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THE COMEBACK QUEEN

JOSH KERR
MASTERING MEDAL SUCCESS

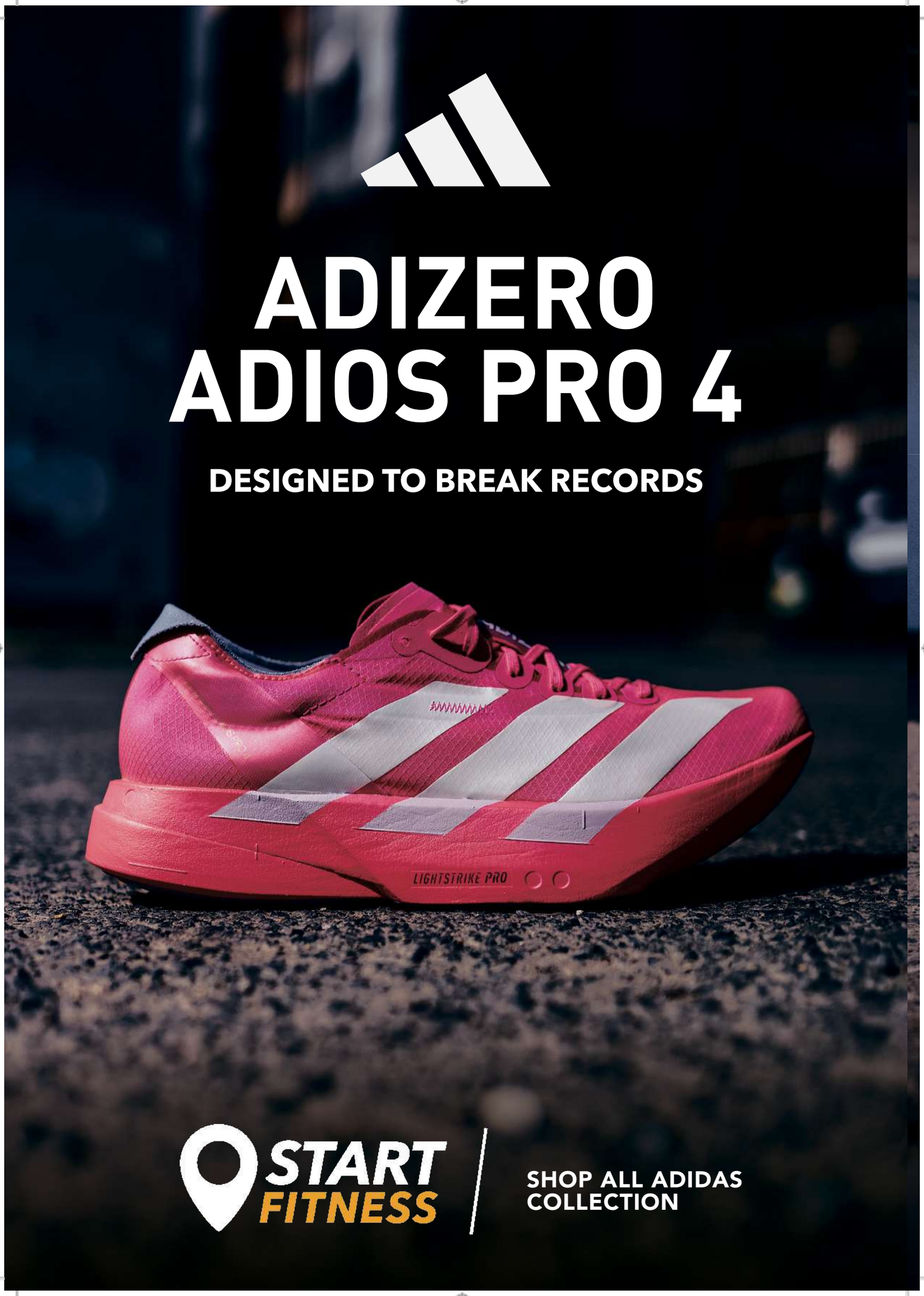
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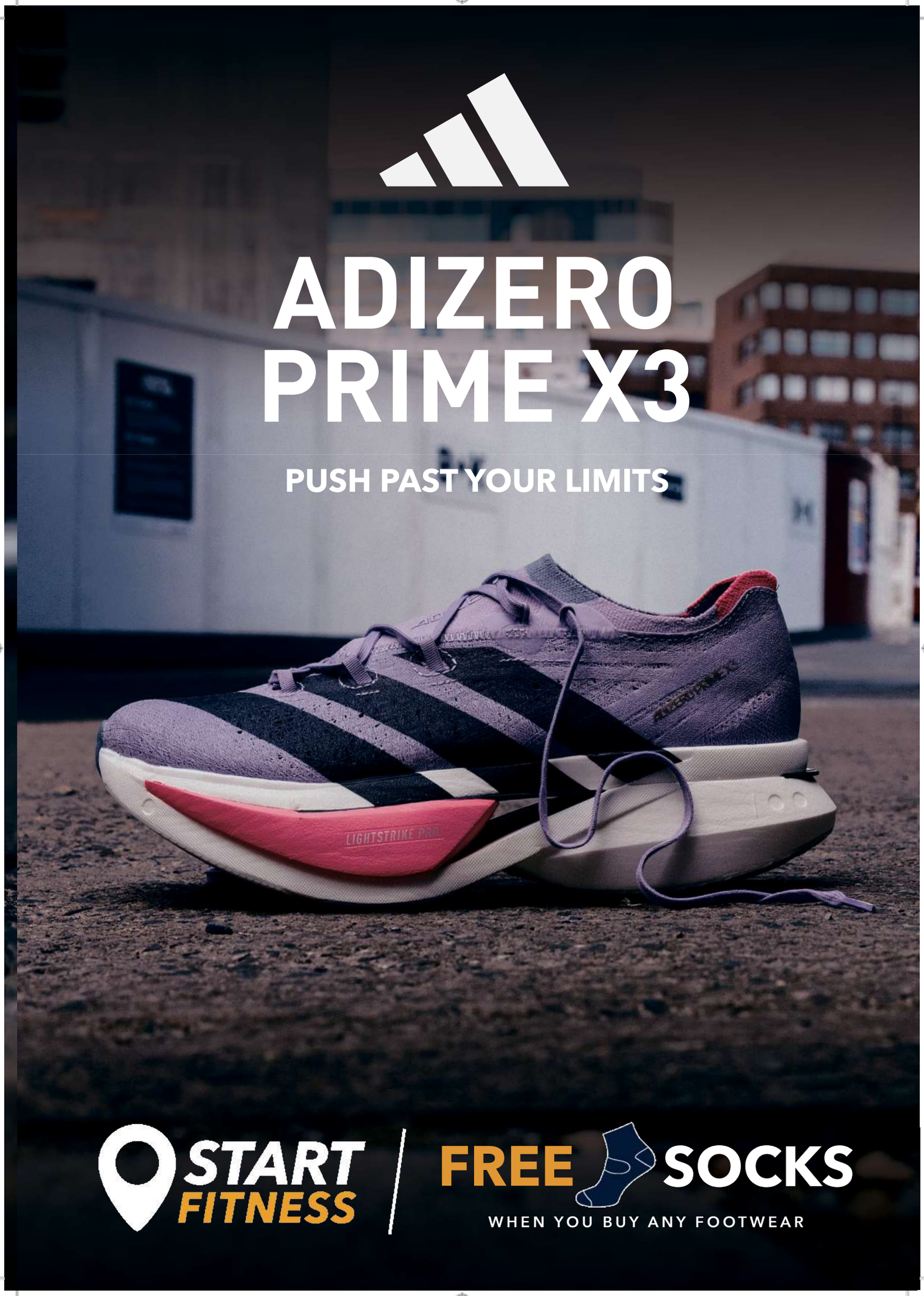
TOKYO STORY

STARS READY TO WRITE THE NEXT CHAPTER IN ATHLETICS HISTORY IN JAPAN



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EARNING THE RIGHT



Euan Crumley
AW Editorial Director

It's a curious thing when something you have been anticipating and looking forward to for so long can both seemingly take an age to arrive, yet be upon you in a flash. And so it is with the 2025 World Athletics Championships in Tokyo.

Mention of the city makes my mind naturally leap first towards memories of 1991 – Mike Powell and all that (see our flashback feature on p54) – rather than the outright oddity of the covid-afflicted Olympics of 2021.

"The funniest part about it is that it just felt like no one was watching," says Josh Kerr, who won 1500m bronze at those Games and returns to Japan as the defending world champion. "It didn't feel like that big a deal. I don't really have a phone for the two weeks [of a championships]. I'm checking in a little bit with family and so on but, from the social media side, or from a general world view, I was very surprised after the fact of going on my interviews and [finding that] people cared. That was a bit weird but, overall, I think Japan is ready to host a proper championships again."

The feedback should be considerably more immediate when the athletes compete in the National Stadium this time around, the culmination of a huge amount of effort just to get there in the first place – whether it's been possible to follow a long-term plan to the letter or, in the case of people such as Keely Hodgkinson and Jakob Ingebrigtsen, overcome the mind-numbing and brutal graft of injury recovery. Don't let anyone tell you that athletics isn't an incredibly hard sport.

This is the moment when everyone really gets to show off, to demonstrate to the world what they're capable of, to express themselves. Winging it won't work, though, and in today's environment where the finest of margins make the world of difference, you won't find many people getting on to a global podium thanks to a fluke.

"You've got to earn your moments, and we've got to earn the impression of it looking easy," says Kerr, who provides some great insight into his approach and preparations on p46. "They say that overnight success takes about 12 years, right? So it's that consistency and these moments of hard work that allow me to make the right decisions at the right time, when things are the toughest."

In this issue, we've tried to give you as much information and background as possible so that you, too, feel fully prepared for settling down to watch it all unfold in the land of the rising sun. Let's hope the sport and its stars can shine in its spotlight. Enjoy the magazine and enjoy the championships. AW

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NEXT MONTH
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS REVIEW
ON SALE OCTOBER 10

PICTURE THIS

SEVILLE SCORCHES THROUGH THE STORM

On a night of incessant rain at the Lausanne Diamond League (August 20), Oblique Seville defied the elements to clock a swift 9.87 (-0.3) as he beat Olympic champion Noah Lyles by 15 hundredths of a second.

The Jamaican announced himself as a real contender at the World Championships in Tokyo next month as he produced an assured performance to see off a quality field that also included British record-holder Zharnel Hughes, who finished fifth in 10.09.





PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES



THE MONTH IN NUMBERS

A look back at some of the biggest news and best performances of recent weeks

2.00m

Morgan Lake achieved a significant milestone at the Diamond League final in Zürich on August 27, where six field event finals were staged in front of a lively crowd on the city streets. She cleared 2.00m in the women's high jump to finish third and break new ground in British athletics history.

It was a breakthrough moment for Lake, who became the first British woman ever to join the two-metre club. The clearance surpassed her own national record of 1.99m, set indoors in 2023 in Hustopeče.

She said: "I feel like it's something I've dreamed about for so long and I've visualised myself going over two metres over and over again and I was starting to think: 'Will I ever jump it?'. I knew I would, I just didn't know when I would."

Nicola Olyslagers of Australia took the win with an Oceania record of 2.04m.

ABOVE: Morgan Lake broke her British record in Zurich

8:07.04

With 8:07.04 at the Diamond League in Poland on August 16, Faith Kipyegon came within less than a second of beating Wang Junxia's controversial and long-standing world 3000m record.

The Chinese runner clocked 8:06.11 in Beijing in 1993 but the performance is one of the most dubious in the record books amid allegations that her training group, which was run by coach Ma Junren, took drugs.

Beatrice Chebet, the world 5000m and 10,000m record-holder from Kenya, came close to the 3000m record this summer with 8:11.56, but the world 1500m and mile record-holder Kipyegon came even closer this weekend, narrowly missing the mark by 93 hundredths of a second.

4:40.13

At the Brussels Diamond League on August 22 Winfred Yavi ran the fastest time ever in the new women's one mile steeplechase with 4:40.13. The event is due to be classified as a world record event soon but the jury is still out over how popular it will be.

11.22

Kelly Doualla does not turn 16 until November but on the second day of the European Under-20 Championships in Tampere (August 8) she scorched away from her older rivals to win the women's 100m title in style.

The Italian sprint prodigy clocked 11.22 (-0.1) ahead of runner-up Mabel Akande as the British athlete ran 11.41 in front of bronze medallist Uliana Stepaniuk of Ukraine.

The winner's full name of Kelly Ann Maevane Doualla Edimo was inspired by Jamaican sprint legend Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce. Certainly, if she continues her progression she could follow in Fraser-Pryce's footsteps. AW

BELOW: Kelly Doualla



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There's nothing quite like a home championships to bring out the best in athletes and Birmingham 2026 will present the perfect opportunity for the Great Britain and Northern Ireland team to shine on the track and in the field from August 10-16.

Many of the stars who are currently preparing for the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo are planning to compete in the West Midlands next summer and there's no replacement for being there in person to see the best run, jump and throw.

Birmingham 26 represents the first time that the European Championships have been staged in Britain and the team will be looking to build on their already impressive history in the event. At the last edition, in Rome last June, next year's host finished third in the medals table, with Keely Hodgkinson and Dina Asher-Smith striking gold in the women's 800m and 100m respectively, as well as the women's 4x100m and half marathon teams coming away with the top prize.

Birmingham 26 tickets go general sale on September 10 at 10am BST and you will find the full timetable at birmingham26.com, allowing you to plan your spectating schedule.

There will be top-class action right from the off, with the entire women's 100m competition unfolding on the first day of competition (August 10), while the same applies to the men's 100m on day two (August 11).

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CRAIG **PICKERING**

MY GREATEST RACE

Golden Spike, Ostrava, June 17, 2009, 100m, second place, 10.08 (2.1)

For a few precious seconds, the European indoor 60m silver medallist left Usain Bolt in his wake. The Jamaican came past to take victory while the Briton celebrated second, and a personal best, before the wind gauge removed some of the sheen

The 2008 Olympics in Beijing didn't go well. At the start of that year, I pulled my hamstring and tore it reasonably badly straight after the national championships indoors. I came back, raced in Turin and I pulled it again there. It was about six weeks away from the Olympic selection at that point.

I managed to just qualify by coming third at the trials and running the qualifying time but I didn't make the semis at the Games, coming 18th overall. Then, in the 4x100m relay, I went early, and the team was disqualified as a result. Off the back of that, I was hoping for a really good 2009.

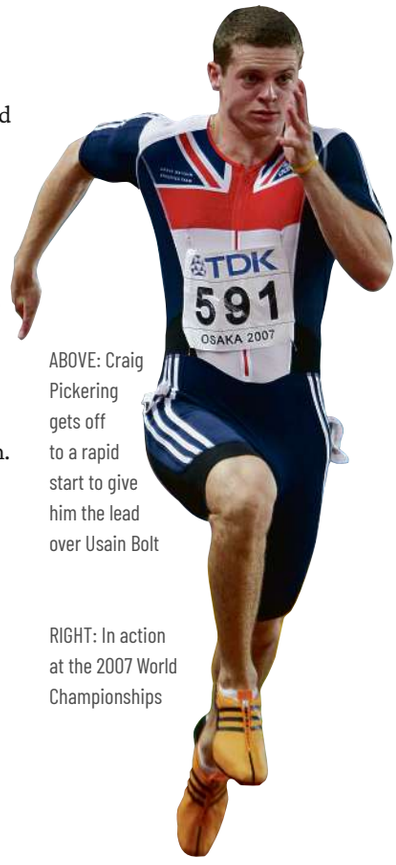
I was probably trying a bit too hard. The indoor season hadn't gone quite as well as I'd hoped. I'd won the silver medal at the European Indoors in 2007 but I was fifth in 2009.

I started off outdoors with a wind-assisted run of 10.16 in Belgrade before going to Geneva and getting beaten by James Dasaolu and Harry Aikines-Aryeetey. I was a little bit frustrated by that. Things weren't going particularly well.

I arrived in Ostrava, and everything was focused on Usain Bolt. I was maybe the sixth-fastest person in the race. I knew it was on TV and I was just thinking: "Everyone's going to see this, and my great fear is if it doesn't go well, I'm going to get found out quite quickly." My main motivation was to try and get a really good start, put people under pressure a little bit and see how I went.

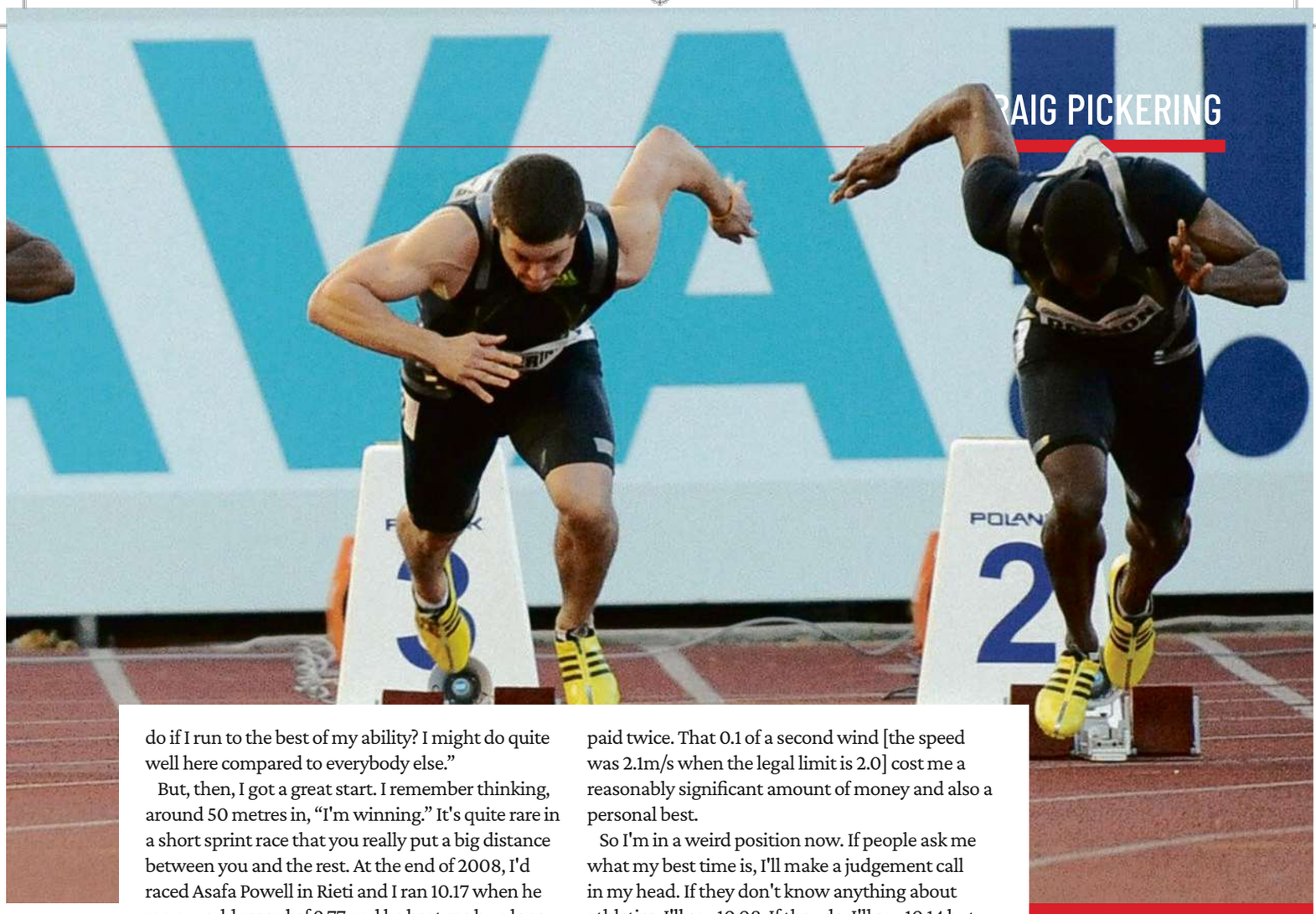
The whole competition was set up for Bolt. There was a countdown clock to the race in the stadium which was continually on the big screen. Even when we were waiting to go on the track, for ten minutes, the camera was just on him the whole time.

In the call room itself, he's quite relaxed, whereas you know you're not going to win the race. I'm thinking: "The best I can come here is second." It kind of reduces that pressure. It does really focus you on: "I can't win but what can I



ABOVE: Craig Pickering gets off to a rapid start to give him the lead over Usain Bolt

RIGHT: In action at the 2007 World Championships



do if I run to the best of my ability? I might do quite well here compared to everybody else."

But, then, I got a great start. I remember thinking, around 50 metres in, "I'm winning." It's quite rare in a short sprint race that you really put a big distance between you and the rest. At the end of 2008, I'd raced Asafa Powell in Rieti and I ran 10.17 when he ran a world record of 9.77 and he beat me by a long way. I was also in the race when Dwain Chambers broke the European 60m record and that's the most I've ever lost a 60m by. Usually people are quite close to you.

In Ostrava, when I was winning at 60m, I was thinking: "I'm winning this." And then Usain just flew past me in the last 40m. He was so far ahead of me. It just made it really clear that that the last 40m was where he was going to do all his damage.

And the amount of damage he could do to everybody, including me, was just phenomenal. It wasn't something I had particularly experienced before. I had raced him once or twice before, but I wasn't really in contention. Just seeing him go away from me was incredible.

As I crossed the line, I thought: "I've run quite quickly there." And then I think it came up as being wind-assisted, even before my time came up. I was like: "Okay, this isn't going to count." In my contract at the time, I had time bonuses, which had to be legal. If you get it, that time bonus then gets added to your retainer the next year, so you basically get paid twice. That 0.1 of a second wind [the speed was 2.1m/s when the legal limit is 2.0] cost me a reasonably significant amount of money and also a personal best.

So I'm in a weird position now. If people ask me what my best time is, I'll make a judgement call in my head. If they don't know anything about athletics, I'll say 10.08. If they do, I'll say 10.14 but that I have run a slightly wind-assisted 10.08.

Prior to then, the Jamaicans had one or two good athletes, but not necessarily over a consistent period of time and they probably lost some of their better athletes to other countries as well. But then Asafa Powell came through first, followed by Usain Bolt. After that there would just be Jamaicans that you hadn't even heard of coming through.

So my reflection now is that 2005, 2006 and 2007 were probably not great sprint years, which is why I started to stand out a little bit. My times wouldn't get me anywhere now, but then they were doing not too badly. In 2008 it just kind of exploded with loads of different talent and 2009 was when Bolt took it even further and just extended from there. A lot of the British sprinters started doing really well and 10.00, even sub-10, became quite common.

Even so, in Ostrava, I was winning that race. I'm still not sure if that actually is how it played out like in real life, but it was just an amazing experience all round. AW

As told to Mark Woods

> **THE AMOUNT OF DAMAGE USAIN COULD DO TO EVERYBODY WAS JUST PHENOMENAL. IT WASN'T SOMETHING I HAD EXPERIENCED BEFORE**

FACTFILE

Born: October 16, 1996

Events: 60m/100m/200m

PBs: 6.55/10.14/20.89

International honours

2007: World Championships 4x100m relay bronze; European Indoor Championships 60m silver; European U23 Championships 100m silver and 4x100m relay gold

2005: European U20 Championships 100m gold

2003: World U18 Championships 100m bronze

RISING STAR

CHARLOTTE **HENRICH**

FACTFILE

Age: 19

Club: Invicta East Kent/ Blackheath & Bromley

Coach: Nigel Stickings

Event: 400m

PB: 51.68

Jasmine Collett talks to the emerging 400m talent about keeping the faith, overcoming self doubt and fulfilling her ambition of winning European U20 gold

Charlotte Henrich was riding high this summer after storming to second place in the British 400m at the London Diamond League – clocking a personal best in a competitive field.

That was already a standout moment in itself but what could make the season even better? How about winning gold at the European U20 Championships – and doing it with another PB? That time of 51.68 didn't just secure her the top spot on the podium in Tampere, it also propelled the 19-year-old to second on the UK all-time under-20 list, just behind Yemi Mary John.

Henrich came into the championships with high expectations and clear intent. After winning European under-18 gold in 2022, nothing less than first place was going to satisfy her – and she delivered exactly that.

The choice to train with a talented and competitive group, featuring Olympic medallist Sam Reardon, clearly contributed to her gold medal-winning performance and is providing the platform from which to excel.

How was your experience at the European U20 Championships?

I was really nervous before the heats. I've cried before every single race and I didn't cry before my heat or my semi, which I was really proud of myself for. I was so nervous because I thought: "If I don't get through the heats, then what's the point of me being here?". I really wanted that medal.

Once I got through the heats, it wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be. I felt so good and it was a confidence boost because I felt ready and in shape. I've had a couple of niggles so I just felt healthy and happy to be there.



How did you feel in the final?

I was doubting myself, [worrying] that I had run too fast in the heat and in the semi. But I had to remind myself I did feel pretty good. I saw my coach [Nigel Stickings] before the final and we sat by the river and had a chat about the race but, before that, I was very nervous. I knew how much I wanted to win so, once I was on the start line, I just knew that that was all I wanted to come here and do. I knew I'd be disappointed with second.

I remember asking my coach during my warm-up how [British team-mate] Lyla Belshaw had done in the 1500m. He told me she won and that made me feel good because we had had breakfast together that morning, we had shaken hands and said we were going to win because we both won the under-18s so we both needed to win the under-20s.

How did it feel to run that personal best of 51.68?

I knew I'd won but I double checked



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

the screen just to make sure and then I saw the time and I was really happy. Going into it, I knew I had it in me to run a PB because of how training was going. It was just a matter of executing the race. It didn't matter what time I ran, though, I just really wanted to win.

How do you reflect on this year?
The whole year hasn't been too easy, because I'm a drama queen and if anything [bad] happens I think my athletics career is done. I had an Achilles injury in January and my Achilles had been playing up after some competitions so I've had to pull out of a couple races. There was a time when I thought I wasn't going to run this year but it has been more than I could have wished for.

How did you first get into athletics?
My PE teacher in Year Eight told me to join an athletics club because I was winning races. I didn't really want to go but my friend was there so I thought: "Okay, fine". We messed around for a couple of years and then I joined a more serious sprint group. I started doing 300s and in Year 10 I came third at the UK School Games and everything changed after that because I thought: "I am actually good at something".

> **THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I THOUGHT I WASN'T GOING TO RUN THIS YEAR BUT IT HAS BEEN MORE THAN I COULD HAVE WISHED FOR**

I was more focused after that and then, the year after, I won the European U18s. But the year after that, I didn't run a PB and I spoke to everyone around and realised I should be training more because I was only training three times a week. I changed coaching groups and ever since then it's been absolutely unbelievable.

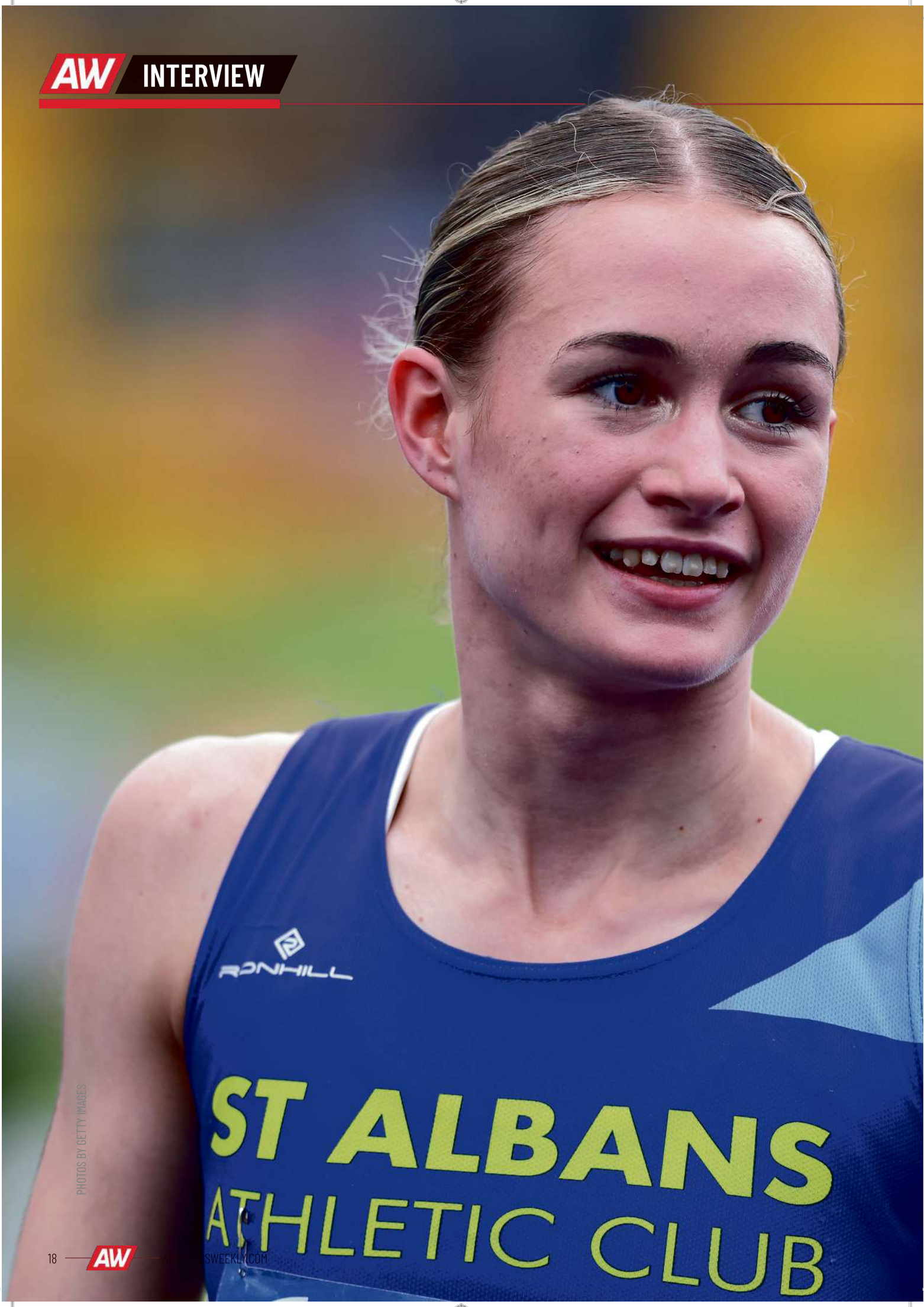
How much has your training set-up helped you get to where you are now?
I cannot express enough how I have the best coach and the best training group ever.

