August 16, 2008

Today's Weather 84°F | 29°C Heat Index: 86°F | 30°C Scattered Thunderstorms

Bird's Nest Stadium Opens for Athletics

AROUND THE RINGS BEIJING

五环旗下

Huge crowds descend on the Bird's Nest venue for the opening day of the athletics program but long lines to enter the stadium led to some spectators missing early heats.

"Some people were here at 6 a.m. (Friday)", said a BOCOG volunteer. Through a loudspeaker, one volunteer tried to direct visitors to access the stadium complex at gate 8 some 200 meters up the road, but to no avail.

"It could have been organized better," said one English woman, who spent 40 minutes in the line with her partner. She was annoyed at missing the first action of the day.

Her partner said he did not notice any ticket scalpers operating in the area.

A U.S. visitor from North Carolina stood in line for 30 minutes outside the gate. "I'm a bit disappointed," he said.

But he was wowed by the Bird's Nest stadium, which was bathed in sunshine on Day Seven of competition at the Games.

"The scale of the stadium is much bigger than you think. It's great," he remarked.

Because of the access issue, people were slow to reach their seats. But by 9:45 a.m. the 91,000-seat stadium was nearly at capacity.

The Olympic flame burned under blue skies and



Sprinters burst from the blocks on the opening day of athletics. / Getty Images

pleasant breezes blew through the stadium, in marked contrast to the stifling humidity of the opening ceremony Aug. 8.

Spectators baking in the hot sunshine used makeshift fans to cool themselves, but most people were shaded by the partial roof covering.

Sprint stars Asafa Powell, Usain Bolt and Tyson Gay were the stars of track and field on the opening

morning of the athletics program. They all qualified comfortably for the second round.

China's Hu Kai, running in heat 6 of the men's 100m, garnered the biggest applause of the morning.

His compatriot, heptathlete Liu Haili, was roared on in the high jump by a boisterous crowd.

- Mark Bisson

Rogge Still Best Man for Job, IOC Members Say

Jacques Rogge remains the best man to lead the International Olympic Committee (IOC) through its future challenges, three IOC members say. They appeared at the latest Around the Rings Newsmaker Breakfast presented by McDonald's on the Beijing Olympic Green.

Rogge, who has been IOC president since 2001, has stated he will decide after the Beijing Games whether he plans to run for re-election for another four year term at the next IOC session in Copenhagen next year.

NEWSMAKER BREAKFAST

"I can only say Jacques (Rogge) was the right person at the right moment and he still is", Danish IOC member Kai Holm said.

"If he were to stand for re-election, in my opinion, there would [be] absolutely no one against him. So he's the president for the next four years I think."

Aruba's IOC member, Nicole Hoevertsz, said she

believes Rogge has continued the work of his predecessor, Juan Antonio Samaranch, in reforming the IOC.

"Juan Antonio Samaranch, I think, was really the person who reformed the IOC and made it what it is right now.

"Jacques Rogge has taken over and changed it and put his style of management into place and he's really good at that. So I really hope and trust that he will go for re-election."

(continued, page 3)

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全世界各民族参加一个和平竞赛,庆祝我们拥有一个美 好并充满青春活力的世界。这次,巴西有史以来最大的 奥运代表团热切希望能亲身感受奥林匹克的价值,并且 荣幸地期待上百万的巴西体育爱好者的支持。

里约2016年奧运申办委员会、巴西奧委会衷心祝贺中 国人民和北京奥运组委会出色地准备了2008北京奥运 会,让205个国家奥委会的一万多个运动员梦想成真。

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Beijing Venues Nothing Short of 'Stunning'

(continued from cover)

Asked whether there were any suitable female candidates for the leadership, Hoevertsz, who has strongly supported the push for more women in the IOC membership, said, "absolutely."

Monaco IOC member Prince Albert said Rogge's poise, determination and commitment have greatly benefited the organization.

"He has made incredible advances for the IOC", he said

"President Rogge will continue to be our president for the next four years."

Prince Albert, Hoevertsz and Holm went on to share their opinions about the Games and the future of the IOC.

Ed Hula (EH): What are your thoughts on the Beijing Games so far?

Prince Albert (PA): My first impressions are very positive and I think our Chinese friends have made incredible efforts to make these Games successful. Obviously, in the first couple of days there are always some little glitches; but, generally, the operations are running very well.

Nicole Hoevertsz (NH): The venues are what have impressed me the most. We've all been to several Games before and have seen beautiful stadiums, but what the Chinese and Beijing have done is amazing.

