic gold almost died in a plane crash, but remarkably returned to run again for the U.S. in 1936.

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Moscow 1980: Death of a dream

Don Paige could not bear to watch the race he knew he could win. The 1980 Moscow Olympics were the death of a dream for many athletes.

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The Underdogs: Olympics' true heroes

While Michael Phelps and Usain Bolt grab the headlines, little-known athletes from around the world keep alive the original spirit of the Olympics.

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Hunger Games: Eat like an Olympian

Athletes spend years eating the right foods ... and then must resist the free fast food in the Olympic village. How do they do it?

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