I train with Lucy Tallon, who came second in the 200m at the European U20s, Holly Mpassy, who was part of the 4x400m team at the European U23s, and Sam Reardon, who went to the Olympics. If you had told me four years ago that I'd be training with an Olympian I'd have thought: "That's sick".

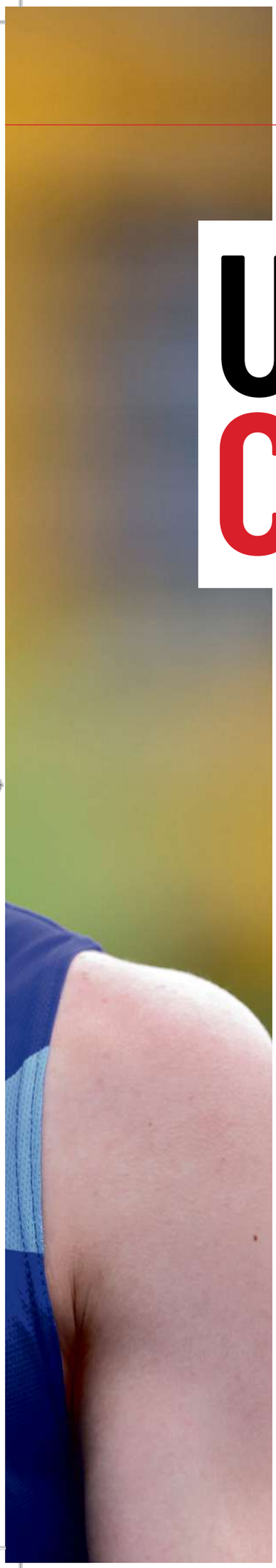
I'm so proud of everyone. We have so much fun, we should probably be a little bit more serious but we genuinely just mess about.

My coach is more than just a coach. If I ever need anything, he's always there for me and it's just so nice to have that support. I do have to travel a lot because I live an hour-and-a-half away from training but it's so worth it.

If you could go back and talk to your younger self, what would you say?
Enjoy it and take in everything, because you are about to have the most incredible five years of your life. You're going to have so much fun. And talk to everybody, because everyone is so interesting and you're about to make the most incredible friends ever. AW



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES



UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE

After her unforgettable Olympic year, Phoebe Gill is about to embark on a new adventure in Edinburgh, spearheading a new and highly ambitious performance project, writes **Euan Crumley**

The life-changing experiences are coming thick and fast for Phoebe Gill. This time last year, the teenager was still digesting her appearance at the Paris Olympics and the end of a whirlwind summer in which she had become the senior British 800m champion and European under-18 record-holder.

Now, after a rather quieter sporting time – due not just to her recovery from a fibula stress fracture, but also a strong focus on her A levels – she is preparing for another landmark event. University beckons and the St Albans athlete is venturing north, to Scotland, to further her education both on and off the track.

She has become the first major signing for the University of Edinburgh's ambitious Global Endurance Project, being led by renowned coach and 1988 Olympic 3000m steeplechase bronze medallist Mark Rowland. If the January arrival of the man who headed up Nike's Oregon Track Club Elite project and coached in the US for 14 years, then spent another two years as Athletics Canada's West Hub Endurance Coach, wasn't a big enough statement of intent then landing a young talent such as Gill, who was not short of options, speaks volumes about what the project is trying to achieve.

Already, what Rowland describes a "spine" to the elite squad is starting to form. Canadian two-time Olympian Gabriella DeBues-Stafford (as well as her husband and coach Rowan) is working with him, while medical student and newly-crowned British 1500m champion Sarah Calvert is in place, too, as is European medallist Megan Keith. Now Gill will join them.

"[Edinburgh] offer a lot," says the 18-year-old, who will be studying biochemistry, explaining her decision. "I was [choosing] between all the running universities – like Loughborough and Birmingham – but when I went up to visit Edinburgh, I just fell in love with the city. Mark is obviously such a phenomenal coach and I'm really looking forward to working with him. I'm also really interested to see how their proposal of a new middle-distance squad works out. And I want to be a part of that. I think it will be a really exciting time to go up there.

"I was very impressed [by Mark]. He's obviously got such a history behind him and, being an Olympian himself, I can see that he's someone that I would trust with my training. He showed me the plans that he had for the group and it's something that I believe in. I'm very excited to start this working relationship with him."

This move doesn't mean that Gill is about to cut ties with her long-time coach Deborah Steer. In the same way that Rowland keeps in close dialogue with Calvert's coach, Luke Gunn, this will be a collaborative approach.

"They already have an agreement about keeping in contact," says Gill. "Deborah's flying up to Edinburgh and seeing everything that's



ABOVE: British 1500m champion Sarah Calvert trains and studies in Edinburgh

going on and I think she's very excited for the relationship to start off. I am excited to see the dynamic between the two of them and how they can work together to better my training. When I come back home, I can train with my club again and then, when I go up there, I'll be with Mark."

And what can she expect in her new surroundings? A strong accent on elite performance, but also a firm focus on taking care of the individual.

"You create the environment that enables athletes to challenge for medal-winning performances at major championships, and then the vision is to cultivate talented individuals or self confident, self-reliant individuals who are able to make critical decisions on and off the track," says Rowland. "You need routine. I think most athletes want routine and structure."

There is so much more to the university experience than sport, however, and Rowland will be taking academic schedules into account to find the best training solutions. There are plenty of moving parts to establishing not just the group, but how he best helps the athletes in terms of strength and conditioning, massage, recovery and all the added extras that can help with performance.

"It's going to be a bespoke programme, and it's going to vary for each individual, but there will be structure around it, and there will be expectations, roles and responsibilities that I wish for people to adhere to," he says. "If they're good enough, they'll do that anyway."

Mindful that there is a lot to take in and deal with at university, particularly in the early stages, the Edinburgh team have also brought in Eilidh Doyle, a former Edinburgh student – not to mention heavily decorated international athlete – as Global Ambassador of Sport to help mentor this next generation in their journey. She will be on hand to listen, share her own experiences and help.

"Coming to university, you want your life to be as easy as possible," she says. "My problem



> I just fell in love with the city. Mark is obviously such a phenomenal coach and I'm really looking forward to working with him

[at uni] was that I went in not preparing for it to be difficult. I totally underestimated everything and tried to do it myself. I wasn't organised and there were nights when I'd finish classes and think: 'I can't be bothered trying to get to Meadowbank Stadium to get a session. It's fine, I'll miss this one'. And then all of a sudden that missed one becomes a couple more, a couple more, and then you're trying to chase sessions because you're not in the shape that you should be. And then it just kind of unravelled a little bit.

"After that first year I managed to get myself more organised but I remember coming home and people saying to me: 'Oh, but everybody struggles in their first year of university. Everybody finds it really difficult'. And I was like: 'Well, nobody told me!'.

"If you've got someone to turn to – if there's a group, there's a coach, there's somebody there for you, that makes a big difference, because you're like: 'I'm part of something'."

She adds: "[I want to be] somebody who the athletes can just chat to, because I'm somebody who's been there and experienced it. Perhaps somebody that they can find slightly easier to talk to, because they might not want to let Mark down.

"Even just somebody to talk to and can help work out how things can be easier. Hopefully I can just give a little bit of insight and be somebody who can be a bridge sometimes between the athlete and the performance team."

Doyle has already made a difference.

"Part of the reason that I chose Edinburgh is because I met with the team, and it's very similar to the support system that I have at home," says Gill. "It's something that I want to emulate going up to university. I trust them all and they've been so, so helpful and supportive with the transition.

"We all had dinner [in Edinburgh] together, and I was very grateful that they had an ex-pro athlete to talk to about not only the training side, but also the mental side of being an athlete. I think that's something that's very important in an athlete set-up."

There will be no rush for Gill to hit the ground running. Now fully recovered from her injury, she could have been back on the track this summer but hers will be a gradual return to full training after that eventful year.

"It's such a hard thing to go to university," she says. "It's a massive change, and I just wanted that to be my focus point, rather than to also have to deal with the stresses that come with racing at the same time. It was definitely a good decision.

"The culture of Scotland is something that I've always loved, and I think I'll really enjoy the course there. There are more aspects than just the running side of it. I'm just very excited to start the journey up there." AW

RIGHT: Mark Rowland and Eilidh Doyle





AUTUMNAL AMBITION

While much of the athletics world is still focused on the last throes of summer, **Verity Ockenden** writes about turning her attention towards setting targets that are further down the road

The contemplation of winter racing schedules doesn't exactly come naturally when you're still fanning yourself in 30-degree heat in southern Italy and dripping with sweat from the moment you walk out of the door. Nevertheless, it is something that has been very much on my mind recently.

I find myself rather alone in these thoughts since most of the population here are preoccupied solely with where they might find their next gelato – unless of course they happen to be an athlete headed for the Tokyo World Championships. If that's the case, they've probably already learned that the best ice cream to be had on their preparatory training camp in St Moritz is post track workout at a small artisanal shop in Chiavenna's cobbled high street.

While the track season is far from over as we prepare for its somewhat tardy culmination in Tokyo, and some of the stars such as Olympic champion Keely Hodgkinson are only just opening their seasons, autumn road and cross-country races are already just around the corner, too.

Of course, this is a far greater source of excitement for me than for those who are still

ABOVE: Verity Ockenden is aiming to compete in the upcoming Great South Run

RIGHT: Verity competing in the Pulford 10km in March, where she just failed to go sub 31:30

in the throes of their summer racing schedules. I'm sure they'll all want to take a well-earned break before even thinking about what's next but, having missed out on all but one track race this year, I can't wait to get started again.

Still in the early stages of being able to run once more after six weeks out injured, it will take me a while to get back up to speed. However, much like the dream of my first run back kept me motivated to cross train while I was relegated to the pool, the dream of the first race back on the calendar is fuelling my motivation to endure the first workouts, which more than likely won't have me feeling my best.

The target is to get in shape before one of the great British classics is held in Portsmouth. After being cancelled due to Storm Ashley last year, the 2025 edition will also double up as the UK Athletics 10-mile Road Championships. Obviously, I'm talking about the Great South Run where I first got into conversation with my now coach Chris Thompson. It is a race which he happened to win for three years in a row and also where he closed out his career, so it's a meaningful race for our team that I'd really like to perform well at myself.

This will hopefully provide us with a good starting point for the rest of our winter exploits, and while I haven't yet decided on the other races to be added to the calendar after that, one thing is always certain when it comes to planning; you have to want to do the race in question.

It might seem like stating the obvious here, but I really believe that this is one of the most crucial keys to getting the best out of yourself, both in training and on race day itself. There will always be races that professional athletes are obliged to do to make money, to obtain qualifying times and to satisfy sponsors, but part of the beauty of road and cross country races is that they tend to be far more subjective than track events.

Over the course of an athlete's career, you develop soft spots for those that have suited you best, and maybe also some fixations on races that didn't go so well in the past, swearing to put the record straight at next time. Word of mouth also goes a long way when planning a season as colleagues within the industry share the places that provided the most enjoyable or well-organised events for them – something that often encourages me to be more adventurous with my exploits and to add new experiences to my bucket list.

"ONE THING IS ALWAYS CERTAIN WHEN IT COMES TO PLANNING; YOU HAVE TO WANT TO DO THE RACE IN QUESTION

For me, two such experiences spring to mind. The first is an appointment with a 10km event, given that, six months on, I'm still annoyed at the two seconds that separated me from going sub 31:30 in Pulford in March. Perhaps if I really wanted to add fuel to that fire, I'd make the location Valencia – a beautiful city that I'd love to return to, on a course that has an almighty reputation for speed, and at which my last outing was, to put it bluntly, an embarrassment that I'd take great satisfaction in putting to rights.

Another idea that stems from rather less bitter roots takes inspiration from my childhood introduction to running through Rupert Pepper, who coached me at Poole Runners during my teenage years. Having family connections in Italy, he would always describe the delightful chaos of one of Italy's most prestigious cross-country races – the Cinque Mulini – to me. I have yet to clatter through the mills of Olona that make up such an unusual part of the race's route, but since I now live not so very far down the road in Lombardy, it might just be time for things to come full circle. The mere thought of it has me setting an alarm for 6am and lacing up to get some miles in while everybody else is still sleeping, and most of all before the sun comes out! AW



PHOTO BY WILLIAM SCRIVEN


GREAT BRITAIN
& NORTHERN IRELAND
GREAT
BRITAIN

A common goal

Hollie Arnold is heading for her eighth World Para Championships, while Bebe Jackson has been selected for her first. Despite the big gap in terms of experience, **Jasmine Collett** discovers both are targeting international progress

When Great Britain's para athletics team travels to New Delhi for the 2025 World Para Athletics Championships later this month (taking place from September 27-October 5), the squad will include athletes at just about every stage of their sporting careers.

The 37-strong contingent includes Hollie Arnold, who is heading to her eighth world championships – an extraordinary feat in any discipline. At the other end of the experience scale is 19-year-old Bebe Jackson, who is preparing for her very first.

For Arnold, receiving the call never gets old, and this time selection has in fact felt like a victory in itself.

"I was at such a low place in my life," she says. "I didn't know what the future held and if I'd get back into the sport."

After winning her sixth consecutive F46 javelin world title in Kobe in 2024, Arnold went into the Paris Paralympics last summer with one goal: another gold. Instead, she left with bronze – still a major achievement by anyone's measure – but a moment that hit her harder than most realised.

"I think it just broke my heart. I realised I hadn't been okay for years and I had always mentally put that on the back burner," says the 2016 Paralympic champion.

"All I wanted was to train, to compete and to go out there and win but I think it takes a really brave person to put their hand up and say they aren't okay. I needed to do something about that."

In the months that followed, the 31-year-old stepped back from the sport completely for months, wrestling with the idea of retirement. "I was in such a low place," she admits.

Eventually, Arnold found her way back – first to the training ground, then to the javelin itself. That first session was emotional.

"I was really worried that I wouldn't feel that spark again and I wouldn't be able to find that energy I usually bring to competitions. But, as soon as I started throwing again, I felt the smile on my face. I had missed it so much, it was a lovely feeling."

Her comeback culminated at last month's Novuna UK Athletics Championships in Birmingham, where she surprised herself by throwing 41.37m, her longest distance since 2019. That performance helped secure her spot on the team for New Delhi.

"I was like: 'Did I just do that?'" she says.

While Arnold returns to the team as one of its most seasoned members and savouring her return to the sport, this is all going to be new for her young team-mate, Jackson, who got the call while on holiday in Barbados.

"I was already really happy just to be on holiday," she says. "Then I

LEFT: Hollie Arnold is preparing for an incredible eighth world championships

BELOW: Bebe Jackson is hoping to make an impact in her first championships



The Novuna Great Britain & Northern Ireland team for the World Para Athletics Championships

Women

Kare Adenegan – T34 100m, 800m and 400m
Hollie Arnold – F46 Javelin
Fabienne Andre – T34 800m, 100m and 400m
Olivia Breen – T38 Long Jump,100m and Universal Relay
Hannah Cockcroft – T34 100m, 800m, 400m and Universal Relay
Lydia Church – F12 Shot Put
Bree Cronin – F44 Discus*
Maddie Down – T38 Long Jump, 100m and Universal Relay
Sabrina Fortune – F20 Shot Put
Sophie Hahn – T38 100m, 200m and Universal Relay
Bebe Jackson – T44 100m and 200m*
Victoria Levitt – T44 100m and 200m*
Anna Nicholson – F35 Shot Put
Funmi Oduwaiye – F44 Shot Put and F44 Discus
Didi Okoh – T63 100m
Ali Smith – T38 400m, 200m and Universal Relay
Amy Thompson – F41 Shot Put*
Hannah Taunton – T20 1500m
Mel Woods – T54 800m, 400m and 1500m

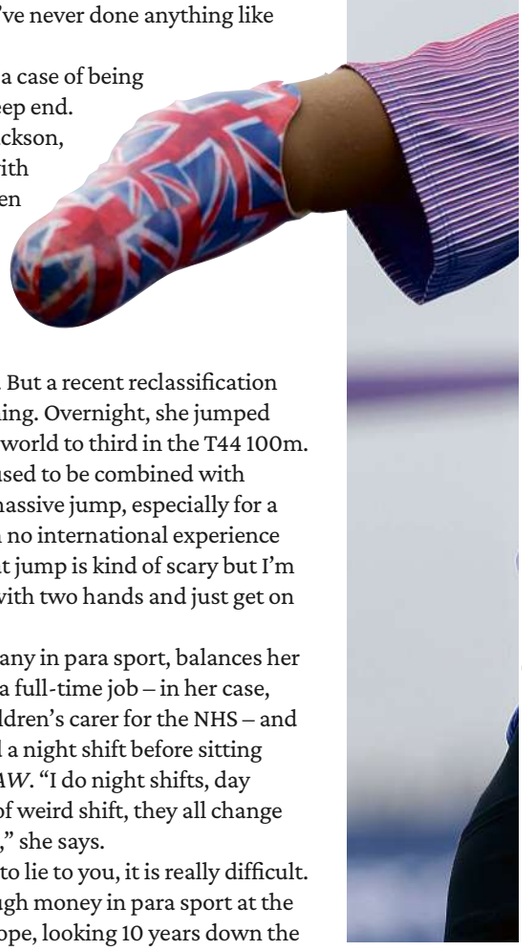
Men

Jonathan Broom Edwards – T64 High Jump
Aled Davies – F63 Shot Put
Dan Gladman – T64 100m*
Dan Greaves – F44 Discus
Michael Jenkins – F38 Shot Put
Nathan Maguire – T54 1500m, 400m and 800m
Finlay Menzies – T72 100m and 400m*
Arthur Milles – T13 1500m*
Luke Nuttall – T46 1500m
Jonnie Peacock – T64 100m and Universal Relay
Dan Pembroke – F13 Javelin
Marcus Perrineau Daley – T52 100m
Ben Sandilands – T20 1500m
Zac Shaw – T12 100m and Universal Relay
Zak Skinner – T13 Long Jump
Luke Sinnott – T63 Long Jump
Harrison Walsh – F44 Discus
Thomas Young – T38 100m

**Making their senior international debuts*

got the call and I was completely gobsmacked because I didn't expect to be selected. It still hasn't sunk in yet."

Her boyfriend cried. Her grandad – with whom she lives in Wales – was the next call, as well as her parents. And then her coach. "It just didn't feel real. I've never done anything like this before."



It absolutely is a case of being thrown in the deep end. Until recently, Jackson, who was born with clubfoot, had been competing in a combined classification and placed outside the top medal positions. But a recent reclassification changed everything. Overnight, she jumped from 10th in the world to third in the T44 100m.

"My category used to be combined with the T64s. It's a massive jump, especially for a 19-year-old with no international experience in sprinting. That jump is kind of scary but I'm ready to take it with two hands and just get on with it."

Jackson, like many in para sport, balances her training around a full-time job – in her case, working as a children's carer for the NHS – and had just finished a night shift before sitting down to talk to *AW*. "I do night shifts, day shifts, any kind of weird shift, they all change week from week," she says.

"I'm not going to lie to you, it is really difficult. There's not enough money in para sport at the moment and I hope, looking 10 years down the line, there will be the opportunity to do it as a full-time job. But, at the moment, there isn't."

Her employers have been supportive, even if two weeks' unpaid leave was needed to get to New Delhi.

"They told me they've never had someone from our job go and do something like this, so they're really proud but I do think there should be a special [holiday] requirement."

In many ways, the stories of Jackson and Arnold reflect the different stages of an elite sporting life – but also a shared resilience. Arnold has seen para sport evolve significantly

> **With the Diamond League, it would be incredible for me to throw with the able-bodied women. There needs to be a bit more of a connection**



ABOVE: Hollie Arnold put in her best performance since 2019 at the recent UK Championships

since her own breakthrough as a 14-year-old at the Beijing Paralympics.

"Back then, para sport didn't have the platform it does now. Things really shifted around 2012, and it's only grown since," she says. "There's more visibility, more support. But there's still a way to go.

"Para sport has moved on since I broke through. There's so much more talent out there now. It took me Beijing, London and then Rio to win my first Paralympic gold medal but now people are coming in and winning medals straight away.

"Obviously they've done the work in the background but the movement has come so far now. From [London] 2012, disability is now more aware and known and that's amazing because it's who we are and what we do."

That's not to say everything is heading in the right direction. Arnold points to the absence of para events in competitions like the Commonwealth Games and the limited integration in events like the Diamond League as causes for concern.

"The Commonwealth Games in 2018 was the first time that the para athletes and able-bodied athletes were mixed together but unfortunately I haven't had an event since," says the Gold Coast Commonwealth champion. "It's a shame that not all para athletes are able to go there and compete.

"With the Diamond League, it would be incredible for me to throw with the able-bodied women because I throw exactly the same javelin weight. There needs to be a bit more of a connection and that will bring in support and sponsors, which is what we need."

Arnold is also aware that, with her experience, comes responsibility. Athletes like Jackson will be looking to people like her for cues – about how to navigate the world of para sport in the still-evolving space.

"I wouldn't call myself a role model," Arnold says. "But I hope I'm approachable. If I can help in any way, I'm there."

And for Jackson, those veteran voices matter. Breaking into the world of para sport was confusing at first, she says – an entirely new system with different classifications, rules, and a culture that's not always easy to access. She credits athletes like Olivia Breen, Laura Sugar and Sophie Hahn for sharing their journeys on social media and making the sport more visible.

"It really helped me," she says. "Now I want to do the same – to help younger athletes coming through."

Jackson took up the sport after being encouraged by her schoolteacher to explore para athletics. Within a year, she had her first GB vest. That rapid ascent hasn't changed her motivations, though. It's still about the people around her – the friends she trains and competes with, and the family that supports her.

"In the NHS, I work alone so I don't have colleagues to talk to everyday. Being at comps and being surrounded by other athletes... that's all the inspiration I need."

And for Arnold, it's that same sense of togetherness that she's most looking forward to in New Delhi.

"We're all spread out when we train," she says. "So when we come together, that's the magic. Being part of a team again – it's incredible. It doesn't get easier, but it also doesn't get less exciting." AW

MOUNTAIN HIGH

Some of the planet's finest off-road runners are heading to the Spanish Pyrenees this month for the third edition of the World Mountain and Trail Running Championships. **Adrian Stott** sets the scene

PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

The rugged and beautiful Pyrenees – more specifically the district of Cranfranc and the Aragón Valley of north-eastern Spain – will provide a stunning backdrop for the third edition of the biennial World Mountain and Trail Running Championships (WMTRC), taking place from September 25-28.

World Athletics' vision of working with the different elements of mountain, trail and ultra running to create a true global championship is certainly bearing fruit. At the inaugural WMTRC, in Thailand in 2022 – postponed by one year due to COVID – 622 athletes participated. The following year, at Innsbruck, and undoubtedly helped by the central European location, entries had almost doubled to 1277 participants while, this time around, 1700 athletes from 80 countries are expected – by far the highest participation in the event's history.

These championships are organised under the supervision of World Athletics and in collaboration with the World Mountain Running Association (WMRA), the International Trail Running Association (ITRA), the International Association of Ultrarunners (IAU), and the Royal Spanish Athletics Federation (RFEA).

Both the WMRA and the IAU organised their own world championship events for several years but World Athletics, sensing the increased interest and participation in off-road running, worked with both organisations and ITRA to create the event that has now become WMTRC.

The championship programme will feature five different races for men and women –



RIGHT: Jim Walmsley is prioritising the WMTRC this year

ABOVE RIGHT: Scout Adkin



uphill mountain races, classic up and down mountain races, short trail, long trail and U20 classic up and down mountain events.

Mountain teams will consist of up to four athletes per country, per gender, to start and with three to score. It's a similar set-up for the trail teams, which can field up to six athletes per country, per gender. In each case, competitors will be battling it out for Individual medals and team titles based on cumulative position.

What are Britain's chances?

There will be a team of 37 athletes representing Great Britain and Northern Ireland. They are the defending team champions in the men's short trail event. On that occasion, they were led home by Thomas Roach, who collected a superb individual silver medal, and he will again lead a strong men's team.

The junior teams will be sure to give a good account of themselves and challenge the team podium once again. In 2023 and 2022, the junior women struck individual gold through Rebecca Flaherty in 2023 and Jess Bailey in Thailand in 2022. On both occasions, they led their teams to gold.

Scout Adkin, recent winner of summer-long WMRA World Cup series – despite missing the series final due to an untimely injury – is selected in both the women's uphill and up-and-down races. Time will tell if she recovers well enough to challenge for the podium.

Her brother Jacob, the silver medalist in the 2024 European Off-road Championships, is also entered in both mountain races.

Naomi Lang is a strong prospect to place highly in the short trail race. Since moving up in distance, she has had some outstanding performances this year at home and abroad.



Who are the global challengers?

Although there is an ever-crowded fixture list of prestigious races, WMTRC is not only now attracting a greater strength in depth than ever before, but leading athletes are now starting to prioritise it over other major races.

Americans Jim Walmsley and Katie Schide, plus French athlete Vincent Bouillard – all previous winners of the prestigious Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc (UTMB) – are prioritising the WMTRC this year rather than being tempted back to Chamonix.

Both the United States and France will have strong teams, especially in the trail races. Defending long trail champion Benjamin Roubiol, and defending European off-road trail champion Thomas Cardin will ensure the French men will be challenging for the podium in the trail races.

Similarly, the French women, led by defending long trail champion Marion Delespierre and the vastly experienced Hilary Gerardi, along with current World and European Short trail champion Clementine Geoffray, will be hoping for the same.

In the mountain races, African runners from Kenya and Uganda made a big impression at Innsbruck, with Kenya taking a clean sweep of the gold team medals, male and female, in both distances. Individually, Kenya's Philemon Kirago is sure to be challenging for the podium, as will Gloria Chebet and Valentine Rutto in the women's fields.

Spain, on home ground, will always be a force to be reckoned with at these championships. They will have prepared teams well, hoping to take advantage of the local terrain.