And I would like to highlight the volunteers. I think they are very well prepared. For them it's really difficult because English is a language that they don't command that well, but they've made an outstanding effort to welcome guests from all over the world.

Kai Holm (KH): I've been around to the venues and they are absolutely world class, all of them. I've seen nowhere where they're better, so it's been stunning.

We had some phony spectators, they sat around in small groups, some in yellow shirts, some in red shirts and so on. They have one thing in common - they do not understand the rules of the game.

EH: Kai Holm, you're leaving the IOC this year. What are your thoughts on what you think the IOC will have to do to make it better?

KH: We had some very harsh rules placed upon us after the scandals of Salt Lake City and it gave some severe restrictions on how we were going to develop in the future.

We have to loosen those rules. We have to adapt to the new future. We are just in between being a business and a club and it doesn't work in the long run.



Prince Albert, Nicole Hoevertsz and Kai Holm were guests at the Around the Rings Newsmaker Breakfast. (ATR)

The ATR Newsmaker Breakfasts present opinionmakers and leaders of the Olympic Movement in an informal, question and answer setting.

Three more programs are scheduled through the Beijing Olympics: a sponsor roundtable (Aug. 17), Sochi 2014 CEO Dmitry Chernyshenko (Aug. 19) and the four cities campaigning for the 2016 Olympics (Aug. 23).

Questions for our guests can also be e-mailed ahead of each event to: newsmaker@aroundtherings.com.

Full story available at www.aroundtherings.com

- ATR Staff

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Today's Highlights

• **10 a.m.** – The vice minister of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission holds a press conference about the human rights of national minorities; followed at 2:30 by a press conference on the Qinghai-Tibet railway given by executives of its management **c**ompany. Both at BIMC.

• **5 p.m.** – Media Appearance. Zhang Lian-wei, the first Chinese golfer to win the PGA European tour. Venue; Omega Pavilion.

Quote of the Day

"The cheats are not way ahead. We are on the heels of those who try to cheat. My interpretation is that there is a fairly low number halfway through the Games, that it is a feature of increased awareness in the sports population that doping is unacceptable. I see the figures rather encouraging than showing anything else."

- Arne Ljungqvist, chair of the IOC Medical Commission

Main Press Centre

• Note: No joint IOC/BOCOG press briefing today

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- **12:00** The Beijing Women's Association holds a group interview on Women and the Beijing Games. Hall 1.
- **2 p.m.** Press conference. Chinese enterprises and the Games. Executives from Olympic sponsors. Hall 1.
- **4 p.m.** A vice minister from the National Copyright Administration talks about the status of the copyright system in China. Hall 1.

Coming Up!

• Aug 17, 8 a.m. – ATR Newsmaker breakfast. Sponsor Roundtable - GE, Panasonic, Samsung and McDonald's representatives talk about the benefits of Games sponsorship, marketing and presence in China. Venue: McDonald's, Olympic Green, north end.

2008 Medal Projections

	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total		Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
U.S.	49	23	35	107	Spain	7	5	9	21
China	42	22	28	92	Belarus	6	2	6	14
Russia	29	33	26	88	Netherlands	5	5	13	23
Great Britain	19	8	20	47	Poland	5	4	6	15
Germany	18	13	19	50	Kenya	5	3	5	13
Australia	12	11	14	37	Hungary	4	7	6	17
Italy	10	14	11	35	New Zealand	4	6	1	11
Korea	10	11	7	28	Czech Republic	4	5	2	11
France	9	17	12	38	Cuba	3	9	5	17
Japan	8	7	18	33	Canada	3	5	2	10

Based on results in recent World Championships. Projections are by Luciano Barra, former director of sport for the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI), and deputy CEO of TOROC 2006. Barra has been projecting medal counts for 10 years by analyzing past performances.



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Event of the Day: Gymnastics Enters New Age

A famous gold medalist says that Nastia Liukin's gold medal Friday in the women's all-around gymnastics competition was a victory for artistry over acrobatics under the controversial new code of points for the sport. And, it may have been an endorsement of age over youth.

Liukin, who will turn 19 in October, and U.S. teammate Shawn Johnson, 16, outscored bronze medalist Yang Yilin, one of three Chinese gymnasts whose age has been disputed.

"What happened today was great for the sport of gymnastics," Bart Conner, Olympic gold medalist and television commentator, told Around the Rings. "Although I love Shawn Johnson and she's a wonderful athlete, the fact today was a competition between the acrobat and the artist and the artist won out. I think that's good for gymnastics."