With each succeeding championship bringing more nations and athletes together, there are sure to be some surprises, with new individuals and teams making their mark. AW

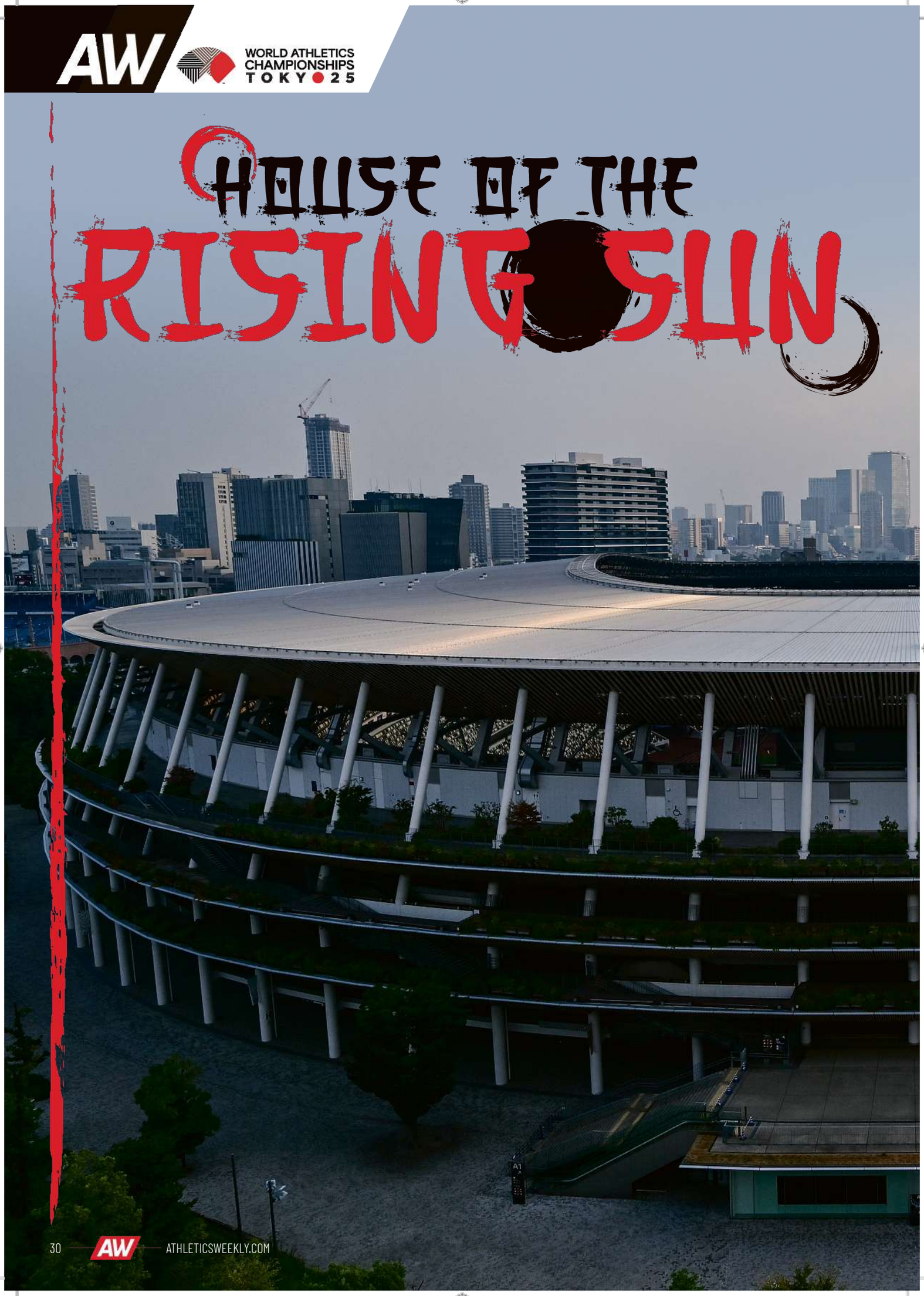


PHOTO BY SMARNA GORA

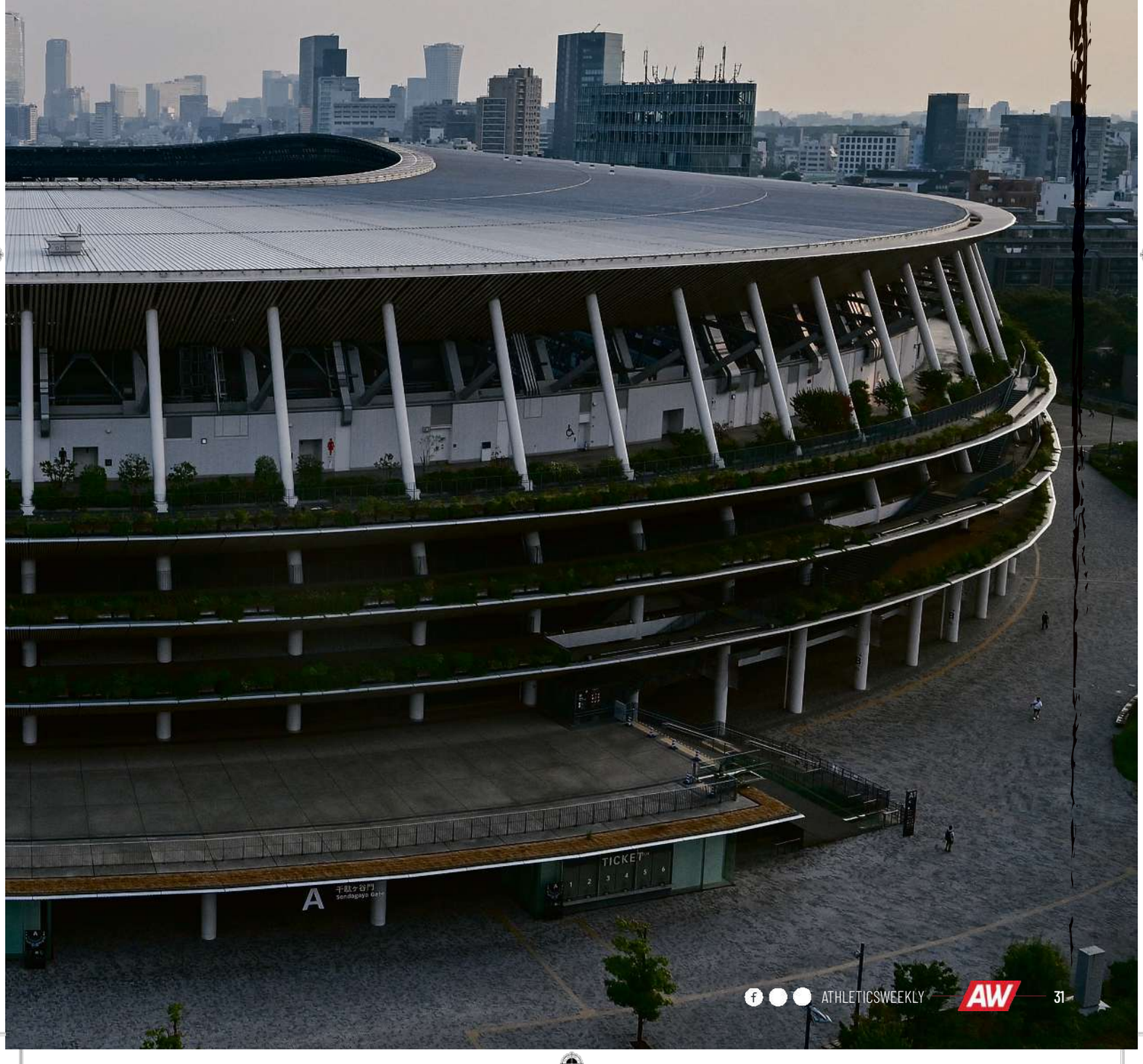
WMTRC 2025 schedule

Sept 25: Senior men and women uphill races – 6.5km/986m elevation
Sept 26: Short trail men and women – 45km/3700m
Sept 27: Long trail men and women – 81.20km/5413m
Sept 28: Senior men and women up-and-down races – 15km/820m
Sept 28: Junior men and women up-and-down races – 8km/400m

HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN

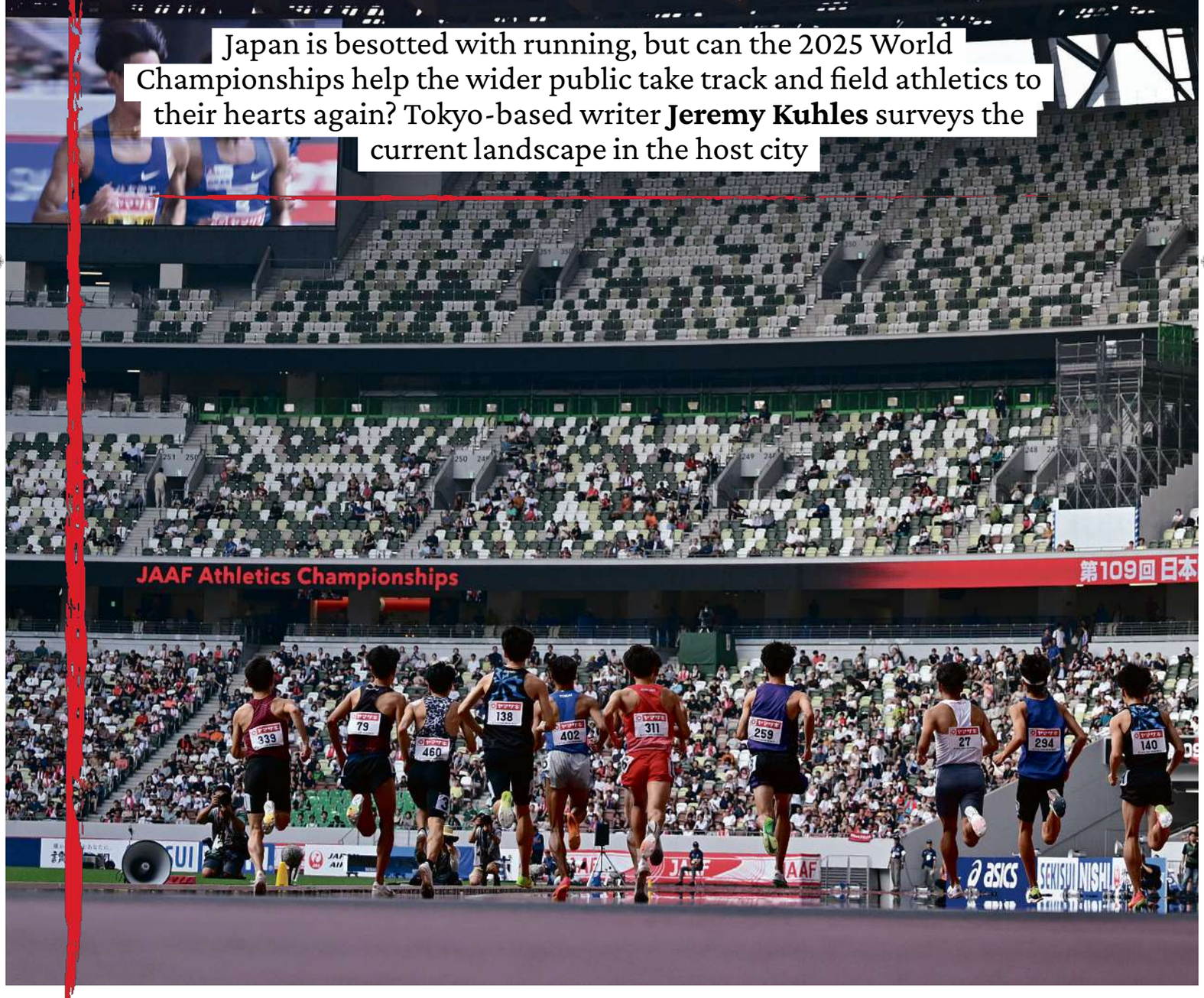


Tokyo's national stadium is ready to host the 20th edition of the World Athletics Championships and, over the following 54 pages, we get the lay of the land, speak to some of the big names, look back in time and examine every single event that is about to unfold in the Japanese capital



SPREADING THE LOVE

Japan is besotted with running, but can the 2025 World Championships help the wider public take track and field athletics to their hearts again? Tokyo-based writer **Jeremy Kuhles** surveys the current landscape in the host city



I can still vividly remember the 1991 World Athletics Championships, the last time the event was held in Tokyo. I was 10 years old, on a Eurocamp holiday in northern France, jumping up and down in front of a tiny TV with my brother as Kriss Akabusi burst past Antonio Pettigrew on the final straight in the 4x400m relay, lunging for the line to take gold.

I can still hear the roar of the crowd, crammed in like a Tokyo rush-hour train on those steep banks of the old stadium as the two athletes charged into the closing stretch. I still remember the commentary: "Akabusi has a go! And the American is beaten!" (Which always felt a bit premature given how close the race was at that point.) I also remember thinking I wished I could have been in the stadium to feel that atmosphere. Now, 34 years later, I will finally get that chance.

But the Tokyo of 2025 is a very different place from that of 1991. Back then, you could argue it was bubble-era optimism and a fresh global outlook that charged the stadium and made it an event to remember. But what do the championships mean to the city in 2025? What's driving the energy, and what legacy will the event leave?

REWRITING THE TOKYO STORY

Let's get the obvious out of the way first: it's impossible to talk about these championships without mentioning the COVID-hit Olympics. But to frame this as a simple redemption story would be misleading. The Olympics themselves were divisive and the pandemic changed the world so profoundly that no fair comparison can really be made. However, what this event does offer is the chance to reset and change the narrative around Tokyo and athletics, creating fresh stories and positive associations.

Major athletics meetings in Tokyo are relatively rare. It's not on the Diamond League circuit and, while the annual Golden Grand Prix brings strong athletes, it rarely generates the buzz organisers and sponsors might hope for. But Tokyo does know how to turn out for big occasions, and the world championships are a chance to prove that again while also sparking a broader interest in track and field.

STADIUM ROCK

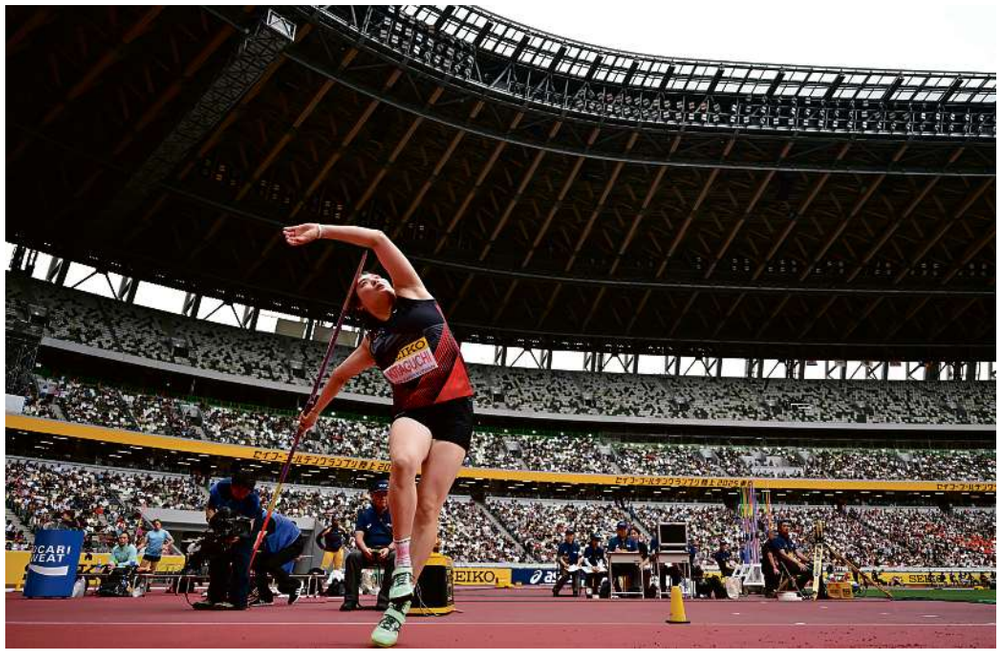
Another meaningful element is the opportunity to breathe life into the National Stadium, infusing it with lasting memories. It would be unfair to call Kengo Kuma's 68,000-seater stadium a white elephant but, if you headed there on most days, I'd wager 1000 yen you would see it being used by fleet-footed club runners for interval training around the perimeter, or social running clubs snapping social media shots before jogging on.

Or if you're in the capital for the Tokyo Marathon in March or the Legacy Half Marathon in October, both of which start and end at the stadium, you'll likely stash your gear somewhere inside and use the bathrooms before heading out on to the roads.

But this arena, with its overlapping, multi-layered eaves using wood from all 47 of Japan's prefectures, wasn't designed to be a glorified



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES



LEFT: the JAAF Championships didn't draw huge crowds to the National Stadium in July

RIGHT: Haruka Kitaguchi is a world title contender

runner's roundabout or an oversized locker room. It was built to house elite-level track and field meetings and create big moments for those in spikes and those in the stands. A rocking 2025 championships will be just what it needs to find its voice.

A TRICKY TRACK RELATIONSHIP

For context, I think it's important to mention that there are plenty of accessible track meetings in the city. In spring, regular kiroku-kai (time trials) at places like Nittaidai University are open and free. For a running fan like me, they're Tokyo Disneyland! I went in April and found myself standing right on the edge of the track as some of Japan's best tested their legs. I even caught myself eavesdropping on post-race briefings between coaches and athletes. Yet, despite this intimacy, the crowds were tiny, made up mostly of team-mates, media, and a few running otaku (nerdy types like me).

Some events are trying to build a stronger community and excitement around track competition (sorry, field athletes), taking inspiration from the UK's Night of the 10,000m PBs, but it's still a work in progress. Field events, meanwhile, remain even more niche, usually tucked inside university competitions.

All of which makes Tokyo's relationship with track a tricky one and, though some sessions for the 2025 championships are sold out, the sight of the National Stadium being consistently packed is far from guaranteed. The dress rehearsal, this year's National Championships, drew a decent crowd, but swathes of empty seats likely gave organisers a few anxious moments. They'll need help to rewrite the narrative and engage a wider community.

HERE COME THE BRANDS

The good news for the event is that many of the big brands have been doing some heavy lifting. Both adidas (ADIDAS TOKYO CITY RUN in April) and ASICS (Tokyo : Speed : Race in May) staged large-scale events around the National Stadium, mixing mass participation 5kms with elite racing, while offering rare chances to see top athletes up close. Yes, these were brand-driven productions, but they doubled as an unofficial preview of the championships and helped stoke awareness of world-class athletics in Tokyo.



ABOVE: Thousands pack the roadsides and millions watch on TV for the two-day Hakone Ekiden in January

New Balance and On are also in on the action, with their respective stars Nozomi Tanaka and Ryuji Miura front and centre of their world championships promotion. Tanaka is perhaps the most internationally recognised Japanese track athlete right now, with regular Diamond League and Grand Slam Track appearances, while Miura's recent Diamond League podium in the steeplechase has started to give him broader recognition. Add in the brilliant Haruka Kitaguchi, Olympic and world champion in the javelin, and you have a handful of genuine headliners.

But, beyond them, Japan is short on podium-level firepower and, more importantly, on household names who can naturally draw

> **"What this event offers is the chance to reset and change the narrative around Tokyo and athletics, creating fresh stories and positive associations**



crowds. I have a theory why that might be, and it starts with the country's obsession with the roads.

THE EKIDEN IN THE ROOM

Based on the conversation so far, you might think Tokyo is non-plussed when it comes to running, but nothing could be further from the truth. It's a runner's city. Head to the Imperial Palace or the major parks, and you'll have difficulty weaving through packs of runners. And around these hubs, a whole ecosystem has sprung up, with "Run Stations" offering lockers, showers, and even carbon super shoes for rent. You will also struggle to nail down a spot in a race; securing an entry is becoming increasingly hard, even for small local 10kms.

So here we hit upon the paradox: a city overflowing with runners, yet one where filling an athletics stadium remains a struggle. The reason, I think, lies in Japan's obsession with road running. It's a marathon city for one, but the more powerful pull is Ekiden, particularly the Hakone Ekiden, the two-day New Year relay that captures the public imagination like no other.

Every January 2 and 3, tens of millions tune in on TV and pack the roadsides ten-deep to watch Japan's top university men's teams battle from Tokyo to Hakone and back. Almost all of Japan's top male runners will have competed at Hakone. But what's often less well known is that only universities in the Kanto region (Tokyo and surrounding prefectures) can compete, which means many of the country's best male runners funnel into those schools for a shot at Hakone glory.

The result is a deep concentration of talent, but also a narrow focus. Each runner trains for a leg of around half-marathon distance, which makes sense for Hakone but less so for developing athletes who might otherwise thrive at 1500m, 5000m, or 10,000m on the track.

My armchair theory is that this Hakone obsession, while fuelling incredible depth on the roads, has limited Japan's potential on the track, leaving the country with fewer global stars and, in turn, less pull to get fans through the stadium gates.

So, where does all this leave this year's championships?

FINDING THE ENERGY

Japan's obsession with the roads isn't going anywhere, and Hakone will always dominate the national imagination. However, there is clearly a huge appetite and market for running; it just needs to be engaged.

With the brands pushing, the organisers pulling and a deep culture of running to tap into, I think Tokyo will rise to the occasion. It may not be bubble-era euphoria, but the energy will be real. The roar will return. Athletes like Tanaka and Kitaguchi have a genuine shot at the podium, and the country will get behind them.

Beyond the roar, these championships can also light a path for the next generation, inspiring young athletes to look beyond Ekiden and towards the track. If even a few choose shorter distances and go on to perform on the global stage, it could create the kind of virtuous cycle Japan has long been missing: stars drawing crowds, crowds fuelling performances and performances inspiring new stars.

For me, personally, it will be a gift to my 10-year-old self, who leapt in front of that tiny TV in northern France and wished he could be there. This month, I will finally be in the stadium, in the city of runners, as Tokyo brings its voice back to the track. AW

Jeremy Kuhles is a British writer and translator who has lived in Tokyo for over 20 years and trains with the Tamagawa University women's Ekiden team and RETO Running Club
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JAPAN ATHLETICS AWAKENING

In the latest part of our historical series, **David Holmes** explores the development of the sport in Japan through the years



ABOVE: the 1964 Tokyo Olympics were transformative

Japanese sport was born on the battlefield. For over 1000 years, the sons of Japan trained in archery, swordsmanship and early forms of martial arts. Physical activity was inseparable from the life of the warrior, from "the cradle to the grave". While Japanese society had been shaped for centuries by the warrior ethos, the 1870s brought a new influence: Western sports, introduced by foreign educators during the country's rapid drive to modernise under Emperor Meiji. Among these imports, modern athletics – a distinctly British innovation – made its debut. The first formal athletics meeting took place at the Imperial Naval College in 1876, and soon school sports days (undōkai) introduced running, jumping and throwing to students across the nation.

1883 proved a noteworthy year, when the British schoolteacher Frederick W. Strange organised the first intercollegiate athletics meet at Tokyo's elite Ichiko school and a neighbouring college that would later become Tokyo University. His vision and organisational acumen laid the groundwork for the sport's dramatic rise in the decades that followed, earning him the Order of the Rising Sun.

In 1902, at another meet at Ichiko, Fuji Minoru became Japan's first athletics star, dazzling spectators with his sprinting performances. Around the same time, newspapers sponsored long-distance races that evolved into relay marathons (ekiden), the first organised by the newspaper Osaka Mainichi in 1909. To mark Tokyo's 50th anniversary in 1917, the city hosted a 23-stage ekiden covering 315 miles.

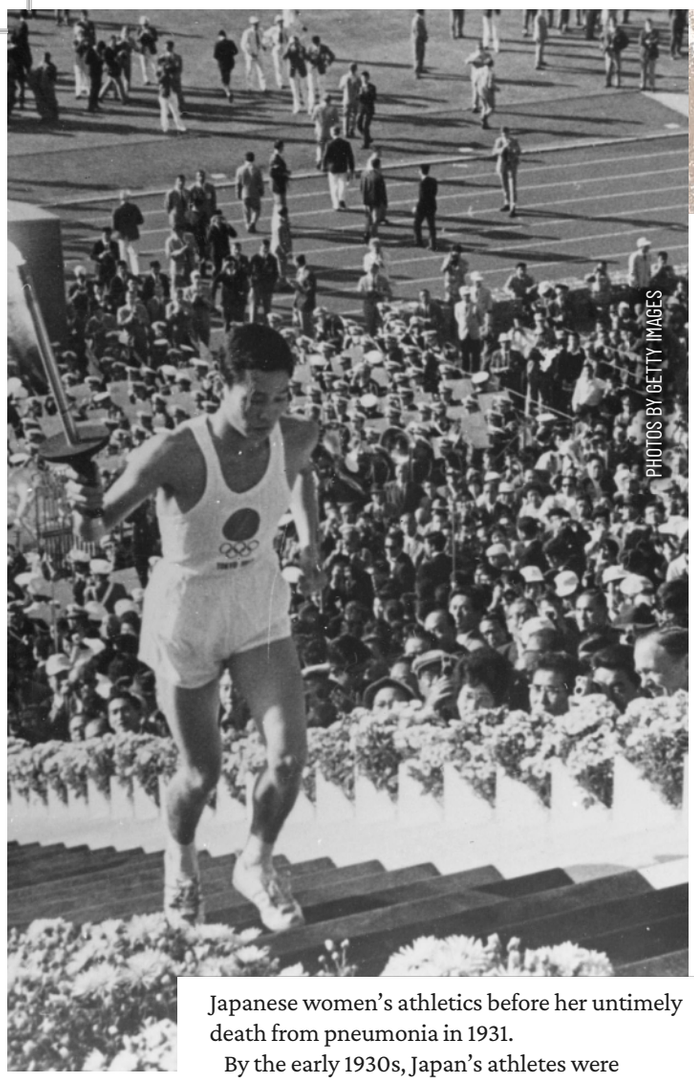
The Japanese athletics system gained a more formal structure in 1911 with the founding of the Japanese Amateur Athletic Association (JAAA), led by Jigoro Kano, the father of judo and Japan's first IOC member. As its first president, Kano spent a decade shaping the sport's early growth, and establishing Japan in regional competitions.

Japan made its Olympic debut at Stockholm in 1912, sending just two athletes: sprinter Mishima Yahiko and marathon runner Kanaguri Shizō. Both struggled. Mishima was outclassed in his heats, while Kanaguri collapsed mid-marathon and fell asleep in a nearby garden; upon awakening, he officially withdrew. Decades later, he returned to Stockholm to "finish" the race, recording a time of 55 years, eight months, six days and 32 minutes.

The disappointment of 1912 spurred change, prompting Japan to expand its athletics program. That same year, the JAAA staged the first national championships and, in 1913, Japan competed at the inaugural Far Eastern Games in Manila. Two years later, in Shanghai, Japan began to assert its dominance, and when Tokyo hosted the Games in 1917, Japanese athletes swept the competition.

The 1920s ushered in a golden era for Japanese sport. The Meiji Jingu Gaien stadium opened in 1924 with a 50,000-seat capacity, providing athletics with a permanent home. Across the country, new sports grounds and facilities were also being built. In 1925, the Japanese Amateur Sports Association was established to systematically coordinate amateur sport and support elite competitors. Tokyo highlighted these developments when it hosted the ninth Far Eastern Games in May 1930.

Success soon arrived on the world's biggest stage. At the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics, Oda Mikio won Japan's first Olympic athletics gold in the triple jump, while Hitomi Kinue took silver in the 800m, becoming the first Japanese woman to win an Olympic medal. A sprint specialist who rarely ran more than one lap, she completed the 800m in 2:17, blazing a trail for



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES



THE RISE OF THE 'CORPORATE AMATEUR' SAW MAJOR COMPANIES EMPLOY ATHLETES WHILE ALLOWING THEM TO TRAIN FULL-TIME

Japanese women's athletics before her untimely death from pneumonia in 1931.

By the early 1930s, Japan's athletes were respected worldwide, and women's athletics flourished, with Hitomi setting multiple national records. But the momentum of this golden era was cut short by war. Japan was scheduled to host the 1940 Olympics, but the Games were cancelled due to World War II.

The war years brought Japanese sport to a halt, with Western sports suppressed. In 1946, the first National Athletics Meet signalled a fresh start and by 1948 the Japanese Amateur Sports Association (JASA) had been re-established, guiding post-war growth. The first Asian Games followed in 1951 in New Delhi, marking Japan's return to the international stage.

A defining feature of this new era was the rise of the "corporate amateur". Major companies employed athletes while allowing them to train full-time, both to enhance the company's reputation and to boost national prestige. Inter-corporate competitions flourished, and the best of these company-backed athletes represented Japan at the Olympics and other international events. The system thrived throughout the 1950s, bolstered by the 1961 Sports Promotion Law, which expanded facilities and encouraged wider participation.

The 1964 Tokyo Olympics transformed Japanese sport, sparking a nationwide boom in participation and raising performance standards. Corporate athletes came to focus entirely on training, while recreational sport spread among ordinary workers. Athletics had become central to modern Japan's national identity.

In the decades that followed, the corporate amateur system continued to shape Japanese athletics. This model produced remarkable depth, though by the 1980s Japan's dominance began to fade. The boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics weakened international competitiveness, and at the 1982 Asian Games in New Delhi, China ended Japan's 31-year winning streak. In 1986, amateur restrictions were lifted, opening the way for professionalism.

The 1990s and early 2000s marked a peak period for women's distance running. Naoko Takahashi, known nationwide as "Q-Chan", won the 2000 Sydney Olympic marathon and a year later shattered the world record in Berlin with a time of 2:19:46. Her feats transformed women's running and made her a national celebrity, mobbed by fans wherever she went. More recently, Japan has excelled in sprinting and relays, with the men's 4x100m team claiming silver at Rio 2016 and bronze in Beijing 2008 and Tokyo 2020. Hosting the 1991 World Athletics Championships and the 2020 Olympics further underline Japan's central place in international athletics – a position that could be enhanced further over the coming weeks. AW

ABOVE: Naoko Takahashi was a national celebrity after a career that included Olympic marathon gold in 2000

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BRINGING BACK THE ROAR

Working at the Tokyo Olympics was a bizarre experience, writes **Katharine Merry**. It's going be fantastic to see the athletes able to strut their stuff in front of the public this time around

To my mind, the omens look good for these world championships. I've started having the first flutters of excitement and I'm sensing the same from the athletes. I think the best sign is that, having experienced the 2021 Olympics, so many of them can't wait to go back to that national stadium in Tokyo – and not just because of the chance to compete there in front of a crowd. It's known for being a great venue, with a fast track, and this time it will be with a full experience.

I, for one, am looking forward to not having to do a spit test every morning to get into the place! Working at those Olympics – as stadium presenter alongside Geoff Wightman – will always be one of the most bizarre things that I've ever done.

Myself and Geoff have spoken a lot since, about how we felt a real weight of responsibility. Because there were no fans, we felt like we needed to really up our game because we were the creators of the atmosphere. I think the event presentation team did a good job of doing this. It's so much easier when you're doing it along with thousands of people and riding the wave of their excitement and emotion. But we didn't have that.

We really felt for the athletes. I remember the competitors in the jumps, just out of habit, turning towards the stands to get some rhythmical clapping going, and then realising there was no-one there. Thankfully, it's all going to be very different this time.

I'll be there in a different role, working for BBC Radio Five Live, and we're going to have so much to talk about. I'm really excited about the short sprints and the men's 100m is bubbling up beautifully – from the pushing and shoving between Noah Lyles and Kenny Bednarek at the US trials to Kishane Thompson putting down a marker in Silesia and then Oblique Seville scorching through the rain in Lausanne.

Do not sleep on Seville come Tokyo ... but it's Noah and Kishane in particular who draw your attention, and not just because this looks like being a brilliant rematch after the Paris Olympic final. They are also so contrasting in terms of their styles.

Kishane's got the faster start and front end speed, while Noah's got the back end and the

ABOVE: Kishane Thompson laid down an impressive marker at the Silesia Diamond League Meeting

I REMEMBER THE JUMPERS, JUST OUT OF HABIT, TURNING TOWARDS THE STANDS TO GET SOME RHYTHMICAL CLAPPING GOING, AND THEN REALISING THERE WAS NO-ONE THERE

strength to come through. If Noah manages to get out quickly then he'll beat Kishane, but Noah doesn't tend to get out very well so it all balances itself out and suggests it's going to be close.

I think Kishane's win in Silesia was hugely significant and will be the reason why he didn't race any more Diamond Leagues. He said he withdrew from Lausanne with a tight hamstring but I suspect he knew he'd done his job and that it was best to leave it there. He has put Noah in the position where he's effectively chasing again but, then again, Noah loves being in that position and not much fazes him.

I think the majority of neutrals would like to see Kishane coming out on top in this one and, though Noah has a habit of producing the goods when he needs to, I think he's more likely to win the 200m, which feels like much more of a free-for-all. Did I mention not sleeping on Oblique Seville!?

On the women's side, Melissa Jefferson-Wooden has been impeccable this year and is doing what Julien Alfred did last year – running consistently fast every time she steps on the track. Julien had been looking really good earlier in the summer and then won the Diamond League final in Zurich, but it's going to take a big effort to knock Melissa off her stride.

The American has been so consistent and that consistency creates pressure on the opposition. When they know she is going to be running to a certain standard come what may, the margin for error is so much smaller and it can force mistakes.

From a British point of view, I think Britain's best chances of a medal will come from Zharnel Hughes, Dina Asher-Smith and possibly Amy Hunt.

To me, Zharnel has put himself on a different level from the rest of the British guys this year and there's definitely an opportunity for him to get on the podium.

The same goes for Dina, and I think that's more likely to come in the 200m than the 100m. She's a hugely experienced competitor now at major championships and that is invaluable. After their brilliant 200m final at the national championships, it would be superb to see Dina and Amy – Daryll Neita too – going toe to toe again on the world stage but we have to remember that major championships are just such a different beast to everything else. It's just so hard to replicate that change of intensity or the level of focus that's needed. This is the one that matters. There's no tomorrow. It's a completely different level.

I'm always watching my event, the 400m, closely and I must admit I was surprised at Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone's decision to contest that rather than the 400m hurdles, where she's the Olympic champion and a serial world record-breaker.

Barring disaster, Femke Bol is going to take the hurdles gold now but I can understand why she said she was disappointed not to be racing against Sydney in Tokyo. After losing out in Paris, Femke will have wanted a rematch and she definitely won't want that caveat of "you only won the world title because Sydney wasn't there".

But Sydney has earned the right to do what she wants – and I like the fact that she's mixing things up. She has certainly given herself a challenge. She's got to get past Marileidy Paulino and Salwa Eid Naser for a start, and it's not as if Sydney's been breaking records this summer. Yes, she's third-fastest in the world this year, with 48.90, but she hasn't come close to Sanya Richards-Ross's US record of 48.70 since running 48.74 in 2023. That said, she's showing drive and desire.

Would winning world 400m gold arguably be her greatest achievement? Only if she does it with a really fast time. For it to be majorly impressive, I'd want to see her doing it by beating the top two and breaking that national record in the process.

But, whoever comes out on top, the best bit is that, this time, there will be a crowd to share the experience with. AW



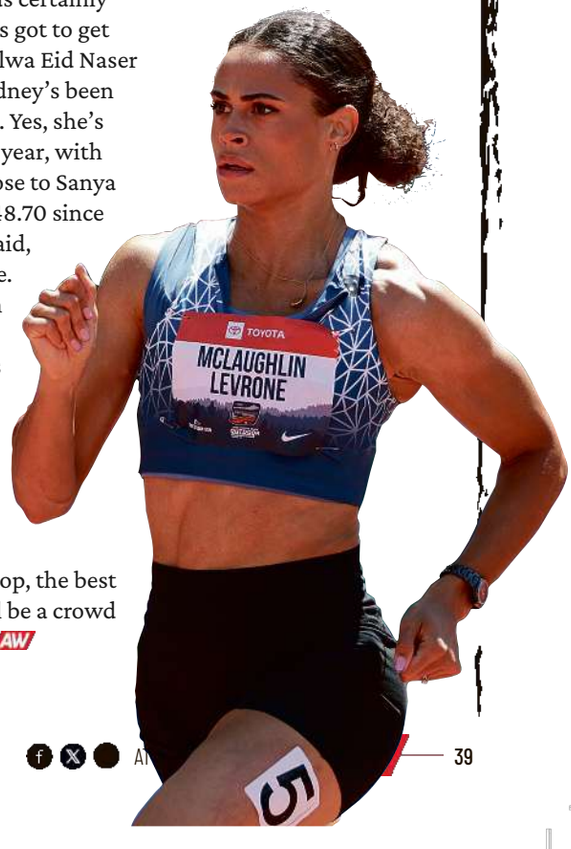
Katharine **Merry**

Olympic medallist and broadcaster

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BELOW: Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone



COMEBACK QUEEN

Euan Crumley talks to coach Trevor Painter and physio Alison Rose about how Keely Hodgkinson has been able to leap from world championship worry to 800m gold medal favourite

It says much about how difficult the past year has been for Keely Hodgkinson that her feeling "like she'd been run over by a bus" was seen as being a positive thing. "She felt dreadful for a couple of days," says the Olympic 800m champion's coach, Trevor Painter. "But then she trained again and, even though she wasn't feeling great, the numbers were really good, so we knew her body was okay."

There was good reason for this particular pain and suffering – it meant she was racing again. Painter is describing the immediate aftermath of Hodgkinson's first outing in over a year – 376 days to be precise – at the Silesia Diamond League in Poland on August 16. Having had to absorb and recover from three hamstring injury blows that combined to keep her on the sidelines since her golden night in Paris last summer, the 23-year-old opted against a low-key return.

Back on the start line, there was no easing herself back in gently. Hodgkinson promptly blew the cobwebs, and the opposition, away with the second-fastest time of her career – a world-leading 1:54.74 that only fell fractionally short of her British record (1:54.61).

As a statement of intent, it could barely have been any stronger. Immediately, the narrative around Hodgkinson flipped from whether or not she would even reach this month's world championships to her becoming the cast iron favourite for gold.

This, says Painter, is what can happen when she is presented with a challenge.

"I was a bit more nervous than normal [ahead of Silesia] but I knew she was fine," he says. "She'd passed all the tests with the physios and the things that we have to make sure that everything was good. I was slightly apprehensive, but that was more about 'how big can this be?', rather than 'is she going to get round?'. I was very confident she would run 1:55 and I was confident she could run 1:54, so I'm just glad it came out."

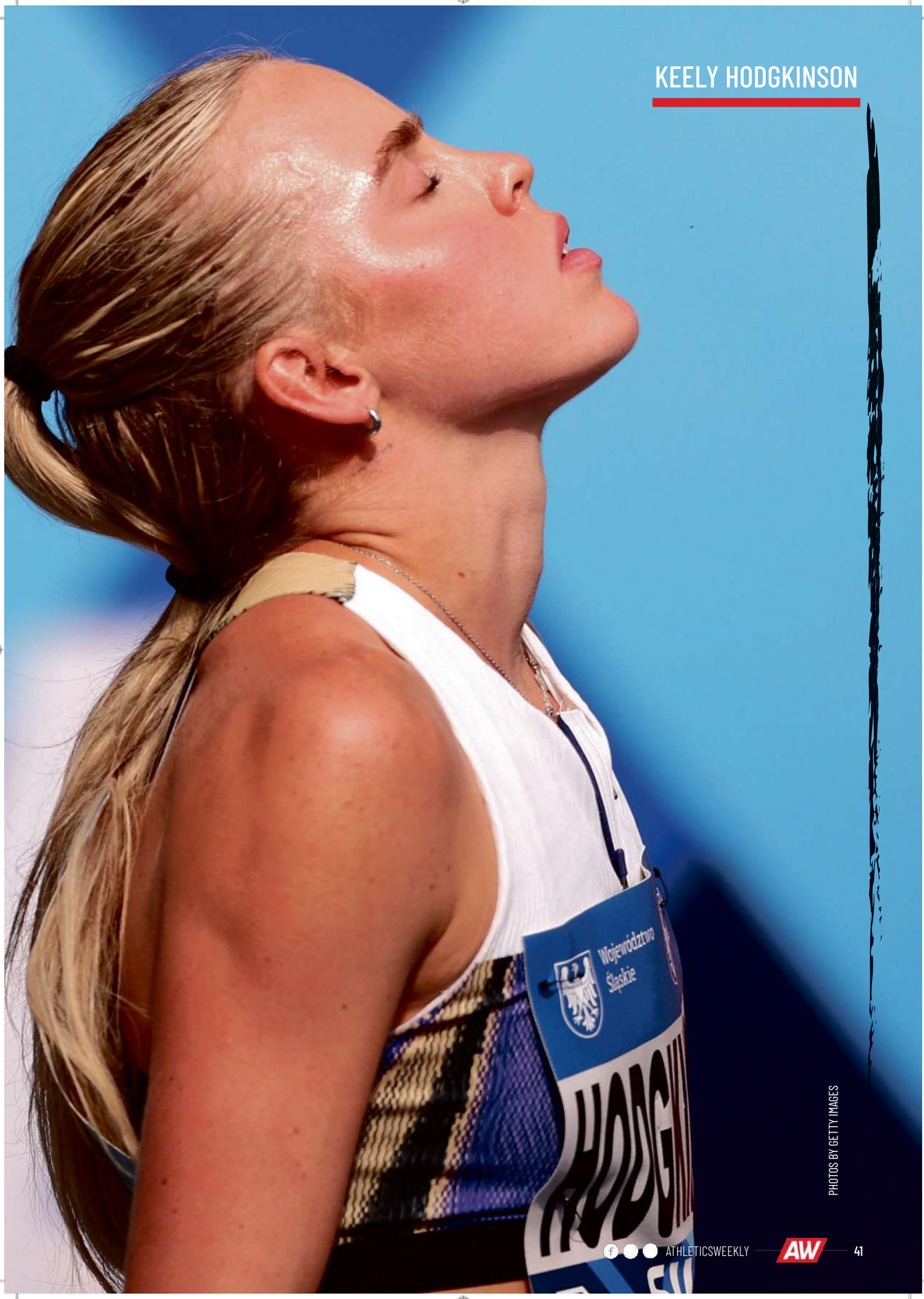
In fact, most of the trepidation came after the race, and the questions about how Hodgkinson's body might react to being put under such stress again.

"It's been a neural problem that's caused the issues and the neural system [or nervous system] is what gets stressed the most in a performance like that," says Painter. "If she had gone out and run 1:57 we wouldn't have learned anything but she smashed a 1:54 and so it was like: 'Well, that is a serious test. What has happened to your body now?' and she presented well."

So well, in fact, that just a few days later she won the Lausanne Diamond League in the second-fastest time of the year, 1:55.69, despite



RIGHT: Keely Hodgkinson takes a moment prior to her 800m race at the Silesia Diamond League meeting


KEELY HODGKINSON
Województwo
Śląskie
PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES



ABOVE: Hodgkinson celebrates her world lead and meeting record at the Silesia Diamond League

the pouring rain in Switzerland. With fitness restored, Painter expects her to be ready to go much quicker – albeit possibly not in the championship environment of Tokyo.

"I thought we should be able to get her into 1:54 shape for Tokyo," he says. "But whether that comes out without pacemakers... we knew she was in 1:53 shape in Paris but you need to be in that shape to run 1:56 the way she did [in the Olympic final] – she was just dominant and composed. I think she probably will be in 1:53 shape in Tokyo now, but it probably won't happen because she's going to have to front run it, and you ain't running 1:53 on your own without a little help!"

That Painter is speaking so freely in such positive terms – Jarmila Kratochvilova's long-standing women's 800m record is 1:53.28, after all – is making for a very pleasant change indeed, given the struggles of the past 12 months. Hodgkinson is no stranger to setbacks but has this period been the most difficult for her to recover from?

"Yes, because it's been three blows, really," he says. "She had a niggle leading into Paris and then she went on holiday with her family to celebrate. When she came back, it had grown from a niggle to being a bit more serious, so we had it scanned and shut things down. Then we built her back up from that.

"You have a period of no running at all and then you phase in some cycling and some swimming, then you start some jogging and then you run a bit faster, and a bit faster and after about six weeks you're back to your normal training.

"We had tears in January on the track, because she wasn't where she wanted to be. But then, very quickly, she accelerated through the gears and, come the middle of February, she was ready to break the [indoor] world record [at her own event, the Keely Klassic] – that's how quickly it changes.

"But then we had the second problem, which was a big blow, because we knew what shape she was in and what she could have done. It would have been a huge story but, sadly, it never happened.

"You're mourning that loss, and you start the process again and build up through the gears. Then we were two to three weeks before Stockholm [Diamond League in mid June] and we were ready. Everything was going in the right direction and then boom! It happened again. Thankfully that one wasn't as bad so we were able to build through the gears a lot quicker.

"Nike did a shoot in Portugal where we had a camp recently to get Keely into top shape and in

> "Resilience and composure have always been big strengths of Keely's. That's why she's won so many medals. She has been through a lot



that there's footage where she's doing some 600s with [European indoor 3000m champion] Sarah Healy and Sarah's miles ahead of her.

"But every session stimulates her and she develops from it and, all of a sudden, the week before Silesia we knew she was back to being Keely Hodgkinson and that she was going to do something really big. So then it's a case of: 'Right, how do we fix you in between that performance to go again?'."

A key part of that process has been the team of physiotherapists behind the scenes. Former international marathon runner Alison Rose, who also treated Olympic champions Kelly Holmes and Jess Ennis-Hill, is one of their number and has been impressed by Hodgkinson's approach.

"She's been really patient," says Rose. "She's followed the plan. She hasn't pushed it. She has obviously been really frustrated with it, but she hasn't done anything silly that would have counteracted [the work we've been doing].

"An impatient athlete would be the kind of person that goes against what you've said and hurts themselves. She's been desperate to get back, but has been very patient and smart. Even in Lausanne, I think she was smart not to try to showboat in that race. The eyes are on the goal, as opposed to just trying to grab everything in the short term."

Hodgkinson's natural power is not only what makes her extraordinary on the track but it's also what places her system under so much pressure, making that maintenance between training sessions and races so important. Rose adds, though, that another key element is communication and that the European champion is not only incredibly in tune with her body, but also increasingly good at spotting potential issues.

"If I assess her and she'll say: 'I think I'm just not quite straight at the moment or quite aligned,' she's always right," says Rose. "I think she's also really pleased that 'I was right'. I think it's really important for any athlete to be able to identify that. Someone like Keely not being quite right could be an injury risk. It's all a learning curve."

And Hodgkinson has learned a lot. As Painter points out, she has been getting knocked down, but getting up again, for a long time now.

"Resilience and composure have always been big strengths of hers," he adds. "That's why she's won so many medals. She has been through a lot, but you only get resilience by going through hard times and she's had a lot of them growing up as a kid, with the operation on her ear (Hodgkinson is 95 per cent deaf in one ear after undergoing an operation to remove a tumour when she was 13) and things like that. It's made her who she is.



ABOVE: Hodgkinson during a physio session with Alison Rose

"This year it's been exactly the same. She's had to draw on strengths to get through. There have been a lot of tears and a lot of fluctuations in mood because one minute you're super happy and the next you're really upset. It's a shame, but it makes you stronger."

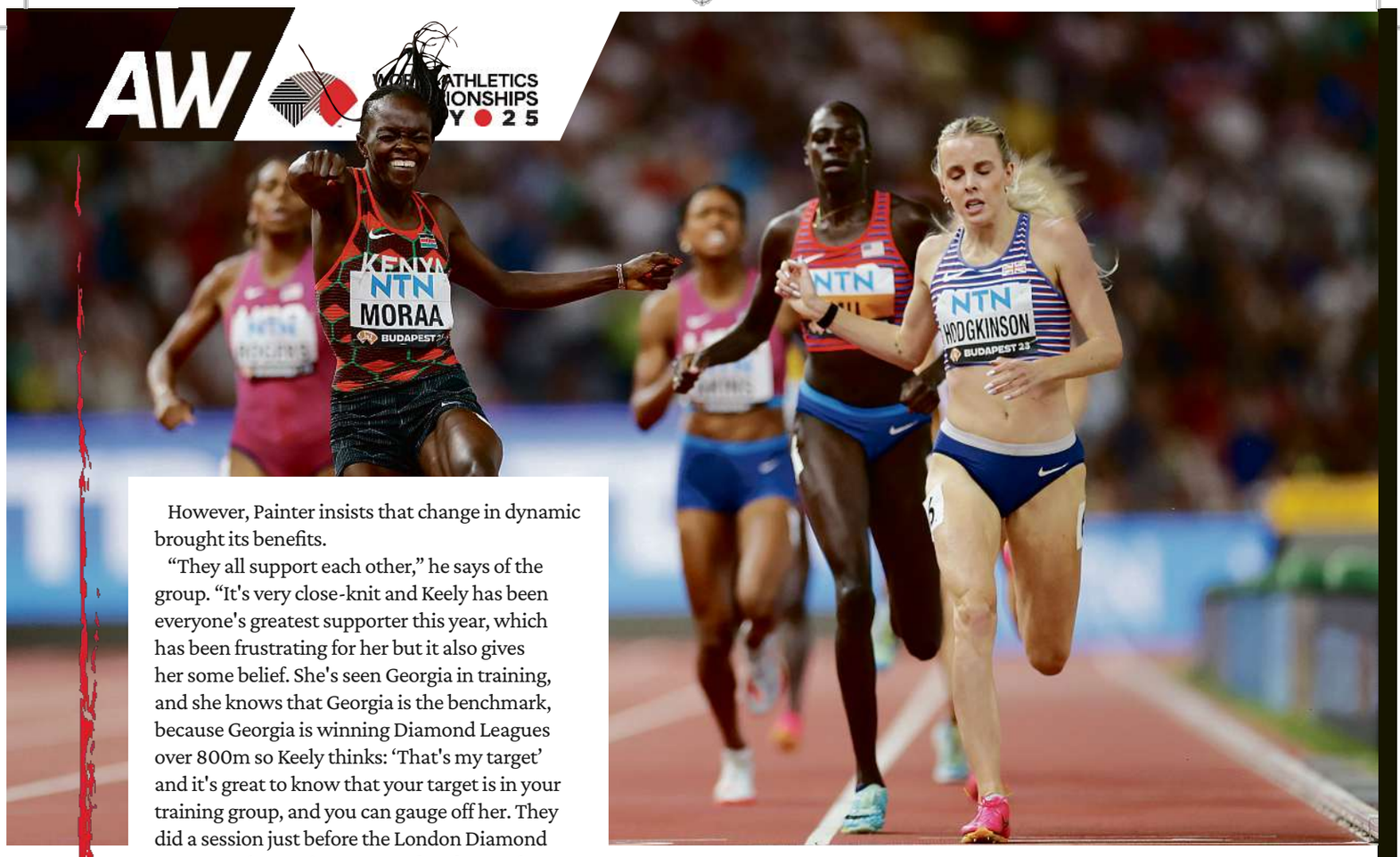
It's a very different Keely Hodgkinson that will arrive at Tokyo's National Stadium in 2025, compared to the 19-year-old who had just arrived on the senior scene but left the 2021 Olympics gobsmacked by her then British record and a silver medal.

Aside from Commonwealth Games gold, a world title is the only thing missing from an already burgeoning CV. But the world championships, either indoors or out, have not been kind thus far. Having to settle for silver in Eugene in 2022 and Budapest a year later hurt. Do those narrow misses represent the biggest disappointments of her career?

"I'd say so, yes," says Painter. "The worlds has never gone perfectly. She's had two silvers and then indoors she's never been able to compete. She's always had an injury when it's been the world indoor championships and it's so frustrating because she should have had three gold medals now in the world indoors, but she's not been able to perform.

"Hopefully she can win this one now and then, hopefully, win the world indoors [in Poland next spring] as well. She needs something to motivate her and the bigger the challenge, the more she rises. Most of the good people in all sports are like that. She wants to leave this sport with a legacy and be one of the greatest of all time."

Hodgkinson is the biggest name in the Manchester-based M11 Track Club that is led by Painter and his wife, Jenny Meadows, but it must have been even more difficult for her to look on this summer and watch team-mate Georgia Hunter Bell making such impressive 800m progress, winning Diamond League races in Stockholm and London.



However, Painter insists that change in dynamic brought its benefits.

"They all support each other," he says of the group. "It's very close-knit and Keely has been everyone's greatest supporter this year, which has been frustrating for her but it also gives her some belief. She's seen Georgia in training, and she knows that Georgia is the benchmark, because Georgia is winning Diamond Leagues over 800m so Keely thinks: 'That's my target' and it's great to know that your target is in your training group, and you can gauge off her. They did a session just before the London Diamond League and Georgia was way ahead so Keely was like: 'Okay, that's where I've got to be'. It's key to that stimulus. She needs that challenge. It has been frustrating but it's also been rewarding in a sense."

It has also been rewarding to silence the online critics recently. One observer called it "delusional" for Hodgkinson to ask for the wavelight pacing technology to be set to 1:54 for that comeback race in Silesia, for example, while Painter is also aware of some other less than positive theories circling the internet.

"We're not just winging it," he says. "Obviously these people are making these comments because they don't know where we are and they've not seen us in training. But everyone's entitled to their opinion, aren't they? It does wind you up a bit, and there's one guy on the internet saying that Keely's had a silent ban for a year – [suggesting] that that's why she hasn't performed. And it's like: 'You're insane'.

"All the plans are in place but there are just some strange people with strange opinions in the world. You've just got to rise above it and use it as a bit of fuel, but ultimately, not get too stressed about it."

The focus is on that Tokyo gold and, for Hodgkinson to finish the year as world champion would represent a remarkable achievement for the 2024 BBC Sports Personality of the Year. Those tasked with getting her to the top of the global mountain once again, though, aren't taking anything for granted.

"I think I'll probably heave a sigh of relief once these world championships are all over," says

> "She needs something to motivate her and the bigger the challenge, the more she rises

Rose. "The Olympics were the same. People said to me: 'Why do you get worried about it?'. Well, until that final is over, it's not over. Anything could happen – you could lose a spike, someone could push you, you just don't know and all of those things are out of your control.

"Keely is in it and dealing with it and it's probably easier doing that than it is watching it. And you know how much work has gone into it. You know how much work she's put into it, how much work Trevor and Jenny have put in, how much all of us behind the scenes have put into it. She works phenomenally hard."

She also shares characteristics with her fellow champions, Holmes and Ennis-Hill.

"Focus," says Rose when asked what she thinks the trio have in common. "There's that real focus on training hard and what your goal is. Then it's having support around them because that's what makes you grounded, doesn't it? With Kelly, it was family, for Jess, it was her husband and family and with Keely it's family and friends.

"I also think it is that absolute self belief that you can do it – an absolute ability to train hard, that big focus on the goal, and just knowing you're going to get there."

ABOVE: Hodgkinson was pipped to 800m gold by Mary Moraa at the World Championships in Budapest

"Georgia's natural talent was always there"

Trevor Painter has long believed that Georgia Hunter Bell possesses great potential over 800m. He could see it during their first spell of working together before she left for university in the US back in 2015 and he can see it now, as she prepares to tackle the distance at a major global championships for the first time.

There were Diamond League wins in Stockholm and London for the 31-year-old but both were disjointed. However, second place at the Zurich Diamond League and a PB of 1:55.96 that puts her third on the UK all-time list shows she is starting to fulfil her two-lap promise.

The story around Hunter Bell's return to athletics, and working with Painter, is well-known and she has been making up for lost time.

Her rapid success, winning Olympic 1500m bronze and breaking the British record in Paris last August, as well as her 800m exploits this year, meant that she was able to genuinely consider going for the 800m/1500m double in Tokyo.

She has opted to focus on the shorter event, which will put her directly up against gold medal favourite Keely Hodgkinson.

And, while Hunter Bell might not be expected to get in the way of her training partner's golden ambitions, her coach believes that she can be a big factor.

"When she went off to America I was gutted because I thought she had the skills to be a very good 800m runner," says Painter. "Then she got fed up over there, got injured a lot and started having a life, moved away from the sport.

"She came back through duathlon, so she was more of a 5km runner but I knew what the potential was for the faster speeds.

"We started doing a few 1500s as well as the 5km and the 1500s went very well. Then we started doing a few 800s to enhance the speed for the 1500s and the 800s went very well, very quickly off little speedwork. So that natural talent was always there."

Discovering how best to race the distance is an ongoing process, meanwhile, and Hunter Bell has been learning on the job.

"If you look at Stockholm, she won that race, but at 600m she was plum last and boxed in and she just managed to get through. In London, she ran into a hole again, managed to get out of it and came away like a train. In Lausanne [where she was third], she ran 56.6 for the first lap and that would have felt like 56.1 in those conditions. That's too fast for Georgia."

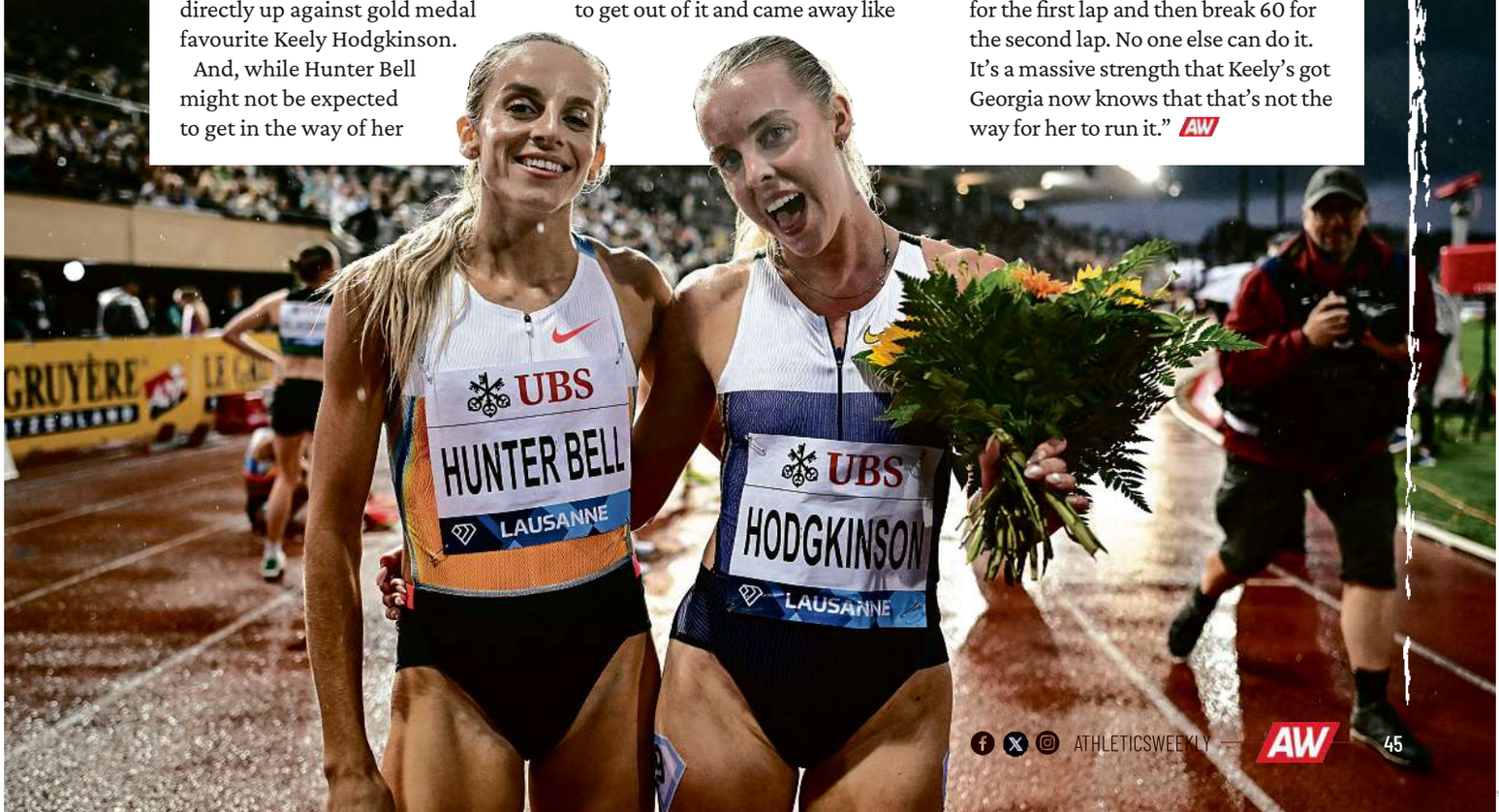
Zurich, where she ran the first 400m in 56.8, was "almost the perfect race", says Painter. "She still got blocked twice in last 300m so when she gets a clear run that time should come down a little more."