Conner said the code of points rewards acrobatic skills. It divides the judgment of a routine into difficulty and execution and eliminates the 10-point scoring scale.

Now Olympic gymnasts typically score from 13 to 16 points. Yang's 16.725 on uneven bars was the high score in Friday's competition.

"Some of us were afraid when we saw the new code that it would take away from the artistry of gymnastics, the reason being, 'How do you quantify artistry?" Conner said.

"In an attempt to make the rules more quantifiable and to take some of the subjectivity out of it, they basically assigned a point value for each skill. So when the coaches and athletes build a routine, they just look through the book and they pick skills that give them the most points."

He said artistry has become an afterthought. "There's no reason to do a beautiful move if it has no number next to it," he said.

The code of points goes hand-in-hand with gymnastics' age eligibility rules that say a gymnast must be 16 or turn 16 in the Olympic year to qualify. Some reports said that Yang will turn 15 this year, not 16. Two of her teammates on the gold-medal winning Chinese team are also suspected to be underage. Conner said there is talk within the International Gymnastics Federation of raising the minimum age to 18.



All-around champion Nastia Liukin competing for her gold. / Getty Images

"I think the code issue is a problem because the code rewards acrobatics and acrobatics are more easily done by a young, small person which means a younger person," he said. "If they're trying to raise the age, and at the same time require a high level of acrobatics, those things work against each other."

Conner believes that instead of raising the age to 18, gymnastics should roll it back to its previous minimum of 14.

"That's how it was when Nadia [Comaneci, his wife] won [in 1976 for Romania]," Conner said.

"I think that raising the age was a statement that the international gymnastics federation was saying, 'We're trying to protect our athletes.' But I feel that it doesn't cause the coaches to push less in the training, because if you're going to be great by 16, you need to be great by 12. I don't think it has caused coaches to say, 'We have to slow up the progress of this athlete because she's not going to be age eligible anyway.""

FIG President Bruno Grandi said earlier this week that there has been "good progress" made toward increasing the age of female gymnasts.

"I believe these ladies have the possibility to develop the artistic part and not only the acrobatic part," he said.

But he believes attention to difficulty has increased too much. "I'd like for gymnastics to remain artistic," he said.

"Our sport is artistic gymnastics. We can't lose this artistic element, because it's not only one biomechanical performance."

A Full House for Gymnastics

Unlike the Athens Olympics, where large blocks of seats were empty, the folding-fan-shaped National Indoor Stadium was full for the women's all-around final. Before a vocal crowd in the 18,000 seat arena, spectators alternated chants of "China! China!," with "USA! USA!"

"You've got to love it," Steve Penny, president of USA Gymnastics told ATR. "Obviously gymnastics is at the forefront of these Games. I heard tickets were going for up to \$2,000 for the event today."

Penny said the arena was set up with the athletes in mind. The warm-up gym is adjacent and has podiums to help the athletes get better accustomed to the conditions they'll face.

"They've done everything you could possibly do to prepare this for optimal performance," Penny said. "I think they've set a new standard for what Olympic facilities should be for gymnastics."

He said it didn't have the accoutrements of other arenas, like the LED board going around in the basketball facility, because it was recently built. He expected more features to be added later.



Yang Yilin on the vault / Getty Images

Changes to the Sport

The Beijing Games also marked the Olympic debut of a system for scoring inquiries using video review.

FIG is also considering teams made up of five gymnasts instead of six.

That also worries Conner, who won two Olympic gold medals in 1984.



Olympic champions Nadia Comaneci and Bart Conner. (ATR)

"Sport is getting more and more exclusive," he remarked.

He considered only 10 women and eight men contenders for all-around medals. "So you're getting fewer and fewer people that have a chance," he commented. "Reducing the numbers hurts us, no question about it, because you've got 5 million kids in the United States doing gymnastics and six can make the Olympics. Now if it's only five, there's one less position to dream about."

- ATR Staff

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On the Scene in Beijing: Press Briefings Cut

The often contentious press conferences held by BOCOG and the IOC will take a break from the regular schedule this weekend. No briefing will be held Saturday. The next one is scheduled for Sunday morning.



Communications Director Giselle Davies. (ATR)

A dearth of news may be part of the reason. But avoiding the daily barrage of queries about protests, Tibet and other issues said to be "outside the remit" of BOCOG and the IOC may be another reason. Questions about political points have become a fixture at the daily briefings.