Hunter Bell's best chance of medal success, he feels, is to remember her strengths and not get caught up by what Hodgkinson is doing.

"If Georgia trained the way Keely trains, she'd run terribly," he adds. "And if Keely trained the way Georgia trains, she also wouldn't be as good. Georgia is a more floaty, aerobic runner, whereas Keely is a more powerful sprinter-type so she has to get out and use her speed. Georgia has to conserve her speed, and that's why she finishes so strong.

"She's not actually running that much faster. She's just stronger than the others and that's why she's coming through.

"She knows now: 'I can't run 56 low [for the first lap]'. There's only one person in the world that could do that for the first lap and then break 60 for the second lap. No one else can do it. It's a massive strength that Keely's got Georgia now knows that that's not the way for her to run it." AW



SPORTS PERSONALITY

There's a softer side to Josh Kerr that is in stark contrast to the ultra competitive athlete that the public sees. But, as **Euan Crumley** discovers, that empathy also helps to give the reigning world champion an edge over his opposition

According to his coach, Danny Mackey, there are two sides to Josh Kerr. One is the super confident, hyper competitive figure that the public sees and is also only too happy to throw in the occasional verbal hand grenade to provoke a reaction from his opponents. The other is the softer, "thoughtful" individual who dotes on Mackey's three-year-old daughter and "makes you feel cared for". Both are very real, but to see the latter traits as some kind of weakness would be a big mistake.

"My mentor, [the renowned coach] Dan Pfaff, does a lot of work with Special Forces, and one of the highest qualities in military people is empathy," explains Mackey, head coach of the US-based Brooks Beasts group. "They're just softies and Josh is like that. He's very empathetic. But I think that quality makes him so competitive, because another side to empathetic people is that they put their heart into things, and they feel those things, and they wear their emotions on their sleeve."

Does that empathy also mean the reigning world 1500m champion is better at reading the room, picking up signals from his opponents, and potentially using them to his advantage?

"For sure," says Mackey. "He'll say things to me that, as a coach, I should be aware of first and I'll be like: 'It's crazy that he watched a race of one of his competitors and picked up something on them'. And he'll do it during races, too. He's reading them.

"It's almost like a boxer or an MMA fighter, where they'll start reading their competitor's patterns and picking up on the feints and head movements, their foot position and they're basically downloading it like a computer. He's very like that and I think the empathy is probably part of that. He's a caring person, so that means he pays attention."

Speaking to the Olympic silver medallist himself, it's clear that he loves paying attention to every single aspect and detail of his job – whether that is staying on top of his nutrition and sleep levels ("I set an alarm to go to bed and I'm an early riser so that means going to bed at 8pm") – to using every opportunity to give himself an edge. Take the call room, for example.

"I absolutely love it," grins Kerr, from the depths of his final pre-Tokyo training camp in Albuquerque. "There's something about it that I look forward to, and I don't know why. This year, we have a long call, with the warm-up area being a 15-minute drive from the stadium, so we practice that.

"It's something that, if you don't love, you truly hate. I can tell if someone loves it or hates it and I'll play with that a little bit. You've got to stay in your own processes a little bit but I think there's something special about seeing everyone in a pretty intense environment before you go out to war and I feel like I thrive in those situations."

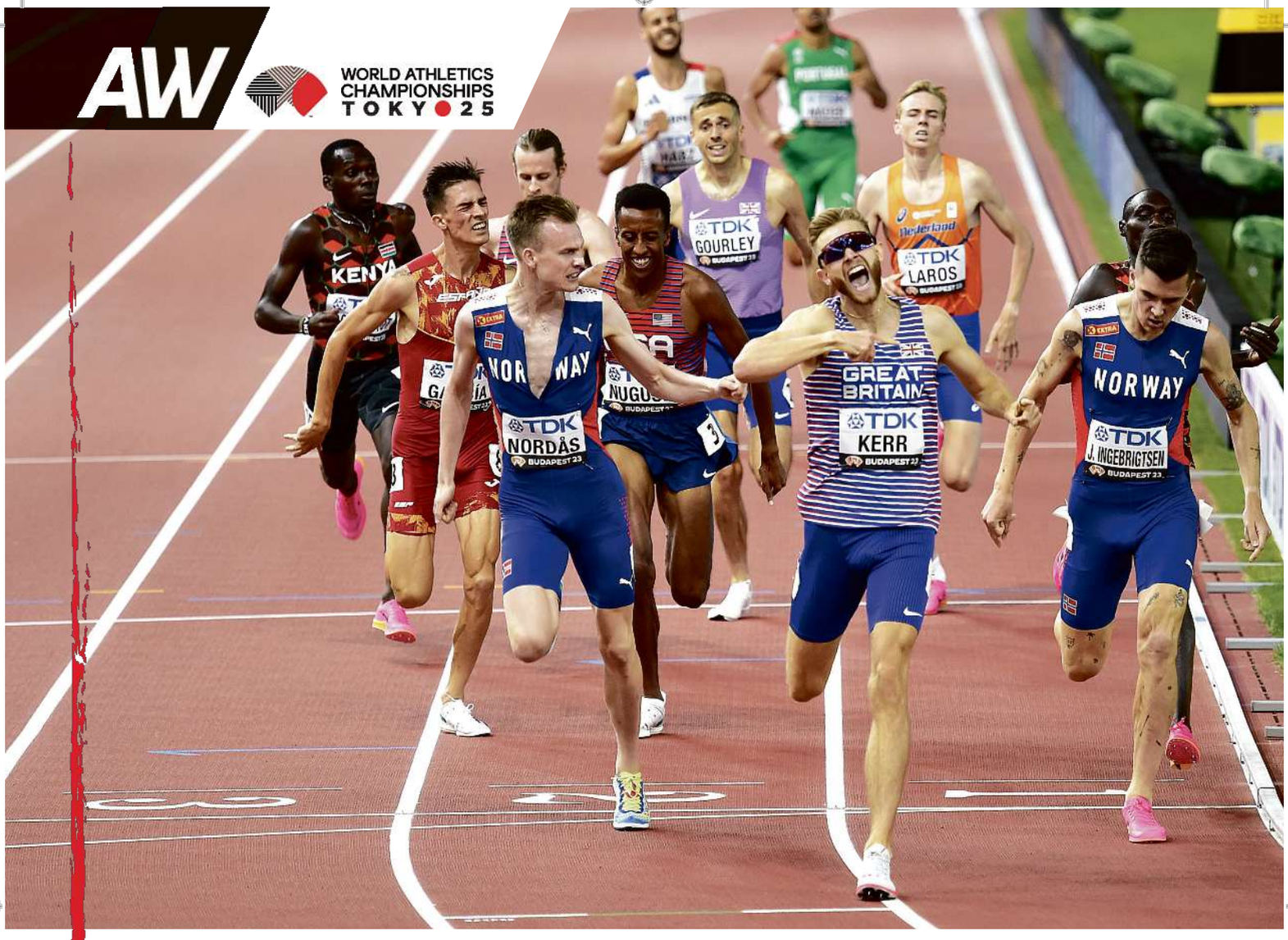
Given the nature of the 1500m in 2025, there will be some fresh faces for Kerr to keep an eye on in that Tokyo call room. His is an event that refuses to stand still and potential threats have been emerging from all directions.

At the London Diamond League, for example, Kerr was beaten by 18-year-old Kenyan Phaniel

RIGHT: Josh Kerr wins the 5000m at the UK Championships in Birmingham



PHOTO BY ALEX LIVESEY/BRITISH ATHLETICS



ABOVE: Kerr takes the 1500m world title ahead of Jakob Ingebrigtsen in Budapest

Koech, while Dutch European under-23 champion Niels Laros is clearly rounding into form and Olympic champion Cole Hocker ran 3:30.37 at the US trials, yet found it only to be good enough for third behind Jonah Koech and the 22-year-old Ethan Strand. Olympic bronze medallist Yared Nuguse was forced down the Diamond League route in his attempts to reach the world championships but didn't make it.

The Scot's response to the widening array of oppositon is to highlight the difference between one-off performances and championship racing. He knows from personal experience about the gulf between the two.

"It's whoever's going to prepare the best, and whoever is going to be ready to win," he says. "With these championship races, it's experience. It's: 'Have you been here before? Are you going to make mistakes? Are you feeling the pressure? How fit are you?' and I feel pretty confident in that so I'm very excited.

"For me, London 2017 [Kerr's first world championships] was a very eye-opening experience. For younger athletes, it's less about fitness and more about an availability to having success – being excited to be there and just going out and really sending it.

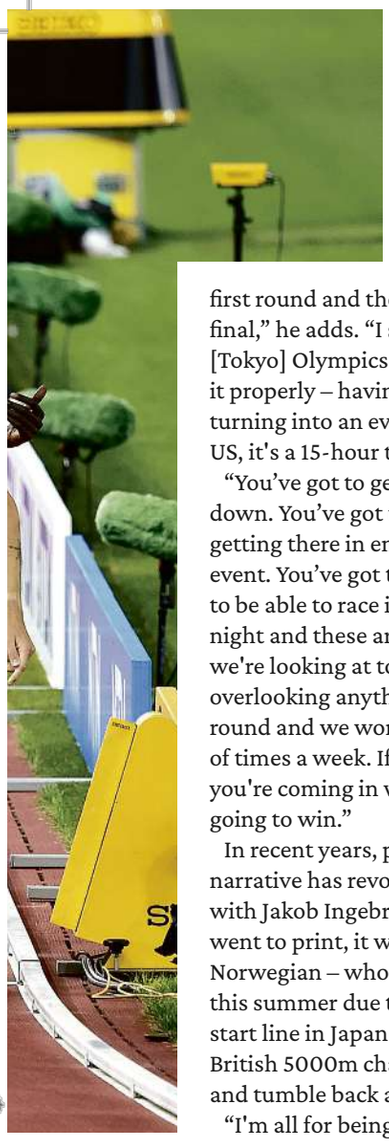
"I had great fitness that day but I got knocked out in the first round. I looked left and right, and I was like: 'There are seven or eight medals here'. I got the qualifying time by 0.01 – I ran 3:35.99 in college – and it's just different.

"You've got to be willing to hurt and you've got to be willing to get after it. When it's the top six [going through] in a 12-person race, you've got to race it like that. You don't race to win, you race to get through and you've got to be scrapping. You've got to want it. It'll be an interesting first few rounds. I think there are going to be some shocks."

There will be plenty to plan around, too.

"We're also going to be dealing with a 9am

> "Anyone that has a medal always has a shot to get another one, because it's a skill. It's not a fitness thing



first round and then 10pm second round and final," he adds. "I struggled with that at the [Tokyo] Olympics in 2021. I hadn't prepped for it properly – having a morning race and then turning into an evening race when, for us in the US, it's a 15-hour time difference.

"You've got to get your circadian rhythm down. You've got to make sure that you're getting there in enough time ahead of the event. You've got to go through your processes to be able to race in the morning and at night and these are the small things that we're looking at to make sure that we're not overlooking anything. I have my plan for each round and we work on that in practice a couple of times a week. If you're not prepped, and you're coming in without a plan, you're not going to win."

In recent years, particularly 2024, the 1500m narrative has revolved around Kerr's rivalry with Jakob Ingebrigtsen. Just as this magazine went to print, it was confirmed that the Norwegian – who has not raced outdoors at all this summer due to injury – would make the start line in Japan. Has the recently crowned British 5000m champion missed the rough and tumble back and forth with his nemesis?

"I'm all for being yourself," he says. "Both of us just answer questions the way we want to answer them, and we're very passionate about what we do, and we want to win.

"I think it would be nice to have him at the world championships ready to go. I would love that. I'm prepared for him to be at his best. I'm hoping for that, because I think anyone in the world is going to have a tough time dealing with me this month. And yes, it's frustrating not to have the best athletes at their best but everyone's got a lot going on in their lives."

Kerr is well aware, though, that if Ingebrigtsen does show, he won't be there just to make up the numbers.

"Anyone that's got a medal when it comes to a championship is going to be a threat." he says. "I do think there's an element of, with a lack of racing this year, it's going to be a tough one to navigate but I think that anyone that has a medal always has a shot to get another one, because it's a skill. It's not a fitness thing. I think if you matched everyone's fitness on the start line, there's not going to be that much of a difference, but it's 'who's the winner?' and if you have medals then you're a winner."

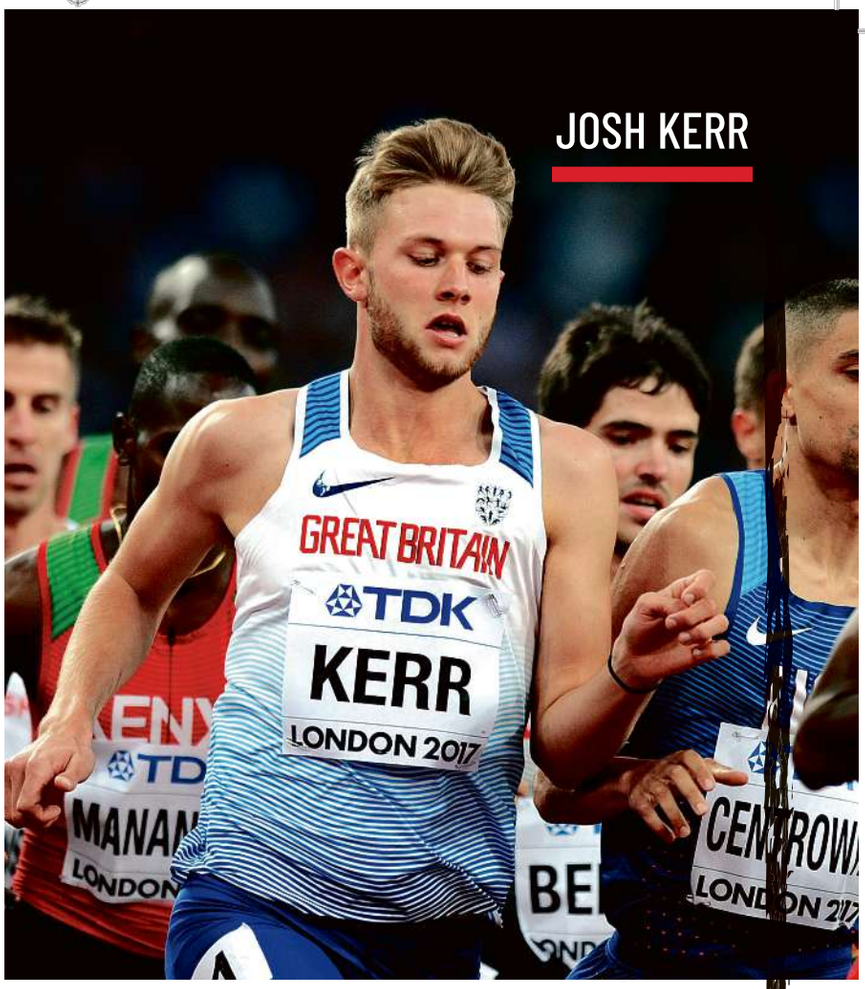
It's now over two years since Kerr sampled that winning feeling in Budapest with his world title and the 27-year-old quips that he's responsible for "probably 50 per cent" of the views the race has received online.Tellingly, though, he says: "I prefer to watch races that I don't do super well in, because you need to find the reasons why you don't win races and the reasons why other people do.

"It's very easy to watch the race that you won and be like: 'Ah, perfect. That was great', but I like the problem-solving aspect of it all. I'm looking to make decisions in 0.1 of a second and so, when I'm given a situation in front of me, I need to have a large bank of information of: 'This equals this' and so what we're working on at the moment is having lots of different plans and structures."

Kerr is magnanimous when discussing the 1500m final at the Paris Olympics, where he came second to Hocker despite a British record-breaking run of 3:27.79. "Someone that can kick, reload and kick again in a 3:27 race... you're not going to beat that," he says. "I couldn't beat that on the day."

Yet the performance represented progress, which is what the 2024 world indoor 3000m champion is searching for. With no man having retained the world 1500m title since Asbel Kiprop in 2013, there's another piece of history to take aim at.

"These are moments when you've got to pinch yourself and say: 'There are not many more times in your career that you're going to come in as a reigning champion, ready to set the world on fire again," he says. "It's a very privileged position to be in." AW



ABOVE: A youthful Kerr at his first World Championships in London eight years ago

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

Laura Muir talks to **Euan Crumley** about the long road back from injury, making it to her seventh world championships, and the chance to continue her athletics education

"I seem to get injured in World Championships years," says Laura Muir with a rueful grin, allowing the thought to linger. She isn't wrong. In 2017, 2019 and 2022 there were fitness battles to be fought before the Olympic silver medallist took to the 1500m start line in London, Doha and Eugene respectively.

There has been a similar script to follow in 2025, too, though this time it felt different – and not in a good way. "This was the worst injury I've had," she says when referring to the torn calf muscle, with the damage extending into the Achilles, sustained during the early part of this year. "It's probably the longest period of time that I had had off of running since I started when I was 12."

With more than a hint of understatement, the now 32-year-old adds: "This one wasn't great. Achilles and calves are a bit of a bugger to try and sort. There's not a fixed timeline where it's like: 'Okay, at this point it's healed'. You've got to load it, and that takes time, it's different for every person and it flares up when you might not expect it. You've got to be patient."

The circumstances were made all the more challenging by the fact that going for a run is not just part of the day job for the reigning Commonwealth 1500m champion but also a way for her to work things through in her mind, to unwind, to clear her head.

"It's what I love to do, and then you're not allowed to do it," she says. "It really helps me mentally switch off – it's a nice break and a release – so when you don't have that it's like a vicious cycle. But it's part of the process, something you've got to take on the chin and just cross train the best you can."

And cross train Muir did, under the watchful eye of someone who knew exactly what she was going through. It was in January that the Scot announced she would be basing herself in Leeds to be guided by Steve Cram and Laura Weightman. Neither of that coaching team were strangers to injury during their own athletic careers but Weightman had it



PHOTO BY GRAHAM SMITH



RIGHT: Laura Muir has had a long road back from injury

LEFT: Muir in action at the UK Championships

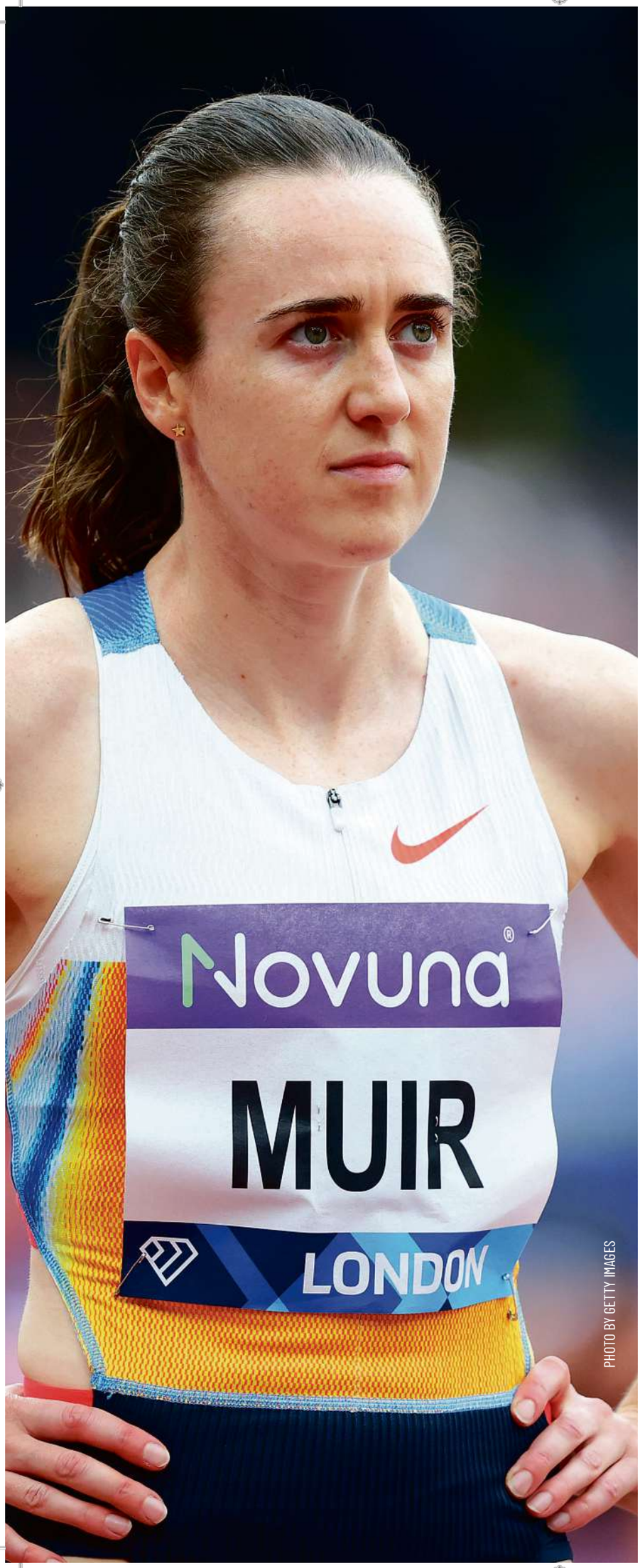


PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

particularly tough and was forced to retire early, in September 2023, because of a number of setbacks that had required surgery. Her own experiences were channeled into helping her athlete's recovery process.

"She was amazing," nods Muir of the European and Commonwealth medallist. "I was knackered! I had a whole cross training routine. [Laura] had me doing everything – swim sessions, aqua jogging sessions, I was in the gym loads, so I was like: 'Laura!'. She was so good at communication – we had my strength and conditioning coach and my physio and the doctors all in on everything. I couldn't have wished to have a better person to co-ordinate all that and take me through that. It was very, very valuable – I've never had anybody like that in my corner before.

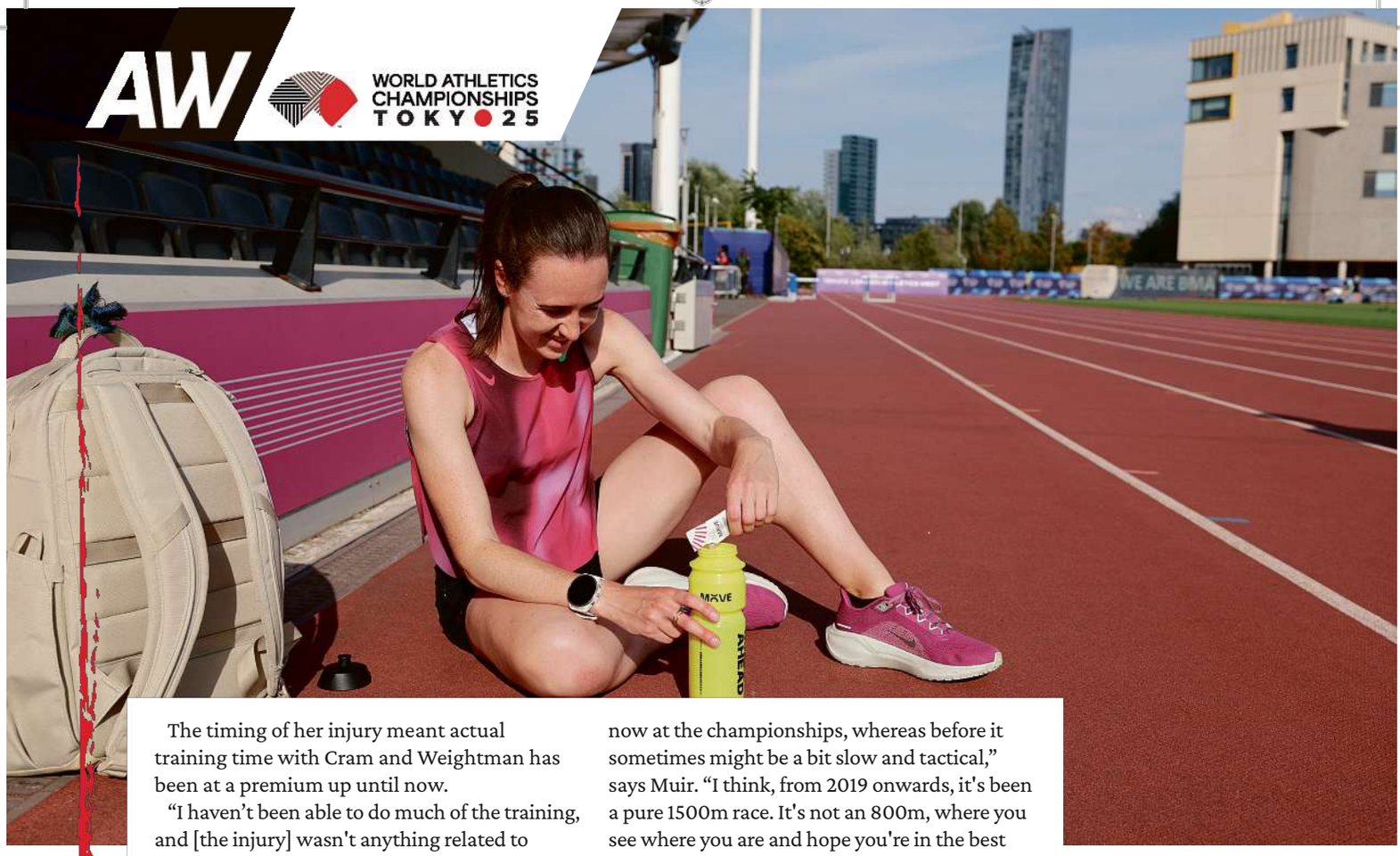
"I'm proud of myself in that I've had a few injuries before, but I've always come back pretty strong and I think mentally you just grind it out. It's not fun, but you get it done. I know that process but, having Laura there, that reassurance and that mental aspect as well was really big. And having someone that's gone through it before and been off their feet for that length of time – well, a lot longer, actually – someone who can relate, not just physically, but mentally as well."

The work has been worth it, though, and Muir admits "it was huge" to be back racing on the track again in recent weeks. After a low-key, rain-lashed 1500m runout at Trafford in mid-July that represented her first appearance since the Paris Olympic final, she was back in front of an adoring crowd at the London Diamond League a few days later.

"To have the opportunity brought me on a lot," she says of that 800m performance that proved to be the perfect set-up for the British Championships. With the 1500m qualifying standard already secure, a top-two finish would punch the ticket for Tokyo. That Sarah Calvert beat her to the national title did not bother Muir one jot. The job had been done.

"It was just really special to be back in that environment and then, to secure my spot, I was thrilled, because there were times – probably even two, three weeks before that – that I wasn't really sure if I was going to make the team."

Instead, Muir is talking to *AW* in early August from St Moritz, the Swiss mountain air helping to put a spring in her step as she embarks on a training block that she hopes will not only put her in contention for more major honours but help to build the relationship with her mentors.



The timing of her injury meant actual training time with Cram and Weightman has been at a premium up until now.

"I haven't been able to do much of the training, and [the injury] wasn't anything related to their training at all," says Muir, who ran an encouraging 3:57.63 at the Brussels Diamond League. "So it's nice to have this window to try and push on, learn about the training a little bit more, and then for the next few years to come hopefully, if I can do the training, then I'll be excited to see what I can do."

With that Olympic silver from Tokyo in 2021 and a world bronze from Eugene, as well as European titles indoors and out, there is little left for Muir to prove. Yet persistence and determination have been hallmarks of her success and, with personal bests arriving at regular intervals last year, she is intent on enjoying a few more years at the top level.

She does admit, however, that that is an increasingly tough place to be. This will be her seventh outdoor World Championships, having made her debut over 800m in Moscow back in 2013. At those same championships, a then teenaged Faith Kipyegon was finishing fifth in the 1500m final – the event she has not only mastered but transformed. The Kenyan world record-holder and three-time Olympic champion will be going for her fourth world title over the distance in Tokyo.

"I think [1500m] is a really hard, fast race now at the championships, whereas before it sometimes might be a bit slow and tactical," says Muir. "I think, from 2019 onwards, it's been a pure 1500m race. It's not an 800m, where you see where you are and hope you're in the best place when the moves are made, it's just all out from the front, which I think is great because she [Faith] is making it such a pure 1500m event. You have to be really strong, you have to be really fast. It's not leaving anything to chance so the best 1500m runners are at the front."