Just as the Olympics in China are like none other, these new briefings are in a league of their own.

The Games spokesmen start digging their own hole with the media by keeping them waiting. While briefings are scheduled for 11 a.m., the actual start time has been in flux since Day One of the Games when the first began at least 15 minutes late. Now scheduled officially for 11:15, the extra 15 minutes still doesn't produce on-time starts.

In Friday's briefing Wang Wei, BOCOG vice president, dealt with questions about the latest protests by Tibet activists, using Chinese for his answers to keep them precise. While such a topic is one of those outside the remit of BOCOG and the IOC, he glibly explained Chinese policy on Tibet.

But he was still unable to summon information from relevant authorities on the number of applications Beijing authorities have approved for Games protests, pointing out for the third day in a row that the question involves an area outside BOCOG's authority. This non-answer is typical fodder of the briefings, where the Olympic spokesmen often say they don't know the answers to the more controversial questions – or even benign ones.



A common scene on the Common Domain. (ATR)

IOC spokeswoman Giselle Davies, after mentioning that "no Games are perfect," was pressed by a reporter to explain what BOCOG had done wrong so far; the inference drawn by the journalist that the IOC had some criticisms, which Davies said the IOC did not.

Reporters holding on to the microphone to ask follow-up questions drew rebukes from BOCOG press chief Sun Weide, who had to raise his voice at one time to press the point, rejecting the entreaty of the journalist that follow-ups were a right of press conferences. Davies refused to answer one question until the mic had been handed over to the microphone usher.

In all, nearly three dozen questions, most of little import to the Games, were posed in the Friday briefing which ran the course of an hour. Of course, it started 30 minutes late.

Two Athletes Kicked Out for Doping

The IOC expels two more drug cheats from the Beijing Olympics, bringing the number of athletes kicked out of the Games to three.

North Korean pistol shooter Kim Jong-Su tested positive for propanolol after winning silver in the 50meter pistol and bronze in the 10-meter air pistol. The banned betablocker can be used to prevent trembling, important in sports such as shooting.

Vietnamese gymnast Thi Ngan Thuong Do, who finished last in the women's floor exercise, tested positive for the diuretic furosemide.

The latest positive doping cases come after Spanish cyclist Maria Isabel Moreno was expelled from the Games earlier this week after testing positive for EPO.

The IOC said Friday that 2,203 drug tests have been carried out in its largest ever crackdown on doping at an Olympics. This includes 1,720 urine and 483 blood tests and covers the period July 27 to Aug. 13. In precompetition controls, 1,250 tests were performed.

The IOC is carrying out 4,500 drug tests in Beijing; testing takes place at 41 doping control stations, 34 in Beijing and seven in the co-host cities.

Glowing Reviews of Olympic Village

Beijing's Olympic Village has received wide acclaim from its residents and visitors since it opened July 27. Deng Yaping, deputy director of the Olympic Village department, said Friday that she had received 49 letters of praise from different countries as of Aug 14.

Some 14,268 athletes and officials from 204 national Olympic committees have been received in 9,993 guest rooms in the 42 apartment buildings, he said.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and Australian PM Kevin Rudd are among the 62 governmental leaders, royal



Team New Zealand relaxes in Olympic Village. / Getty Images

representatives and other international dignitaries to have visited.

Deng said the main dining hall has served a total of 273,627 athletes and officials; it served the most guests on one day in the history of the Olympics on Aug. 8, day of the opening ceremony, when 18,634 guests dined in the hall from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. It broke the record of serving 10,515 guests during the same period at the 2004 Games.

Deng said a meeting with all the chef de missions is held every other day to resolve any issues of concern. While admitting "we have been dealing with a number of problems every day," she did not elaborate on the nature of the problems.

"So far we haven't received one single letter of complaint," she told reporters.



Mongolian judo gold medalist Tuvshinbayar Naidan / Getty Images

Mongolia Wins First Gold

Tuvshinbayar Naidan has won Mongolia's first gold medal in the Olympics. His win in the men's 100 kg judo event Thursday sparked scenes of joyous celebrations in the streets of capital Ulan Bator.

Thousands of Mongolians filled the central square, where in June demonstrators protested election results and five were killed during clashes with police. Naidan's victory was toasted with vodka by flag-waving Mongolians, while cars sounded their horns to salute his achievement.

He beat Kazakhstan's Askhat Zhitkeyev to become Olympic champion, after earlier ousting the favorite, Japan's Keiji Suzuki. Zhitkeyev's silver is Kazakhstan's first Olympic medal in judo.