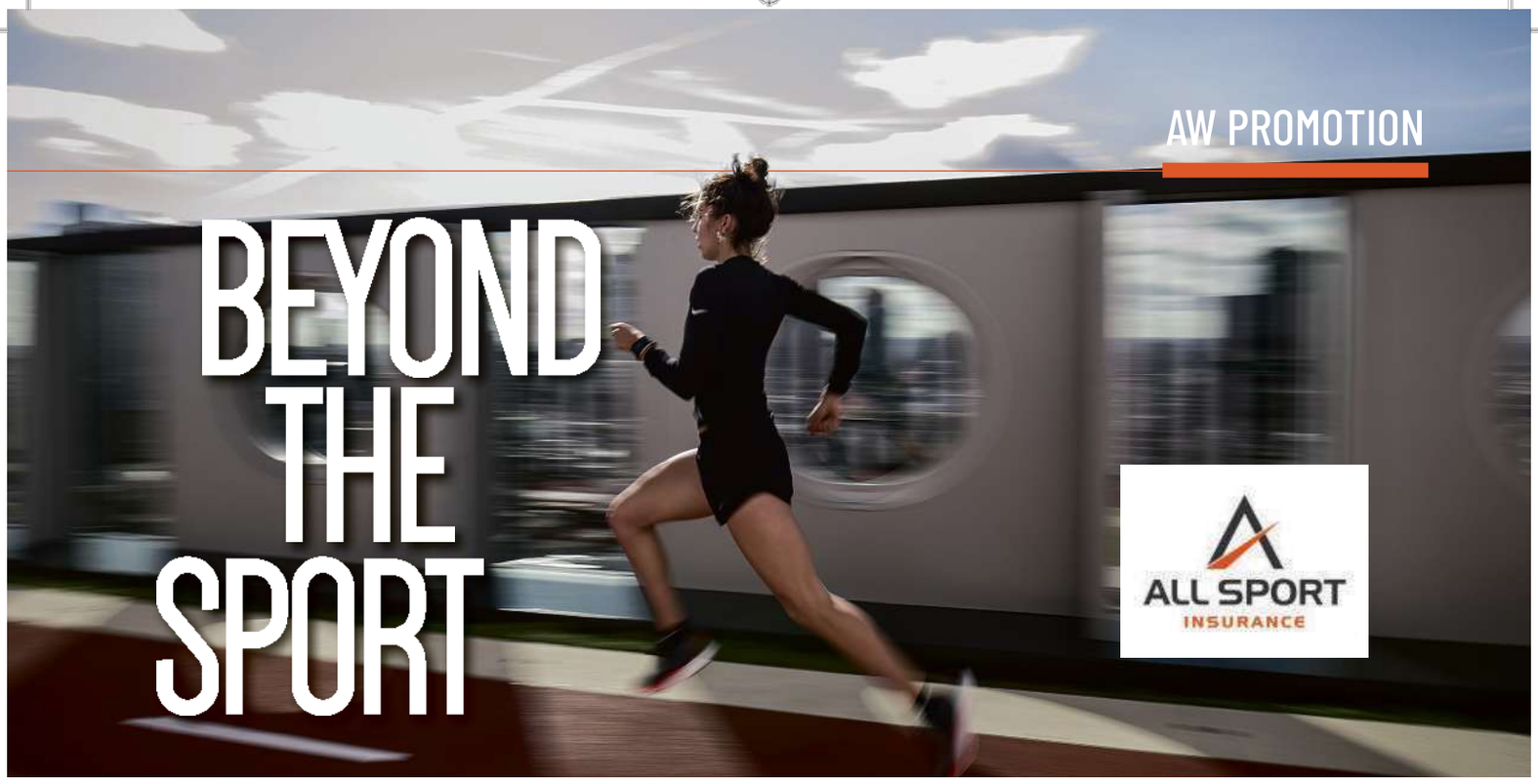
All of that sounds exciting, exhausting and excruciating in equal measure. So how does it feel to run a major final like that?

"It's like an 800m race but it's 1500m – that's the only way I can describe it," says Muir. "I went through, I think, in 61 seconds for the first 400m of Paris and that was a 1500m, so it's like running an 800m race, but you've got to keep going. You've just got to get on that train and hang on. It just shows who's the strongest and who's the fastest. It makes it very, very, very fair. You've got to be the fastest 1500m runner to win." AW

ABOVE: Laura Muir uses MOVE Endurance to help fuel her training sessions

Laura Muir has partnered with Scottish brand MOVE Pre-Workout, integrating their new Endurance formula into her training. MOVE Endurance is designed for long, demanding sessions, providing sustained energy, improved stamina and hydration support ***movepreworkout.com***

"Faith is making it such a pure event. You have to be really strong, you have to be really fast. It's not leaving anything down to chance so the best 1500m runners are at the front



BEYOND THE SPORT

When we think of elite athletes, we often picture peak physical performance, personal bests and championship moments. Less visible, yet equally critical, is the off-field preparation that makes these moments possible.

Beyond rigorous training and mental preparation, successful athletes operate like businesses. They manage their affairs with foresight and precision — especially when it comes to logistics, financial planning and protection.

As former Olympian Allyson Felix put it: "Every detail matters. The more you take care of off the track, the more space you have to focus on the race."

That's why, in the August issue of *AW*, All Sport Insurance highlighted how they can help athletes, and the wider athletics eco-system secure the best protections for their needs, on and off the field of play. Here are some examples to consider.

1. Travel Insurance – Protection on the Move

Athletes often travel internationally, sometimes to locations with limited access to healthcare or logistical support. Travel insurance provides:

- Medical cover abroad, including emergency evacuation
- Trip cancellation or delay protection
- Lost or damaged equipment reimbursement

2. Motor Insurance and Home Insurance – Covering life on the road

Athletes travel frequently to training and competition venues but many may be unaware that this activity requires business use to be added to their car insurance.

Other considerations include:

- The need for comprehensive cover to provide protection against accidents, theft, vandalism or damage
- Adding additional drivers, such as support staff, family and friends to your policy
- The need to accurately disclose your occupation as an athlete, to ensure any claims are not rejected

3. Medical Insurance – Fast Recovery, Best Treatment

Injury is an unavoidable risk in sport. Private medical insurance ensures:

- Fast access to specialist care, rehab and surgery
- Choice of providers and treatment plans
- Reduced downtime and a quicker return to play

4. Income Protection – A safety net for uncertainty

If an athlete is injured and unable to compete, their income can dry up fast – especially for those not on guaranteed salaries or sponsorships. We have all heard about delayed payments from leagues recently, and this can hinder future financial planning.

Income protection insurance can:

- Replace a portion of earnings during recovery
- Cover living expenses or training costs while sidelined
- Offer peace of mind for both athletes and their families

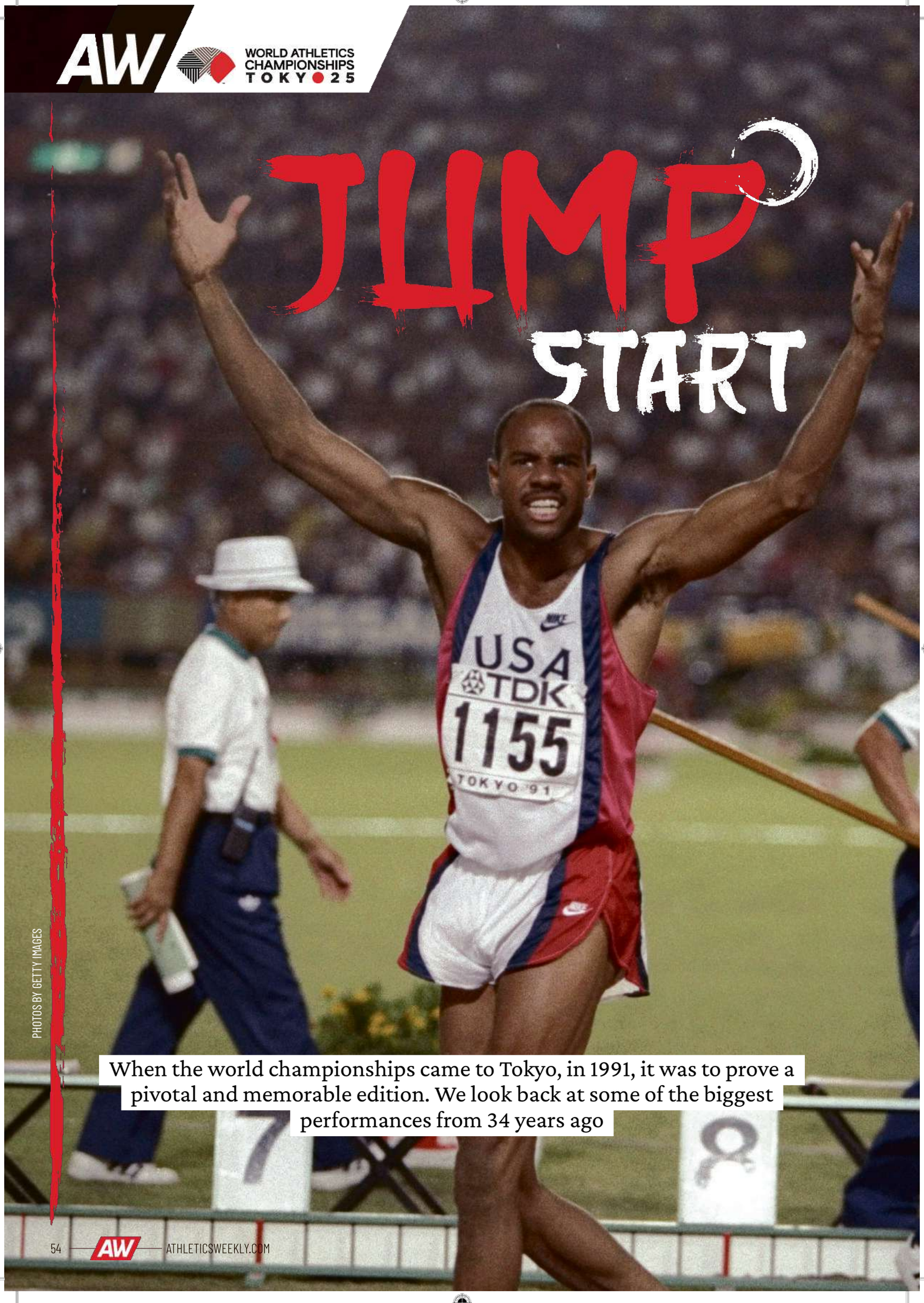
Smart athletes invest in risk management the same way they invest in training. It's not just about maximizing gains; it's also about minimising avoidable losses. Whether you are an athlete, coach, support staff, agent or a member of a local club you can contact the team at All Sport, who will be happy to discuss your specific circumstances and the various insurance options available.

#OnYourSide

GET IN TOUCH

For more information, visit: allsportinsurance.co.uk
Our team are happy to answer any questions or provide a quote.
Enquiries can be received at: enquiries@allsportinsurance.co.uk
or call 01803 659121
Follow @AllSportInsurance on Instagram, LinkedIn and X

JUMP START



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

When the world championships came to Tokyo, in 1991, it was to prove a pivotal and memorable edition. We look back at some of the biggest performances from 34 years ago



The 2025 World Championships in Tokyo has a tough act to follow. Not only is Budapest two years ago considered to be one of the best ever but, when the global showpiece last came to the Japanese capital, in 1991, some of the most memorable moments in athletics history unfolded.

As the athletes took to the stage 34 years ago, they did so for what was only the third edition of the World Championships, following on from Helsinki in 1983 and Rome in 1987. It was to be a pivotal time given that, from 1991 onwards, the championships were staged every two years rather than every four – a decision which didn't actually sit well with many athletes at the time who felt it would devalue the championships but is now, of course, widely accepted as the norm.

The global landscape was very different then, too. This was the last world championships to feature the Soviet Union and the first to feature the then recently unified Germany.

The former East German Katrin Krabbe hit the headlines as the only athlete to win double individual gold, winning the women's 100m and 200m, albeit her career was ended soon afterwards due to a doping ban. Carl Lewis (men's 100m), Greg Foster (men's 110m hurdles) and Sergey Bubka (men's pole vault) won their respective events for the third time, while there was also a world record for the US men's 4x100m team. However, one performance in particular stood out above all of the others – and is still unbeaten to this day.

Stars align for Powell

Gold in the men's long jump was expected to go to Lewis, who had been unbeaten in the event for 10 years, had just broken the world record in taking 100m gold and was now eyeing Bob Beamon's historic mark of 8.90m that had stood since the 1968 Olympics.

It wasn't by accident that the American Olympic silver medallist Mike Powell had earned the nickname "Mike Foul" and, opening with an effort of 7.85m – compared to Lewis's championships record of 8.68m – the writing appeared to be on the wall.

Yet, as Powell recalled to *Athletics Weekly* in 1991: "Before the first jump I was too hyped and I got too excited. After that, I was more focused. I wasn't worried about what Carl Lewis did and that surprised me."

Powell's second effort was a much improved 8.54m but, after a foul, Lewis made his intentions clear with a third-round 8.83m and fourth-round 8.91m that cemented his lead and sent him beyond Beamon's mark but did not put him into the record books due to the illegal wind readings.

Yet still Powell was not deterred. "Even when I saw Carl jump 8.91m I thought: 'Well, that's not good enough to win'," he recalled. "I predicted the record before the meet."

That prediction came true when the stars aligned for him in round five. At first glance, the jump looked huge but Powell faced an anxious wait for the distance to be confirmed. When 8.95m flashed up, he could not contain his joy and sprinted off down the track, eyes wide and arms aloft.

Could Lewis respond? He did so magnificently with leaps of 8.87m and 8.84m but, despite the greatest series in history that featured four personal bests, he had to settle for second.

Lewis' golden consolation

He might have missed out on long jump glory but Carl Lewis still went home with two gold medals in his hand luggage.

LEFT: Mike Powell produced an incredible performance to break Bob Beamon's long jump world record



RIGHT: Carl Lewis won 100m gold in a world record-breaking time

First, he produced a world record-breaking run of 9.86 to win the 100m. Having won his second-round race in a windy 9.80, in the final his late surge took him past previous record-holder Leroy Burrell, who had won the US Championships.

Lewis and Burrell then later combined to set a world record 37.50 in the 4x100m relay, though France pushed them close, with Great Britain in third place.

Marathon man

The most popular winner in Tokyo came on the lost day of the championships, when Japanese home favourite Hiromi Taniguchi took the marathon honours. His face covered in pain as he broke away at 38km, he coped with the hot and humid conditions better than his rivals did to clock 2:14:57 and finish 29 seconds ahead of runner-up Ahmed Saleh of Djibouti.

Krabbe's double

Merlene Ottey had been unbeaten in 56 finals since the Rome race of 1987 and was a big favourite in the women's 100m after a windy 10.78 semi-final. Yet the Jamaican could only finish third in the final in 11.06 into a very strong 3.0m/sec headwind as Katrin Krabbe won it in 10.99 before then grabbing 200m gold in the rain and into a headwind in 22.09.

TOKYO 1991 BY NUMBERS

1517
participants *(1451 in Rome)*

167
countries *(159)*

43
events *(43)*

14
countries provided champions *(16)*

29
countries provided medallists (27)

52
countries provided finalists *(47)*

POINTS & MEDAL TABLE

	Points	G	S	B
1 URS	283	9	9	11
2 USA	249	10	8	8
3 GER	194	5	4	8
4 KEN	84	4	3	1
5 GBR	76	2	2	3
6 FRA	45	1	1	0
7 JAM	42	1	1	3
8 FIN	42	1	1	1
9 CHN	40	2	1	1
10 ITA	38	1	0	0

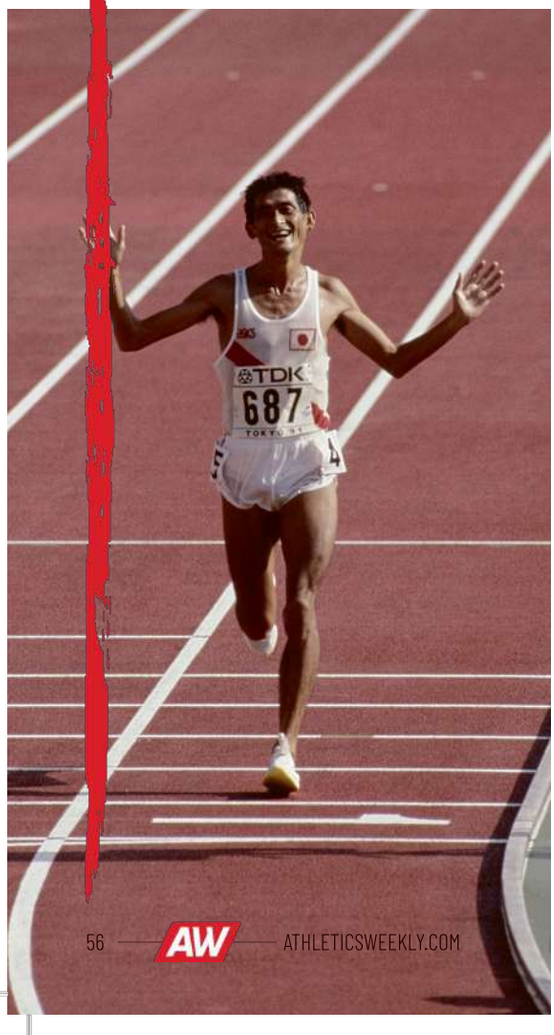
Britain's champions

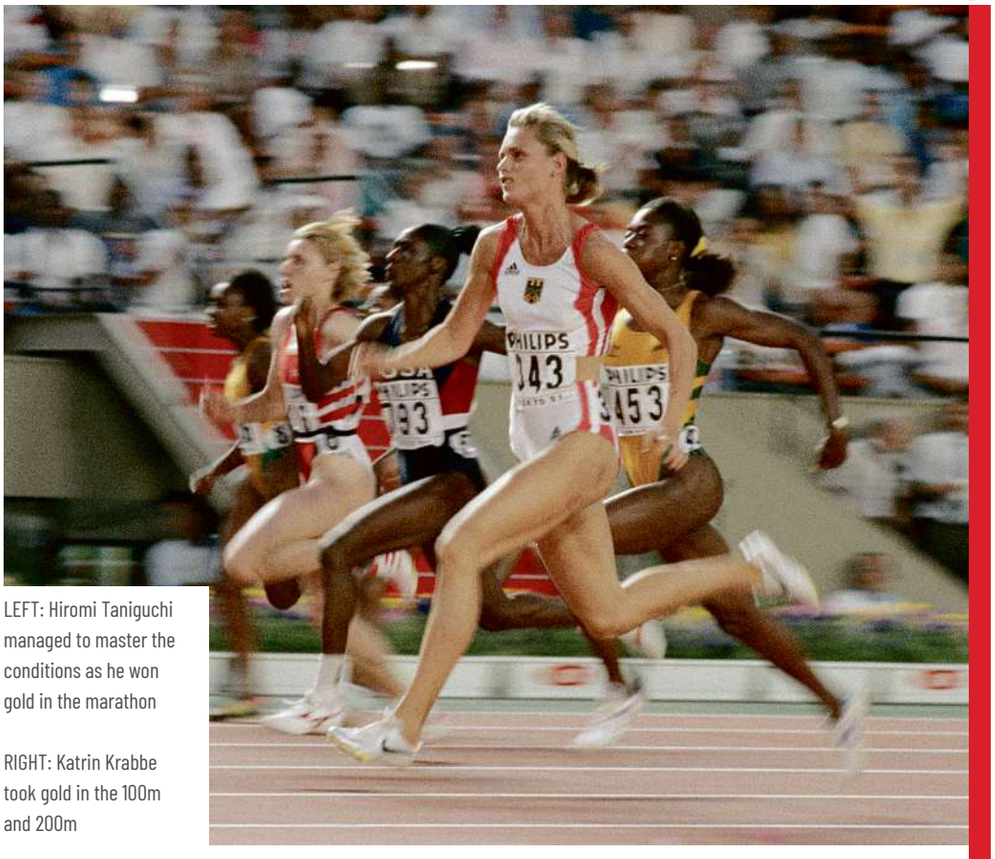
Two gold medals came Great Britain's way in 1991. The first was won by Liz McColgan, who wore her competitors down with a brilliant front-running 10,000m, competing just 10 months after the birth of her daughter Eilish.

She immediately set a fast pace in extreme heat and humidity. By halfway (15:34.15), only world junior champion Derartu Tulu could stay with her.

The Ethiopian fell 80 metres back at 8000m and ultimately ended up a minute back in eighth. The Scot pushed on alone and won by 20 seconds.

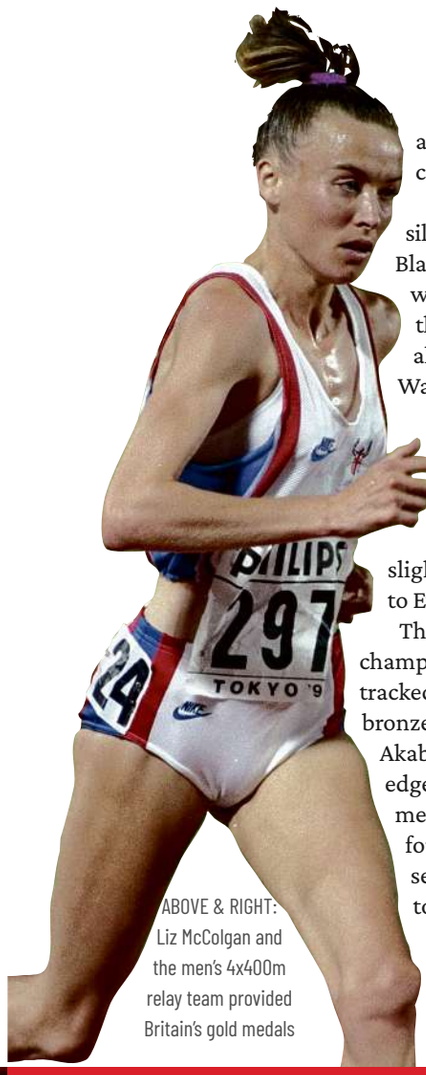
The other gold was less expected as the 4x400m team pulled off a shock victory





LEFT: Hiromi Taniguchi managed to master the conditions as he won gold in the marathon

RIGHT: Katrin Krabbe took gold in the 100m and 200m



ABOVE & RIGHT: Liz McColgan and the men's 4x400m relay team provided Britain's gold medals

against the normally all-conquering Americans.

The individual 400m silver medallist Roger Black put Britain ahead with a 44.7 opener but the US were three metres ahead after Quincy Watts' electric 43.4.

Many expected the US to extend that lead but John Regis stuck to Danny Everett and closed up slightly with a leg of 44.22 to Everett's 44.31.

The final leg saw 400m champion Antonio Pettigrew tracked by 400m hurdles bronze medallist Kriss Akabusi, but the Briton edged ahead in the last 30 metres and won by just four hundredths of a second. He timed 44.59 to the American's 44.93.

Britain's seven medals put them fifth in both the medal standings and points table. AW



1991 WORLD CHAMPIONS

MEN

100m: Carl Lewis (USA) 9.86 (WR)
200m: Michael Johnson (USA) 20.01
400m: Antonio Pettigrew (USA) 44.57
800m: Billy Konchellah (KEN) 1:43.99
1500m: Noureddine Morceli (ALG) 3:32.84
5000m: Yobes Ondieki (KEN) 13:14.45
10,000m: Moses Tanui (KEN) 27:38.74
Marathon: Hiromi Taniguchi (JPN) 2:14:57
3000m steeplechase: Moses Kiptanui (KEN) 8:12.59
110m hurdles: Greg Foster (USA) 13.06
400m hurdles: Samuel Matete (ZAM) 47.64
High jump: Charles Austin (USA) 2.38m
Pole vault: Sergey Bubka (URS) 5.95m
Long jump: Mike Powell (USA) 8.95m (WR)
Triple jump: Khristo Markov (BUL) 17.92m
Shot: Werner Gunthor (SUI) 21.67m
Discus: Lars Riedel (GER) 66.20m
Hammer: Yuriy Sedykh (URS) 81.70m
Javelin: Kimmo Kinnunen (FIN) 90.82m
Decathlon: Dan O'Brien (USA) 8812
20km walk: Maurizio Damilano (ITA) 1:19:37
50km walk: Aleksandr Potashov (URS) 3:53.09
4x100m relay: USA 37.50
4x400m relay: GBR 2:57.53

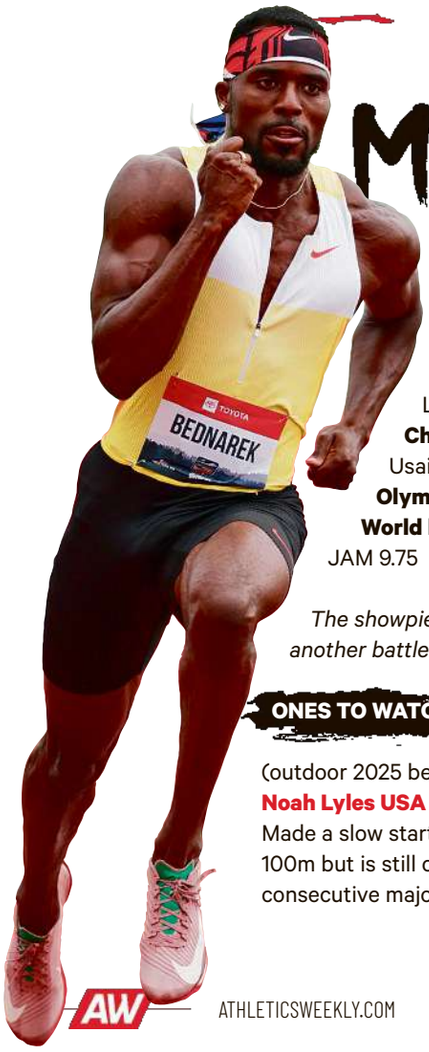
WOMEN

100m: Katrin Krabbe (GER) 10.99
200m: Katrin Krabbe (GER) 22.09
400m: Marie-Jose Perec (FRA) 49.13
800m: Liliya Nurutdinova (URS) 1:57.50
1500m: Hassiba Boulmerka (ALG) 4:02.21
3000m: Tatyana Dorovskikh (RUS) 8:35.82
10,000m: Liz McColgan (GBR) 31:14.31
Marathon: Wanda Panfil (POR) 2:29:53
100m hurdles: Lyudmila Narozhilenko (URS) 12.59
400m hurdles: Tatyana Ledovskaya (URS) 53.11
High jump: Heike Henkel (GER) 2.05m
Long jump: Jackie Joyner-Kersee (USA) 7.32m
Shot: Huang Zhihong (CHN) 20.83m
Discus: Tsvetanka Khristova (BUL) 71.02m
Javelin: Xu Demei (CHN) 68.78m
Heptathlon: Sabine Braun (GER) 6672
10km walk: Alina Ivanova (URS) 42:57
4x100m relay: JAM 41.94
4x400m relay: URS 3:18.43

TREASURE



MEN'S 100M



Final: Sunday September 14
History maker: Usain Bolt JAM – three golds, one bronze
Defending champion: Noah Lyles USA 9.83
Championships record: Usain Bolt JAM 9.58, 2009
Olympic champion: Lyles USA 9.79
World leader: Kishane Thompson JAM 9.75

The showpiece sprint looks like being another battle between the USA and Jamaica.

ONES TO WATCH

(outdoor 2025 bests in brackets)

Noah Lyles USA (10.00)
Made a slow start to his 2025 campaign over 100m but is still capable of winning his third consecutive major title at the distance.

Kishane Thompson JAM (9.75)
The Olympic silver medallist won the Jamaican trials in a PB 9.75, backed up by a 9.85 win at the Pre Classic and victory over Lyles in Silesia.

Oblique Seville JAM (9.83)
The serial major finalist has a tendency to peak in the semis but has had impressive wins in London and Lausanne, easily beating Lyles in the latter.

Kenny Bednarek USA (9.79)
Looks much improved, winning the US trials and dominating the Grand Slam Track events.

British challenge:
The 2023 bronze medallist Zharnel Hughes looks sharp, judging by his British title victory. World indoor champion Jeremiah Azu qualified with a mid-August 9.97. Romell Glave also competes.

AW Prediction:
1 Thompson JAM 9.75; 2 Lyles USA 9.76; 3 Bednarek USA 9.78. *Top Brit: 5 Hughes 9.85*



HUNTERS

Steve Smythe examines every event to identify who'll be in the hunt for medals in Tokyo

**Information correct at time of going to print*



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

WOMEN'S 100m

Final: Sunday September 14
Championships record:
Sha'Carri Richardson USA 10.65
History maker: Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce: five golds, one bronze
Defending champion:
Sha'Carri Richardson USA 10.65
Olympic champion: Julien Alfred LCA 10.72
World leader: Melissa Jefferson-Wooden USA 10.65

Can anyone stop America's emerging force?

ONES TO WATCH

Melissa Jefferson-Wooden USA (10.65)
The Olympic bronze medallist dominated the Grand Slam events but moved up another level at the US Championships to go into the all-time top five.

Julien Alfred LCA (10.75)
Fourth in Budapest, the Olympic champion has been consistent at sub 10.80 this summer.

Sha'Carri Richardson USA (11.05)
The enigmatic defending champion and Olympic silver medallist has not yet looked anywhere close to her form of past years.

Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce JAM (10.91)
The world's greatest women's 100m runner with seven global short sprint titles was third in Budapest but, at 38, looks past her sharpest.

British challenge:
Amy Hunt impressively won the British title but her time there is outside of the top 40. Expect either her, Dina Asher-Smith or Daryll Neita to make the top eight.

AW Prediction: 1 Jefferson-Wooden USA 10.60; 2 Alfred LCA 10.65; 3 Clayton JAM 10.83.
Top Brit: 6 Asher-Smith 10.86



MEN'S 200M



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

Final: Friday September 19
Championships record:
Usain Bolt JAM 19.19, 2009
History maker:
Usain Bolt JAM – four golds, one silver
Defending champion: Noah Lyles USA 19.52
Olympic champion: Letsile Tebogo BOT 19.46
World leader: Lyles USA 19.62

Letsile Tebogo takes on the might of America once again.

ONES TO WATCH

Noah Lyles USA (19.62)
Aiming to equal Bolt's haul of four world 200m gold medals, he will be keen to make up for an illness-affected Olympic bronze. Starts as marginal favourite.

Kenny Bednarek USA (19.67)
The three-time global silver medallist narrowly lost out to Lyles at the US trials and will be to the fore again.

Letsile Tebogo BOT (19.76)
After his bronze in Budapest, he dominated the Paris Olympics and has been in good form in 2025, winning in Doha and Eugene before losing out in Monaco and Zurich.

Tapiwa Makarawu ZIM (19.84)
The NCAA champion was sixth at the Paris Olympics and looks improved based on his college title win.

British Challenge: Zharnel Hughes was fourth in Budapest and a 19.90 UK Championships win showed he is currently in great form. Should challenge for the medals again in Tokyo.

AW Prediction: 1 Lyles USA 19.40; 2 Tebogo BOT 19.45; 3 Bednarek USA 19.46. *Top Brit: 5 Hughes 19.71*

WOMEN'S 200M



Final: Friday September 19
Championships record:
Shericka Jackson JAM 21.41, 2023
History maker:
Allyson Felix USA – three golds, one bronze
Defending champion: Shericka Jackson JAM 21.41
Olympic champion: Gabby Thomas USA 21.83
World leader: Julien Alfred LCA 21.71

Melissa Jefferson-Wooden and Julien Alfred square off again.

ONES TO WATCH

Julien Alfred LCA (21.71)
Second in the 200m in Paris, she has looked stronger and faster this year, impressively winning in London in a world-leading time.

Melissa Jefferson-Wooden USA (21.84)
Has looked in sparkling form, winning the US trials in a big PB, but the 100m looks to be her best event.

Gabby Thomas USA (21.95)
A silver medallist in Budapest, she improved to win the Olympics. Only third by a fraction at the US trials, she will need an improvement in form to win her first individual world title.

Shericka Jackson JAM (22.17)
After easy wins in 2021 and 2023, she failed to make it to Paris. After a slow start to 2025, she won in Silesia but is nowhere near her championships record form.

British challenge: There are three potential British finalists and the best on the day could take a medal. Former world champion Dina Asher-Smith just edged Amy Hunt to the British title, while Daryll Neita has generally been below her best in 2025.

AW Prediction: 1 Alfred LCA 21.56; 2 Jefferson-Wooden USA 21.63; 3 Thomas USA 21.75. *Top Brit: 5 Asher-Smith 21.90*

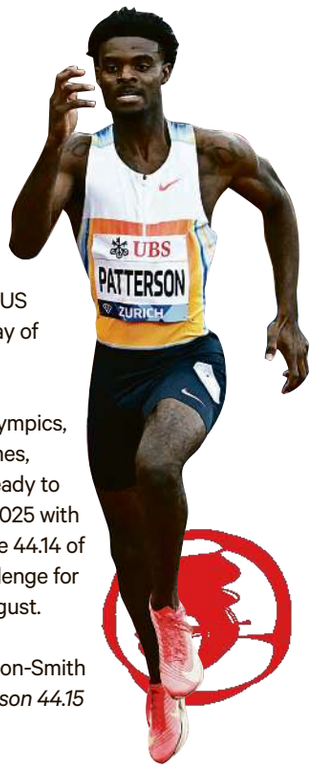
MEN'S 400M

Final: Tuesday September 18
Championships record:
Michael Johnson USA 43.19, 1999
History maker: Johnson USA – four golds
Defending champion: Antonio Watson JAM 44.22
Olympic champion: Quincy Hall USA 43.40
World leader: Zakithi Nene RSA 43.76

Even with Olympic champion Quincy Hall missing, Matthew Hudson-Smith faces a stern challenge.

ONES TO WATCH

Jacory Patterson USA (43.85)
The world indoor bronze medallist went sub-44 early in the season, then won the US trials and Brussels Diamond League before lowering his PB in Zurich.
Muzala Samukonga ZAM (44.11)
The fast-finishing Commonwealth champion was third in Paris and, after a modest start to 2025, won in a fast time at the Hungarian Grand Prix.
Zakithi Nene RSA (43.76)
His win at altitude in Nairobi tops the rankings but he has failed to make the final in his four previous global championships. Gained Diamond League top three places in Rabat, Rome and London.
Chris Bailey USA (44.15)
The world indoor champion was second at the US trials and proved he is more than just a mainstay of the relay team.



British challenge: With silver medals at the Olympics, world championships and Commonwealth Games, new father Matthew Hudson-Smith could be ready to top the podium and has been in good form in 2025 with a best of 44.10. He was beaten in London by the 44.14 of fellow Brit Charlie Dobson, who could also challenge for a medal. Sam Reardon clocked 45.15 in mid-August.

AW Prediction: 1 Patterson USA 43.88; 2 Hudson-Smith GBR 43.90; 3 Nene RSA 44.05. *Next Brit: 5 Dobson 44.15*

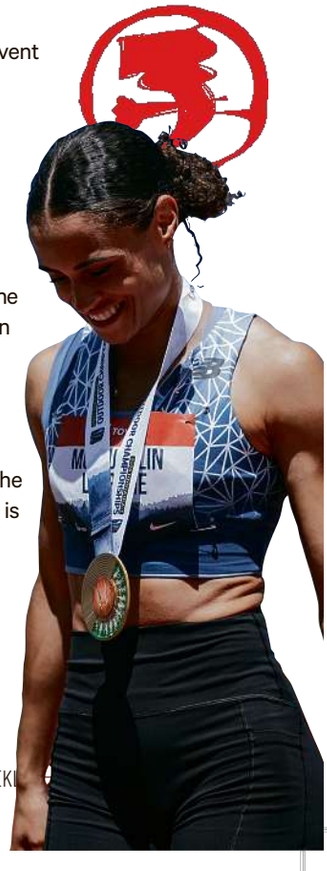
WOMEN'S 400M

Final: Friday September 18
Championships record:
Jarmila Kratochvilova CZE 47.99, 1983
History maker:
Anna Guevera MEX – two golds, one bronze
Defending champion: Marileidy Paulino DOM 48.76
Olympic champion: Paulino DOM 48.25
World leader: Salwa Eid Naser BRN 48.67

A three-way battle for gold features an athlete better known for her hurdling prowess.

ONES TO WATCH

Marileidy Paulino DOM (48.81)
The defending world and Olympic champion lost in Kingston but then won the next two Grand Slam Track meetings and came first at the Paris, Monaco and Silesia Diamond Leagues.
Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone USA (48.90)
The double Olympic hurdles champion focused on the flat 400m to win the US title and hasn't lost in the event for over two years.
Salwa Eid Naser BRN (48.67)
The 2019 world champion who served a two-year doping ban returned to form to win Olympic silver and set an early world lead at the Kingston Grand Slam. Beat Paulino in the Diamond League final.
Henriette Jaeger NOR (49.62)
After winning European and World Indoors medals, she ran a Norwegian record in Oslo and won the European U23 title, as well as the Lausanne Diamond League.



British challenge: World Indoor champion Amber Anning hasn't quite hit top form outdoors with a best of 49.75 in Zurich but she should make the final. Former world junior champion Yemi MaryJohn is also selected, alongside Victoria Ohuruogu.

AW Prediction: 1 McLaughlin-Levrone USA 48.32; 2 Paulino DOM 48.45; 3 Naser BRN 48.58. *Top Brit: 6 Anning 49.40*

MEN'S 800M



Final: Saturday September 20
Championships record:
Donavan BrazierUSA 1:42.34, 2019
History maker: Wilson Kipketer DEN – three golds
Defending champion: Marco Arop CAN 1:44.24
Olympic champion:
Emmanuel Wanyonyi KEN 1:41.19
World leader: Emmanuel Wanyonyi KEN 1:41.44

Will it take a run of 1:41 to land the gold medal?

ONES TO WATCH

Emmanuel Wanyonyi KEN (1:41.44)
The Olympic champion was a silver medallist in Budapest and has been brilliant in 2025, winning in Oslo, Stockholm, Monaco, London and Zurich.

Donavan Brazier USA (1:42.16)
After winning the 2019 world title, he went out in the heats in 2022 and failed to make the 2021 and 2024 Olympics. Bounced back with a PB at the US trials.

Djamel Sedjati ALG (1:42.20)
Second at the 2022 world championships and third at the Olympics, he has been in consistent form – twice running inside 1:42.30.

Marco Arop CAN (1:42.22)
The defending champion was second in Paris and remains among the favourites after a 1:42.22 run in London.

British challenge: Olympic finalist Max Burgin looks faster and stronger in 2025 and should be close to a medal. The 2023 world medallist Ben Pattison has bounced back to form to be selected, while Tiarnan Crorken makes his world championships debut.

AW Prediction: 1 Wanyonyi KEN 1:42.10; 2 Arop CAN 1:42.25; 3 Sedjati ALG 1:42.45.
Top Brit: 6 Burgin 1:42.85

WOMEN'S 800M



Final: Sunday September 21
Championships record:
Jarmila Kratochvilova CZE 1:54.68, 1983
History maker:
Maria Mutola MOZ – five golds
Defending champion: Mary Moraa KEN 1:56.03
Olympic champion: Keely Hodgkinson GBR 1:56.72
World leader: Hodgkinson GBR 1:54.74

Keely Hodgkinson is eyeing a first world title.

ONES TO WATCH

Tsige Duguma ETH (1:56.64)
The 2024 world indoor champion and Olympic runner-up was only sixth in Nanjing indoors but won Diamond Leagues in Shaoxing, Rabat and Eugene.

Prudence Sekgodiso RSA (1:57.16)
The world indoor champion has been very consistent, running 1:57.16 at both Ostrava and Eugene.

Mary Moraa KEN (1:57.83)
The defending champion was third in Paris but has been well below that form in 2025 and by mid- August had only once gone under 1:59.5.

Audrey Werro SUI (1:55.91)
Fourth in Nanjing, she continued her improvement in the summer winning the Euro U23 gold and setting a Swiss record in winning at Bydgoszcz before lowering that mark in the Diamond League final with 1:55.91.

British challenge: Olympic champion Keely Hodgkinson made a spectacular return in Silesia with 1:54.74 and a meeting record in Lausanne. Georgia Hunter Bell won in Stockholm, London and lowered her PB to 1:55.96 in Zurich. Jemma Reekie has not been as impressive so far in 2025.

AW Prediction: 1 Hodgkinson GBR 1:55.99; 2 Duguma ETH 1:56.14; 3 Sekgodiso RSA 1:57.23.
Next Brit: 5 Hunter-Bell 1:57.45

MEN'S 1500M



Final: Wednesday September 17
Championships record:
Hicham El Guerrouj MAR 3:27.65, 1999
History maker:
Hicham El Guerrouj MAR: four golds
Defending champion: Josh Kerr GBR 3:29.38
Olympic champion: Cole Hocker USA 3:27.65
World leader: Azeddine Habz FRA 3:27.49

Young talents aiming to upset the established middle-distance order.

ONES TO WATCH

Niels Laros NED (3:29.20)
Ran a 3:45.94 one mile world lead in Eugene, then completed a European U23 800m/5000m double and won in Brussels and in Zurich.

Cole Hocker USA (3:30.37)
The Olympic champion only squeezed into a very strong US team with a typical flying finish and has not matched his Paris form in 2025.

Phanuel Koech KEN (3:27.72)
Set a world under-20 record in Paris and beat Kerr at the London Diamond League.

Jakob Ingebrigtsen NOR (3:29.63i)
After a brilliant indoor season that brought world and European 1500m and 3000m titles plus a mile world record, injury halted his progress.

British Challenge: Defending champion Josh Kerr followed up his Budapest win with a world indoor 3000m title and Olympic silver. He will be a big factor, while former champion Jake Wightman, world indoor medallist Neil Gourley and Elliot Giles could give Britain four finalists.

AW Prediction: 1 Laros 3:28.20; 2 Koech KEN 3:28.32; 3 Kerr GBR 3:29.23. *Next Brit: 7 Wightman 3:31.12*

WOMEN'S 1500M



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

Final: Tuesday September 16
Championships record:
Sifan Hassan NED 3:51.95, 2019
History maker: Faith Kipyegon KEN – three golds and two silvers
Defending champion:
Faith Kipyegon KEN 3:54.87
Olympic champion: Faith Kipyegon KEN 3:51.29
World leader: Faith Kipyegon KEN 3:48.68

Expect another 1500m coronation for Queen Kipyegon.

ONES TO WATCH

Faith Kipyegon KEN (3:48.68)
The world's greatest is running her 11th global outdoor 1500m and will win easily again. Her last major loss at a championships 1500m was in 2019.

Diribe Welteji ETH (3:51.44)
The 2023 world mile road champion (ahead of Kipyegon) was second in Budapest two years ago and took silver at the World Indoors. Just missed a medal in Paris but is in great form in 2025.

Jessica Hull AUS (3:52.67)
The Olympic silver medallist has been seventh at the last two World Championships and this year has set area records for 1000m and the mile.

Sarah Healy IRL (3:57.15)
The European Indoor 3000m champion has failed to make a global outdoor final in her four previous attempts but is now stronger and has twice run 3:57 this summer.

British challenge: Georgia Hunter Bell is focusing on the 800m. The 2021 Olympic silver medallist Laura Muir is running her 30th championships track race and clocked an encouraging 3:57.63 in Brussels. She is joined in the team by European indoor bronze medallist Revee Walcott-Nolan and Hunter Bell's training partner, Erin Wallace.

AW Prediction: 1 Kipyegon KEN 3:50.67; 2 Welteji ETH 3:51.45; 3 Hull AUS 3:51.87. *Top Brit: 5 Muir GBR 3:54.03*

MEN'S 5,000m



Final: Sunday September 21
Championships record:
Eliud Kipchoge KEN 12:52.79, 2003
History maker: Mo Farah GBR – three golds, one silver
Defending champion:
Jakob Ingebrigtsen NOR 13:11.30
Olympic champion:
Jakob Ingebrigtsen NOR 13:13.66
World leader: Andreas Almgren SWE 12:44.27

Has Jakob Ingebrigtsen's injury opened things up?

ONES TO WATCH

Jakob Ingebrigtsen NOR (13:13.66 in 2024)
Has won three global 5000m titles between 2022 and 2024 but hasn't raced outdoors this summer. He will still expect to win, even if unlikely to be at his best.

Andreas Almgren SWE (12:44.27)
The former world junior 800m medallist who failed to get through the Budapest heats produced the run of his life at the Stockholm Diamond League to top the world rankings.

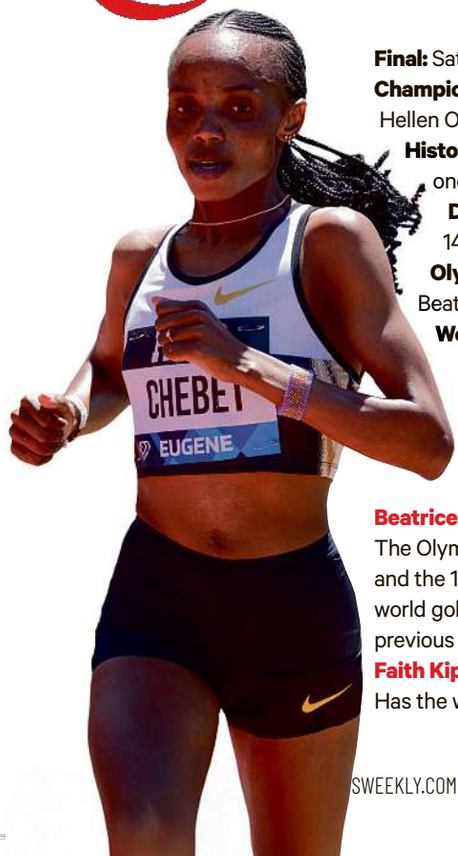
Biniam Mehary ETH (12:45.93)
Finished sixth at the Olympics aged just 17 and chased American Nico Young home in Oslo earlier this year.

Cole Hocker USA (13:09.36)
Ranked 66th in the world in August based on his Stockholm seventh place but the Olympic 1500m champion won the US trials and will be a danger if the race isn't hard all the way.

British Challenge: George Mills will be the sole British competitor and should be a major factor after winning European Indoor 3000m silver, setting a British record in Oslo (12:46.59) and improving his 1500m best to 3:28.56.

AW Prediction: 1 Hocker USA 12:55.67; 2 Ingebrigtsen NOR 12:55.78; 3 Mehary ETH 12:56.01. *Top Brit: 5 Mills 12:57.86*

WOMEN'S 5,000m



Final: Saturday September 20
Championships record:
Hellen Obiri KEN 14:26.72, 2019
History maker: Meseret Defar ETH – two golds, one silver, two bronze
Defending champion: Faith Kipyegon KEN 14:53.88
Olympic champion:
Beatrice Chebet KEN 14:28.56
World leader: Beatrice Chebet KEN 13:58.06

It's a Kenya v Ethiopia clash of the titans.

ONES TO WATCH

Beatrice Chebet KEN (13:58.06)
The Olympic champion smashed the world record and the 14-minute barrier this year but needs a world gold to complete her medal collection after a previous silver and bronze.

Faith Kipyegon KEN (14:29.60 in 2024)
Has the wild card from being defending champion from 2023 and second in the Paris Olympics last year. The 5000m comes after her main event, the 1500m, but she has focused on shorter races thus far in 2025.

Agnes Ngetich KEN (14:01.29)
Set a 24-second PB in Eugene behind Chebet to go third all-time but has no 5000m championships experience.

Gudaf Tsegay ETH (14:04.41)
The former world record-holder and 2022 champion has nine global indoor and outdoor medals but can still be tactically naive and enigmatic.

British Challenge: After their PB-smashing runs in London, both Hannah Nuttall (14:39.48) and multiple European junior champion Innes Fitzgerald (14:39.56) qualified in style. Melissa Courtney-Bryant also gets the nod.

AW Prediction: 1 Chebet KEN 14:11.60; 2 Kipyegon KEN 14:11.86; 3 Ngetich KEN 14:14.56. *Top Brit: 10 Nuttall 14:45.65*

MEN'S 10,000M



Final: Sunday September 14
Defending champion:
Joshua Cheptegei UGA 27:51.42
Championships record:
Kenenisa Bekele ETH 26:46.31, 2009
History Maker: Haile Gebrselassie ETH – four golds, one silver, one bronze
Olympic champion: Joshua Cheptegei UGA 26:43.14
World leader: Biniam Mehary ETH 26:43.82

With Joshua Cheptegei switching to the roads, the path is clear for a new champion to emerge.

ONES TO WATCH

Grant Fisher USA (29:02.37)
The double Olympic bronze medallist narrowly lost out in the US trials and has yet to match the indoor form where he set world records at 3000m and 5000m. Could also challenge at 5000m.
Yomif Kejelcha ETH (26:31.01 in 2024)
The 2019 runner-up who has won two world indoor 3000m golds had run three sub 12:50 5000m races in 2025 but was selected for the longer event despite only having run a road 10km (in 26:31!).
Selemon Barega ETH (26:44.13)
The 2021 Olympic champion, third in Budapest, has shown great range in 2025, running a 3:32.93 1500m after a 2:05:15 marathon win in Seville.
Biniam Mehary ETH (26:43.82)
The 18-year-old has only run two 10,000m races – a world junior record last year and a world lead in Eugene – in 2025 but it is unclear whether he will double up.

British Challenge: With just 27 places available and an incredibly high qualifying standard of 27:00 standard there will be no Brits in this event, though Patrick Dever was close to a world rankings spot.

AW Prediction: 1 Fisher USA 26:55.87; 2 Kejelcha ETH 26:56.11; 3 Barega ETH 26:56.45

WOMEN'S 10,000M

Final: Saturday September 14
Championships record:
Berhane Adere ETH 30:04.18, 2003
History maker: Tirunesh Dibaba ETH – three golds, one silver
Defending champion: Gudaf Tsegay ETH 31:27.18
Olympic champion: Beatrice Chebet KEN 30:43.25
World leader: Janeth Chepngetich KEN 30:27.02

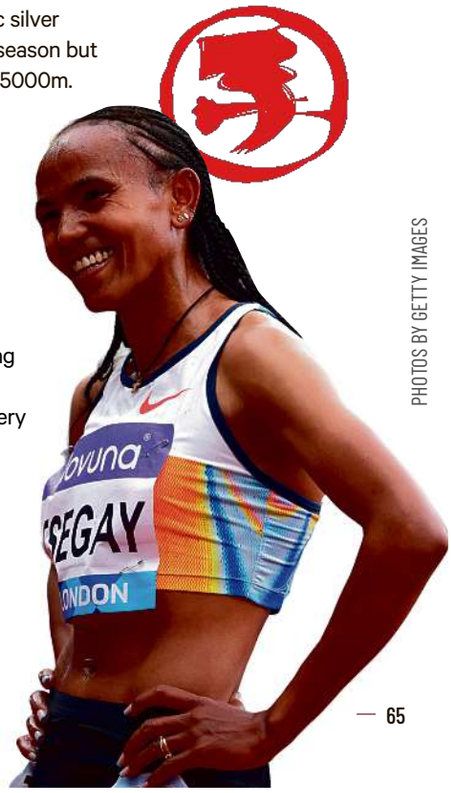
Can anyone thwart a Kenyan clean-sweep?

ONES TO WATCH

Beatrice Chebet KEN (30:27.52)
The Olympic champion was only third in the trials but, judging by her 3000m and 5000m performances, there is nothing wrong with her form.
Gudaf Tsegay ETH (29:05.92 in 2024)
The defending champion was sixth in her last 10,000m, which came at the Olympics last year.
Nadia Battocletti ITA (30:43.35 in 2024)
The European champion and Olympic silver medallist has not run a 10,000m this season but has set Italian records at 3000m and 5000m.
Agnes Ngetich KEN (30:27.38)
Came in the top four at the last two World Cross Country Championships and is the 10km world record-holder (29:27). She has made big improvements over 3000m and 5000m.

British challenge: At the time of going to print, European bronze medallist Megan Keith and Calli Hauger-Thackery were awating selection confirmation, subject to world rankings.

AW Prediction: 1 Chebet KEN 30:32.65; 2 Tsegay ETH 30:32.97; 3 Ngetich KEN 30:35.82



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

MEN'S 3,000m STEEPLECHASE



Final: Monday September 15
Championships record:
Ezekiel Kemboi KEN 8:00.43 2009
History maker: Ezekiel Kemboi KEN – four golds, two silvers, one bronze
Defending champion:
Soufiane El Bakkali MAR 8:03.53
Olympic champion:
Soufiane El Bakkali MAR 8:06.05
World leader:
Soufiane El Bakkali MAR 8:00.70

Soufiane El Bakkali looking for a hat-trick.

ONES TO WATCH

Soufiane El Bakkali MAR (8:00.70)
The double Olympic champion bids for his third successive world gold and fifth successive medal. Has wins in Rabat and Monaco to his name.

Ryuji Miura JPN (8:03.43)
After three global top-eight finishes by the age of 22, looks ready to finally win a medal, judging by his Japanese record in Monaco.

Lamecha Girma ETH (8:07.01)
The world record-holder has three world silvers behind El Bakkali but suffered a bad fall at the Olympics last year and has run once so far this summer.

Frederik Ruppert GER (8:01.49)
After a 14-second PB and German record to chase El Bakkali in Rabat, he failed to win the German title but then took the Diamond League crown in Zurich.

British challenge: Zak Seddon (8:15.66) was awaiting confirmation of his selection via the rankings system at the time of going to print.

AW Prediction: 1 El Bakkali MAR 8:12.34; 2 Girma ETH 8:13.45; 3 Miura JPN 8:13.86

WOMEN'S 3,000m STEEPLECHASE



Final: Wednesday September 17
Championships record:
Winfred Yavi BRN 8:54.29, 2023
Defending champion:
Winfred Yavi BRN 8:54.29
Olympic champion: Winfred Yavi BRN 8:52.76
World leader: Winfred Yavi BRN 8:45.25

Winfred Yavi keeping a firm grip on gold.

ONES TO WATCH

Winfred Yavi BRN (8:45.25)
The defending champion also won Olympic gold and, after two early losses in Doha and Oslo, has hit top-class form.

Faith Cherotich KEN (8:48.71)
Bronze medallist in Budapest and Paris had Diamond League victories in Doha, Oslo and Paris before clocking a big PB in Eugene and then winning in Zurich.

Doris Lemngole KEN (8:58.15)
The NCAA champion has never run in a major championship and had only raced in Kenya and the USA until winning in Lausanne. Has also won NCAA titles at 5000m and cross-country.

Peruth Chemutai UGA (8:51.77)
The 2021 Olympic champion and Paris runner-up has won no world medals from four previous championships but has been in great form in 2025.

British challenge: The much-improved national champion Elise Thorner qualified comfortably with a 9:15.06 PB in Oslo and was also fourth in Lausanne, while Sarah Tait should join her via the rankings.

AW Prediction: 1 Yavi BRN 8:47.85; 2 Cherotich KEN 8:49.11; 3 Chemutai UGA 8:50.45. *Top Brit: 12 Thorner 9:11.16*

MEN'S MARATHON



Monday September 15
Championships record:
Tamirat Tola ETH 2:05:36, 2022
History maker: Abel Anton ESP, Jaouad Gharib MAR, Abel Kirui KEN – two golds
Defending champion:
Viktor Kiplangat UGA 2:08:53
Olympic champion: Tamirat Tola ETH 2:06:26
World leader: Sabastian Sawe KEN 2:02:27

Ethiopia in pole position on the roads.

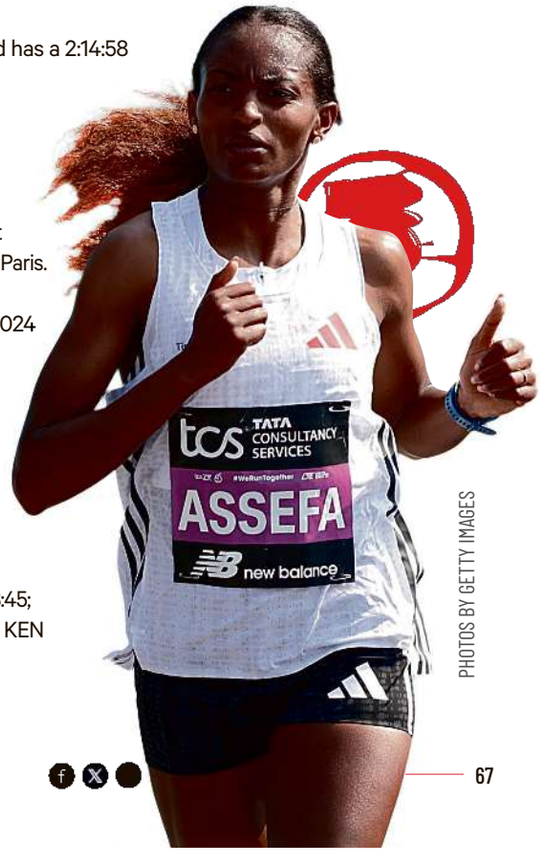
ONES TO WATCH

Deresa Geleta ETH (2:03:51)
The Tokyo runner-up was fifth in Paris last year before also running 2:02.38 in Valencia in December to make the all-time top 10.
Tadese Takele ETH (2:03:23)
The Tokyo marathon winner won a world junior steeplechase medal in 2021 and is just 23 years old.
Tesfaye Deriba ETH (2:04:13)
Seventh in the steeplechase in the 2017 world championships and ran 2:04:13 to win in his marathon debut in Barcelona.
Vincent Ngetich KEN (2:04:00)
Has finished third in Tokyo for the last two years and has a best of 2:03:13 from finishing second in Berlin in 2023. Second in the Great Manchester 10km this year.

British challenge: Emile Cairess, who was a brilliant fourth at the Olympics, could place even higher in Japan if he can replicate his best championships form.

AW prediction: 1 Geleta ETH 2:08:59; 2 Takele ETH 2:09:01; 3 Ngetich KEN 2:09:21. *Top Brit: 5 Cairess 2:10:04*

WOMEN'S MARATHON



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

Sunday September 14
Championships record:
Gotytom Gebrselassie ETH 2:18:11
History makers:
Edna Kiplagat/Catherine Ndereba KEN – two golds, one silver
Defending champion:
Amane Beriso ETH 2:24:23
Olympic champion: Sifan Hassan NED 2:22:55
World leader: Tigist Assefa ETH 2:15:50

Peres Jepchirchir standing in the way of Ethiopian dominance.