- ATR Staff

Beijing Photo Gallery



Daigoro Timoncini of Italy (red) competes with Aslanbek Khushtov of Russia. / Getty Images



The Bird's Nest rejoined Olympics headlines as athletics began on day seven. / Getty Images



Brazil's Renata Ribeiro (L) smashes ball against Greece's Vassiliki Arvaniti. / Getty Images



Norwegian Ida Marcussen prepares for the shot put. /Getty Images



Italy's Jahyn Vittorio Parrinello (R) fights against Thailand's Worapoj Petchkoom / Getty Images

10



Asbel Kipruto Kiprop of Kenya won his 1500m heat, but was nearly 10 seconds off the fastest time of the day. / Getty Images

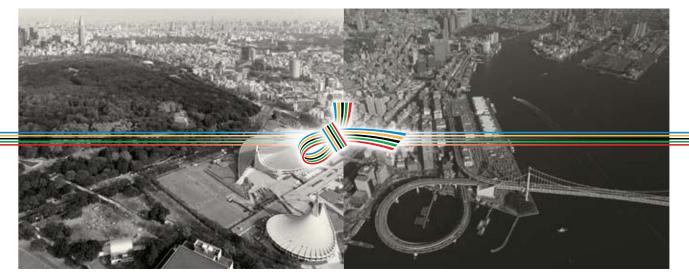
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	Events	Time	Venue		Events	Time	Venue
Athletics	Heats and qualifiers: M: 3000m steeplechase, discus, long jump; W: shot put, pole vault, 100m, 400m, and heptathlon long jump, javelin and 800m. Semifinals: M: 100m, 400m hurdles; W:	9:00 – 14:00, 19:00 – 23:30	National Stadium	Football	M: quarterfinals	18:00 – 21:00, 21:00 – 00:00	Early: Beijing Workers' Stadium, Shenyang Olympic Stadium. Late: Shanghai Stadium, Qinhuangdao Olympic Stadium
				Fencing	W: team foil competition and medal rounds	9:00 – 16:50, 18:00 – 21:20	Fencing Hall
	walk, 100m; W: shot put, heptathlon.			Gymnastics - Trampoline	M/W: qualifiers	11:00 - 14:00	National Indoor Stadium
Badminton	match. M: doubles	10:00 – 13:00, 18:30 – 22:30	BJUT Gymnasium	Handball	M: preliminaries	9:00 – 12:15, 14:00 – 17:15, 19:00 – 22:15	OSC Gymnasium
				Hockey	W: pool matches	9:00 – 12:15, 14:00 – 17:15	Olympic Green Hockey Stadium
Baseball	medal rounds; W: singles medal rounds Preliminaries	10:30 – 12:30, 18:00 – 20:00	Wukesong Baseball Field	Rowing	M: eight, LWT double sculls; W: LWT double sculls. Medal rounds: M: single sculls, double sculls, pair, four. W: single sculls, double	14:00 – 18:30	SY Rowing- Canoeing Park
Basketball	M: preliminaries	9:00 – 13:00, 14:30 – 18:30, 20:00 – 00:00	Olympic Basketball Gymnasium	Sailing	sculls pair. M/W: RS:X, 470. Races: star, tornado, laser radial. Medal races : finn, yngling	13:00 - 17:00	Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center
Beach Volleyball	W/M rounds	9:00 – 13:00, 18:00 – 22:00	Chaoyang Park BV Ground				
Boxing	M: fly, middle, light fly	13:30 – 17:30,	Workers'	Shooting	M: skeet and 25m rapid fire pistol competition and medal rounds	9:00 - 16:15	Beijing Shooting Range CTF
	rounds W: ind. pursuit.	19:00 -23:00	Gymnasium	Softball	Preliminaries	9:30 - 14:00, 17:00 - 21:30	Fengtai Softball Field
Cycling - Track	Competition and finals: M: points, ind. pursuit, keirin	16:30 – 20:30	Laoshan Velodrome	Swimming	Semifinals: W: 50m freestyle. Finals: M: 100m butterfly, 50m	10:00 - 12:00	National Aquatics Center
Diving	Women's 3m Springboard Semifinal	20:00 - 21:00	National Aquatics Center		freestyle W: 200m backstroke, 800m freestyle		
Equestrian	Dressage Individual Grand Prix Special	19:00 – 20:30	нк	Tennis	W: doubles. M: doubles gold medal match	16:00 – 19:00	Olympic Green Tennis Center

W = Women / M = Men

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