ONES TO WATCH

Tigist Assefa ETH (2:15:50)
The former world record-holder was second at the Olympics and won London this year.
Amane Beriso ETH (2:21:58)
The Budapest winner was fifth in Paris and then fifth in Boston this year and has a 2:14:58 PB from 2022.
Peres Jepchirchir KEN (2:16:16 in 2024)
The 2021 Olympic champion and three-time world half-marathon champion won London in 2024 but hasn't raced since finishing 14th in Paris.
Suteme Asefa ETH (2:16:31)
The two-time Tokyo winner, in 2024 and 2025, qualifies for her first major championships.

British challenge:
Calli Hauger-Thackery, sixth in Boston, was pre-selected but switched to the 10,000m.

AW prediction: 1 Assefa ETH 2:18:45; 2 Asefa ETH 2:18:58; 3 Jepchirchir KEN 2:19:45

MEN'S 110M HURDLES



Final: Tuesday September 16
Championships record:
Colin Jackson GBR 12.91, 1993
History maker: Allen Johnson USA – four golds, one bronze
Defending champion:
Grant Holloway USA 12.96
Olympic champion:
Grant Holloway USA 12.99 (12.98 sf)
World leader: Cordell Tinch USA 12.87

The USA should dominate, but perhaps not with their usual champion.

ONES TO WATCH

Grant Holloway USA (13.11)
The Olympic champion bids for his fourth world title (seventh including indoors) but has been well below his best form outdoors in 2025.

Cordell Tinch USA (12.87)
Set a world lead in Shaoxing, backed up by top-class results in other Diamond Leagues, but lacks championships experience aside from making the semi-finals in Budapest back in 2023.

Rachid Muratake JPN (12.92)
The Olympic fifth-placer smashed the Japanese record in mid-August to increase his medal chances.

Ja'Kobe Tharp USA (13.01)
The 2024 world junior champion enjoyed an NCAA and US trials double, winning in a PB in the latter to make his first senior championships.

British challenge: British champion Tade Ojora (13.30) was awaiting confirmation of his rankings place at the time of going to print.

AW Prediction: 1 Tinch USA 12.95; 2 Tharp USA 12.99; 3 Muratake JPN 13.00. *Top Brit: sf Ojora*

WOMEN'S 100M HURDLES



Final: Monday September 15
Championships record: Tobi Amusan NGR 12.06, 2021
History maker:
Gail Devers USA – three golds, two silver
Defending champion: Danielle Williams JAM 12.43
Olympic champion:
Masai Russell USA 12.33
World leader: Masai Russell USA 12.17

Masai Russell facing fierce opposition.

ONES TO WATCH

Masai Russell USA (12.17)
The Olympic champion has never made a world outdoor final but went second on the all-time list this year.

Tobi Amusan NGR (12.24)
The 2022 world champion has been in her best form since that Eugene gold, having failed to make the Olympic final in Paris.

Danielle Williams JAM (12.31)
The double world champion (2015 and 2023) set a lifetime PB in Silesia at the age of 32.

Grace Stark USA (12.21)
Olympic fifth-placer has greatly improved since and went into the all-time top five with her win in Paris this year.

British challenge: Marcia Sey had the British standard after a 12.77 PB but was awaiting confirmation of her place.

AW Prediction: 1 Russell USA 12.20; 2 Amusan NGR 12.28; 3 Stark USA 12.31

MEN'S 400m HURDLES

Final: Friday September 19
Championships record:
Alison dos Santos BRA 46.29, 2022
History maker:
Karsten Warholm NOR – three golds
Defending champion:
Karsten Warholm NOR 46.89
Olympic champion: Rai Benjamin USA 46.46
World leader: Karsten Warholm NOR 46.28

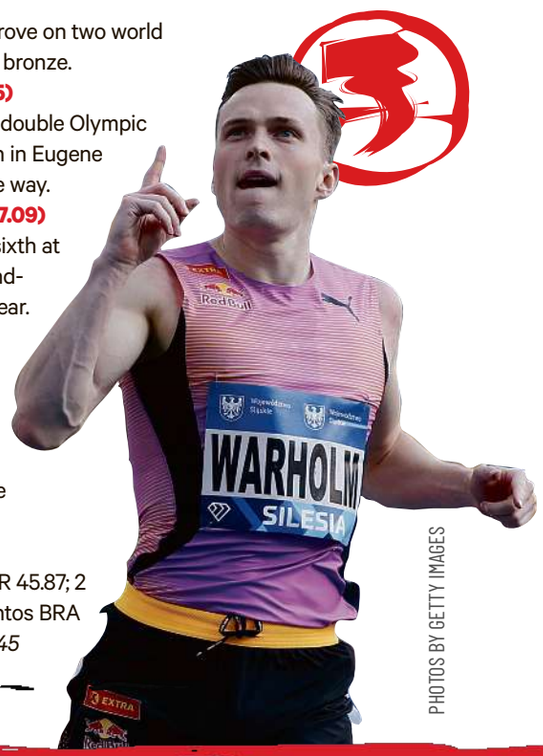
As with the 2021 Olympics, this has the potential to be the race of the championships.

ONES TO WATCH

Karsten Warholm NOR (46.28)
The three-time world champion was second in Paris but, based on his 300m hurdles world record and Silesia world lead, he starts as the favourite.
Rai Benjamin USA (46.54)
The Olympic champion beat a below-par Warholm in Stockholm as he bids to improve on two world championships silvers and one bronze.
Alison dos Santos BRA (46.65)
The 2022 world champion and double Olympic bronze medallist beat Benjamin in Eugene and will push the big two all the way.
Abderrahman Samba QAT (47.09)
The 2019 world medallist was sixth at the Olympics and ran his second-fastest ever time in Paris this year.

British challenge: The trio of British champion Tyri Donovan, Alastair Chalmers and Seamus Derbyshire all qualified and all could make the semi-finals.

AW Prediction: 1 Warholm NOR 45.87; 2 Benjamin USA 45.98; 3 Dos Santos BRA 46.45. *Top Brit: Donovan sf 48.45*



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

WOMEN'S 400m HURDLES

Final: Friday September 19
Championships record:
Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone USA 50.68, 2022
History maker:
Nezha Bidouane MAR – two golds, one silver
Defending champion: Femke Bol NED 51.70
Olympic champion:
Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone USA 50.37
World leader: Femke Bol NED 51.91

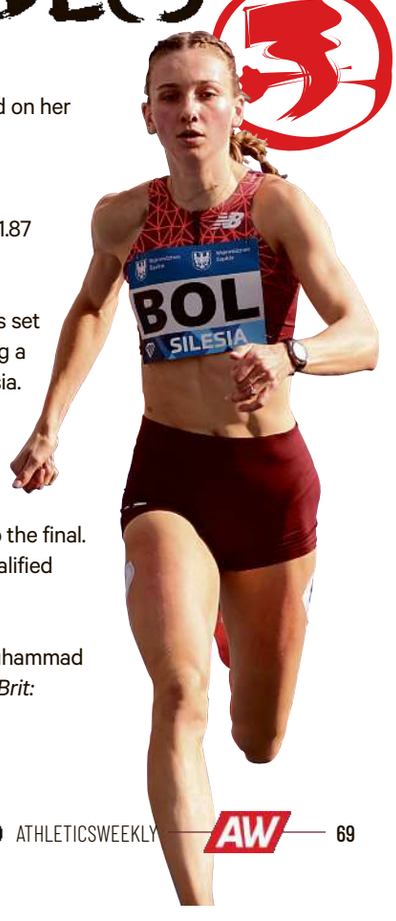
Femke Bol to easily defend her crown.

ONES TO WATCH

Femke Bol NED (51.91)
The defending champion was a well-beaten third at the Olympics but has won all her races easily in 2025 and, with Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone contesting the 400m, should win again with ease.
Dalilah Muhammad USA (52.58)
The former Olympic and world champion bids for a fifth world medal, which seems likely based on her US title win.
Anna Cockrell USA (52.89)
Defeated Bol in Paris last year to take Olympic silver but has not looked in 51.87 form this year.
Emma Zapletova SVK (53.58)
The 2021 European U23 champion has set four national records in 2025, including a second place finish behind Bol in Silesia.

British challenge: Emily Newnham qualified with a stunning 54.08 PB in winning European under-23 gold and a repeat could see her go close to the final. British champion Lina Nielsen also qualified comfortably.

AW Prediction: 1 Bol NED 51.40; 2 Muhammad USA 52.55; 3 Cockrell USA 52.67. *Top Brit: Newnham sf 54.10.*



MEN'S HIGH JUMP



Final: Tuesday September 16
Championships record:
Bogdan Bondarenko UKR 2.41m, 2013
History maker: Mutaz Essa Barshim QAT – three golds, one silver, one bronze
Defending champion: Gianmarco Tamberi ITA 2.36m
Olympic champion: Hamish Kerr NZL 2.36m
World leader: Danil Lysenko RUS 2.35m (Woo Sang-Hyeok KOR 2.34m)

With Gianmarco Tamberi sitting it out, it looks like being a three-way contest for gold.

ONES TO WATCH

Hamish Kerr NZL (2.33m)
The Olympic champion was second in this year's World Indoor Championships and won in Rabat and Silesia as he rounds into top form.

Woo Sang-Hyeok KOR (2.34m)
The double world indoor champion won outdoor world silver in 2022 and has been in good form in 2025, with wins in Rome and Monaco.

Jan Stefela CZE (2.33m)
The Olympic finalist was second at the European indoors and won the European Team Championships in a then world lead.

Oleh Doroshchuk UKR (2.30m)
The European Indoor champion (in a PB of 2.34m) has not quite matched that form outdoors but was second at the Rome Diamond League.

British challenge: There won't be any British contenders in Tokyo.

AW Prediction: 1 Kerr NZL 2.35m; 2 Woo-Sang Hyeok KOR 2.35m; 3 J Stefela CZE 2.33m

WOMEN'S HIGH JUMP



Final: Sunday September 21
Championships record:
Stefka Kostadinova BUL 2.09m, 1987
History maker:
Mariya Lasitskene RUS – three golds
Defending champion:
Yaroslava Mahuchikh UKR 2.01m
Olympic champion:
Yaroslava Mahuchikh UKR 2.00m
World leader: Nicola Olyslagers AUS 2.04m

Yaroslava Mahuchikh can expect some stiff Australian opposition.

ONES TO WATCH

Yaroslava Mahuchikh UKR (2.02m)
The reigning world and Olympic champion and world record-holder is favourite, despite losses in Stockholm, Paris, London and Zurich.

Nicola Olyslagers AUS (2.04m)
The double world indoor champion and Olympic silver medallist was third in Budapest and has been in consistent two-metre form in 2025, breaking her Oceania record in Zurich.

Eleanor Patterson AUS (1.97m)
The 2022 world champion and 2023 runner-up was third in the Olympics has not quite reached that level in 2025.

Vashti Cunningham USA (1.97m)
The 2016 world indoor champion only has a world bronze in 2019 from her seven global outdoor championships but did have an impressive US title win this year.

British challenge: Morgan Lake, fourth in Budapest, enjoyed a fine win in London and broke the British record with 2.00m in Zurich.

AW Prediction: 1 Mahuchikh UKR 2.05m; 2 Olyslagers AUS 2.01m; 3 Patterson AUS 2.01m.
Top Brit: 6 Lake 1.97m

MEN'S POLE VAULT



Final: Monday September 15
Championships record:
Mondo Duplantis SWE 6.21m, 2022
History maker: Sergey Bubka UKR – six golds
Defending champion:
Mondo Duplantis SWE 6.10m
Olympic champion: Mondo Duplantis SWE 6.25m
World leader: Mondo Duplantis SWE 6.29m

Will Mondo break new ground with 6.30m?

ONES TO WATCH

Mondo Duplantis SWE (6.29m)
The double Olympic champion bids for his third world title, having set world records this summer in Stockholm and Budapest while remaining unbeaten. The Championships' biggest star and favourite.

Emmanouil Karalis GRE (6.08m)
Moved to fourth all-time with his Greek title win and the world indoor silver and Olympic bronze medallist is a clear favourite for second place.

Sam Kendricks USA (5.82m)
The former double world champion was second in Paris last year and won a world indoor bronze but has been down on his best form this summer.

Ersu Sasma TUR (5.92m)
The European bronze medallist won in Berlin with a Turkish record as he continues his improvement from fifth in Paris.

British challenge: No Britons qualified.

AW Prediction: 1 Duplantis SWE 6.30m; 2 Karalis GRE 6.00m; 3 Sasma TUR 5.90m

WOMEN'S POLE VAULT



Final: Wednesday August 6
Championships record:
Yelena Isinbayeva RUS 5.01m, 2005
History maker:
Yelena Isinbayeva RUS – three golds, one bronze
Defending champions:
Nina Kennedy AUS/Katie Moon USA 4.90m
Olympic champion:
Nina Kennedy AUS 4.90m
World leader: Polina Knoroz RUS 4.86m (Molly Caudery GBR/Katie Moon USA 4.85m)

Americans blocking Molly Caudery's path to the top.

ONES TO WATCH

Katie Moon USA (4.85m)
The 2021 Olympic champion goes for a third successive world title (having shared gold with Nina Kennedy in Budapest) and has been in good form this summer, winning in Brussels.

Sandi Morris USA (4.83m)
The double world indoor champion, who has three world outdoor silvers, has returned to form to win the US title and also win in Rome.

Nina Kennedy AUS (4.90m in 2024)
The Olympic and joint world champion has yet to compete in 2025 following hamstring surgery.

Angelica Moser SUI (4.76m)
The European champion indoors and out was third at the world indoors and fourth at the Olympics. Has a best of fifth from five outdoor world championships.

British challenge: The 2024 world indoor champion Molly Caudery has been in mixed form this year but was a convincing winner at the national championships and cleared 4.80m in Brussels. Will be in the medal hunt.

AW Prediction: 1 Moon USA 4.80m; 2 Morris USA 4.80m; 3 Caudery GBR 4.80m

PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

MEN'S LONG JUMP



Final: Wednesday September 17
Championships record:
Mike Powell USA 8.95m, 1991
History maker: Dwight Phillips USA – five golds
Defending champion:
Miltiadis Tentoglou GRE 8.52m
Olympic champion: Tentoglou GRE 8.48m
World leader: Tentoglou GRE 8.46m

Established champion Miltiadis Tentoglou facing young pretender Mattia Furlani.

ONES TO WATCH

Miltiadis Tentoglou GRE (8.46m)
The double Olympic champion and triple European winner defends his title and, based on the 2025 form that saw him gain victories at the European Team Championships and London Diamond League, he starts as clear favourite. The only major blip was his fifth place at the World Indoors.

Mattia Furlani ITA (8.31m)
Won Olympic bronze as a teenager last year, landed the world indoor title this winter and has been around 8.30m form over the summer.

Tajay Gayle JAM (8.34m)
The 2019 world champion was third in Budapest two years ago but has struggled for form in 2025, apart from one big early-season jump.

Liam Adcock AUS (8.34m)
Has never made an outdoor championships final but moved up a level with a shock world indoor bronze before winning in Rome this summer ahead of the likes of Tentoglou.

British challenge: Olympic fifth-placer Jacob Fincham-Dukes did not qualify.

AW Prediction: 1 Tentoglou GRE 8.45m; 2 Furlani ITA 8.44m; 3 Adcock AUS 8.30m

WOMEN'S LONG JUMP

Final: Sunday September 14
Championships record:
Jackie Joyner-Kersee USA 7.36m, 1987
History maker: Brittney Reese USA – four golds
Defending champion: Ivana Vuleta SRB 7.14m
Olympic champion:
Tara Davis-Woodhall USA 7.10m
World leader: Tara Davis-Woodhall USA 7.12m

Tara Davis-Woodhall leads the way but this event is wide open.

ONES TO WATCH

Tara Davis-Woodhall USA (7.12m)
The 2024 Olympic and world indoor champion was second in Budapest and has been in good form all summer with Diamond League wins in Stockholm, Eugene and at the US Championships.

Malaika Mihambo GER (7.01m)
The double world and 2021 Olympic champion, who was second in Paris last summer, should again be challenging after wins in London and Berlin.

Claire Bryant USA (6.93m (7.01w))
The surprise world indoor champion has never competed in a major outdoor championships but has been consistent this summer.

Larissa Iapichino ITA (7.06m)
Fifth in Budapest and fourth in Paris, the daughter of the 1995 and 2001 champion Fiona May looks ready for her maiden global medal after her first 7.00m jump this summer.

British challenge: The 2023 European Indoor champion Jazmin Sawyers has a best of ninth from her four previous world championships but should make the final.

AW Prediction: 1 Davis-Woodhall USA 7.11m; 2 Mihambo GER 6.98m; 3 Bryant USA 6.96m. *Top Brit: 7 Sawyers 6.81m*



MEN'S TRIPLE JUMP



Final: Friday September 19
Championships record:
Jonathan Edwards GBR 18.29m, 1995
History maker:
Christian Taylor USA – four golds
Defending champion:
Hugues Fabrice Zango BUR 17.64m
Olympic champion:
Jordan Diaz ESP 17.86m
World leader: Wu Ruiting CHN 17.68m

No-one has seized the initiative this year.

ONES TO WATCH

Donald Scott USA (17.52m)
Has been nowhere near qualifying for finals in previous global outdoor championships but produced a solid fourth at the World Indoors and has had outdoor wins this season in Xiamen, Oslo, Paris and Monaco.

Hugues Fabrice Zango BUR (17.21m)
Defending champion and 2024 world indoor winner has a full set of world outdoor medals but was only fifth at the Olympics and hasn't hit top form in 2025.

Jordan Diaz ESP (17.16m)
The Olympic and European champion didn't jump at all in 2025 until August.

Andy Hernandez ITA (17.19m)
The former Cuban was third at the Olympics and followed that up with world and European indoor titles, but has competed sparingly outdoors.

British challenge: There will be no Brits in Tokyo, with none ranked inside the top 100.

AW Prediction: 1 Diaz ESP 17.65m; 2 Scott USA 17.59m; 3 Hernandez ITA 17.54m

WOMEN'S TRIPLE JUMP

Final: Thursday September 18
Championships record:
Inessa Kravets UKR 15.50m, 1995
History maker: Yulimar Rojas VEN: Four golds
Defending champion: Yulimar Rojas VEN 15.08m
Olympic champion: Thea LaFond DMA 15.02m
World leader: Leyanis Perez CUB 14.92m

With four-time champion and world record-holder Yulimar Rojas still absent, this looks very open.

ONES TO WATCH

Leyanis Perez CUB (14.92m)
Third in Budapest and fifth in Paris, but moved up a level to win world indoor gold and then set world outdoor leads in Oslo and then Brescia.

Jasmine Moore USA (14.68m)
An Olympic bronze medallist at both horizontal jumps last summer but will have to focus on just this event after winning the US title but only coming fifth in the long jump.

Shanieka Ricketts JAM (14.64m)
Won world silver in 2019 and 2022, followed by silver in Paris. She is competing in her sixth World Championships.

Thea LaFond DMA (14.45m)
The 2024 Olympic and world indoor champion has only been fifth at the last two world championships and was fourth this year indoors. Has not matched her best form so far this year.

British challenge: There won't be any Brits competing.

AW Prediction: 1 Perez CUB 14.95m; 2 Moore USA 14.88m; 3 LaFond DMA 14.69m



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

MEN'S SHOT PUT



Final: Saturday September 13
Championships record:
Ryan Crouser USA 23.51m, 2023
History makers: Werner Gunthor SUI/John Godina USA – three golds
Defending champion: Ryan Crouser USA 23.51m
Olympic champion: Ryan Crouser USA 22.90m
World leader: Leonardo Fabbri ITA 22.82m

With Ryan Crouser having not yet competed this year and eight-time global medallist Joe Kovacs missing, gold could be up for grabs.

ONES TO WATCH

Leonardo Fabbri ITA (22.82m)
The European champion who was second in Budapest but only fifth at the Olympics has been in consistent form in 2025, winning 11 competitions outdoors.

Josh Awotunde USA (22.47m)
The 2022 world bronze medallist won the US title with a big PB and will be keen to improve on his Budapest effort, where he failed to qualify.

Ryan Crouser USA (23.56m in 2024)
The world record-holder and Olympic and world champion has been nursing a long-term elbow problem but he has a wild card entry and could still finish on the podium.

Adrian Piperi USA (22.29m)
The former World youth champion and double world junior medallist has had no previous senior outdoor championships experience but, after winning world indoor bronze, set a PB at the US trials and was third in Lausanne.

British challenge: Scott Lincoln could go close to making the final.

AW Prediction: 1 Fabbri ITA 22.41m; 2 Awotunde USA 22.12m; 3 Piperi USA 22.09m

WOMEN'S SHOT PUT

Final: Saturday September 20
Championships record: Natalya Lisovskaya URS/Valerie Adams NZL 21.24m
History maker: Valerie Adams NZL – four golds, one silver
Defending champion:
Chase Jackson USA 20.43m
Olympic champion:
Yemisi Ogunleye GER 20.00m
World leader: Chase Jackson USA 20.95m

Jackson chasing her third world title in a row.

ONES TO WATCH

Chase Jackson USA (20.95m)
The double world champion goes for her third on the trot after an Olympic qualifying disaster and has dominated most of her competitions in 2025.

Sarah Mitton CAN (20.39m)
The Commonwealth and double world indoor champion was second in Budapest and will be looking to bounce back from coming 12th at the Olympics.

Gong Lijiao CHN (19.79m)
Already the owner of eight world outdoor medals (two of them gold) to go with five Olympic top fives but, at 36, is some way down on her very best form.

Yemisi Ogunleye GER (19.67m)
A surprise Olympic winner after only finishing tenth in Budapest in her only world championships outing. Was also second at last year's world indoors but is short of that form outdoors in 2025.

British challenge: Britain's best are ranked just outside the world's top 50.

AW Prediction: 1 Jackson USA 20.12m; 2 Ogunleye GER 19.87m; 3 Gong Lijiao CHN 19.85m



MEN'S DISCUS

Final: Sunday September 21
Championships record: Daniel Ståhl SWE 71.46m, 2023
History maker: Lars Riedel GER – five golds, one bronze
Defending champion: Daniel Ståhl SWE 71.46m
Olympic champion: Roje Stona JAM 70.00m
World leader: Mykolas Alekna LTU 75.56m

With Olympic champion Roje Stona out following his switch from Jamaica to Turkiye, it looks like a three-way title fight between heavyweights.



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

ONES TO WATCH

Mykolas Alekna LTU (75.56m)
Has medals from Eugene, Budapest and Paris but has missed out on senior global gold despite world records in both 2024 and 2025. Has Diamond League victories in Eugene, London and Zurich this summer.

Kristjan Ceh SLO (72.36m)
The 2022 world champion was second in Budapest but just outside the medals at the Olympics.

Daniel Ståhl SWE (70.19m)
The defending champion also won global golds in 2019 and 2021. He was only seventh in Paris last summer but is back to consistent form in 2025.

Ralford Mullings JAM (72.01m)
Ninth in the Olympics at just 21 and beat Alekna at the NCAA Championships before throwing an area record in mid-August.

British challenge: The 2022 European medallist Lawrence Okoye broke the British record this summer (70.76m) and will hope to go one place better in qualifying than he did in 2022 and 2023, where he missed the final by one place. Former NCAA champion Nick Percy also qualified courtesy of a Scottish record 67.86m.

AW Prediction: 1 Alekna LTU 70.23m; 2 Ceh SLO 69.85m; 3 Ståhl SWE 69.12m. *Top Brit: 6 Okoye 67.45m*

WOMEN'S DISCUS

Final: Sunday September 14
Championships record:
Martina Hellmann GDR 71.62m, 1987
History maker: Franka Dietzsch GER – three golds
Defending champion:
Laulaugu Tausaga-Collins USA 69.49
Olympic champion: Valarie Allman USA 69.50m
World leader: Valarie Allman USA 73.52m

Valarie Allman poised for her first world title win.



ONES TO WATCH

Valarie Allman USA (73.52m)
The double Olympic champion went sixth all-time this year and has been unbeatable in 2025. Will look to improve on her performances of seventh, third and second at her last three world championships.

Laulauga Tausaga USA (70.72m)
The shock 2023 world champion failed to make the US Olympic team and, apart from an early-season PB in Ramona, hasn't been competing at world champion level.

Sandra Elkasevic CRO (66.97m)
The seven-time European champion was also the winner of four global golds and eight medals. She was third in Paris and has a medal shot once again.

Yaime Perez CUB (68.18m)
The 2019 world champion will be competing in her sixth worlds, having missed Budapest and Paris but looked back to medal-winning form this summer.

British challenge: The top-ranked Brit is 65th so there will be no competitors in this event.

AW Prediction: 1 Allman 71.12m; 2 Perez CUB 68.25m; 3 Elkasevic 67.12m

MEN'S HAMMER



Final: Tuesday September 16
Championships record:
Ivan Tikhan BLR 83.63m, 2007
History maker: Pawel Fajdek POL – five golds
Defending champion:
Ethan Katzberg CAN 81.25m
Olympic champion:
Ethan Katzberg CAN 84.12m
World leader:
Bence Halasz HUN 83.18m

This looks like being a head-to-head contest between Canada and Hungary.

ONES TO WATCH

Ethan Katzberg CAN (82.73m)
The reigning world and Olympic champion has been consistent in 2025, too, and hasn't finished lower than second in nine competitions.

Bence Halasz HUN (83.18m)
The Budapest bronze medallist improved to second in Paris and has been in great form this year, setting a world lead in Budapest and winning in Chorzow – beating Katzberg each time.

Pawel Fajdek POL (78.12m)
After winning five successive golds, he dropped to fourth in Budapest and finished in the top five at the Olympics Paris. Should challenge for a medal again.

Wojciech Nowicki POL (77.03m)
Five times a world medallllist, he still doesn't have a gold to his name and has not been at his best in 2025.

British challenge: Jake Norris was awaiting confirmation of his selection via the world rankings at the time of going to print.

AW Prediction: 1 Katzberg CAN 83.24m; 2 Halasz HUN 82.96m; 3 Fajdek POL 78.98m

WOMEN'S HAMMER

Final: Monday September 15
Championships record:
Anita Wlodarczyk POL 80.85m, 2015
History maker:
Anita Wlodarczyk POL – four golds
Defending champion:
Camryn Rogers CAN 77.22m
Olympic champion:
Camryn Rogers CAN 76.97m
World leader: Brooke Andersen USA 79.29m

Camryn Rogers can add to her title collection.

ONES TO WATCH

Camryn Rogers CAN (78.88m)
The reigning Olympic, world and Commonwealth champion won in Eugene with a Canadian record and has won nine of her ten competitions in 2025.

Brooke Andersen USA (79.29m)
Has topped the rankings the last four years and is throwing well again this year but, apart from winning the 2022 world title, has not replicated her big throws in major competitions.

Silja Kosonen FIN (77.07m)
The former world junior champion is progressing well, with top-five finishes in both Budapest and Paris. Defeated Rogers early in the season in Bergen.

Anita Wlodarczyk POL (74.70m)
Now 40, the seven-time global and four-time European champion is not at her very best but still won the European Team Championships.

British challenge: Anna Purchase could repeat her Budapest feat of making the final again.

AW Prediction: 1 Rogers CAN 77.87m; 2 Kosonen FIN 77.01m; 3 Andersen USA 76.95m. *Top Brit: 10 Purchase 71.98m*



MEN'S JAVELIN

Final: Thursday September 18
Championships record:
Jan Zelezny CZE 92.80m, 2001
History maker:
Jan Zelezny CZE – three golds, two bronzes
Defending champion: Neeraj Chopra IND 88.17m
Olympic champion: Arshad Nadeem PAK 92.97m
World leader: Julian Weber GER 91.51m

This could come down to another fascinating contest between India and Pakistan.

ONES TO WATCH

Neeraj Chopra IND (90.23m)
The reigning champion and 2021 Olympic gold medallist was second in Paris but threw beyond the 90-metre mark for the first time this year.
Julian Weber GER (91.51m)
The 2022 European champion has never won a global medal but had three successive fourth places between 2021 and 2023. Only sixth in Paris but he set a huge PB in Doha and overhauled that in winning the Diamond League final.
Luiz Da Silva BRA (91.00m)
The Olympic finalist set a huge PB in the Brazilian Championships, having already set a South Americn record in finishing third at the Paris Diamond League this year.
Arshad Nadeem PAK (86.40m)
The Olympic champion was also second in Budapest. He does not compete on the international circuit and his only competition was winning the Asian Championships in May, but he did the same on the way to his other medals.

British challenge: No Brits will compete.

AW Prediction: 1 Chopra IND 91.25m; 2 Nadeem PAK 90.65m; 3 Weber GER 87.65m



WOMEN'S JAVELIN



Final: Saturday September 20
Championships record:
Osleidys Menendez CUB 71.70m, 2005
History maker: Barbora Spotakova CZE – three golds
Defending champion: Haruka Kitaguchi JPN 66.73m
Olympic champion: Haruka Kitaguchi JPN 65.80m
World leader: Victoria Hudson AUT 67.76m

If she can find her form, Haruka Kitaguchi has what it takes to send the home crowd home happy.

ONES TO WATCH

Haruka Kitaguchi JPN (64.63m)
The reigning world and Olympic champion has not been at her best so far in 2025. She won in Oslo but finished just 10th in the rain in Lausanne.
Victoria Hudson AUT (67.76m)
The European champion set an Austrian record in Maribor and was fifth in Budapest but was some way short of making the final in Paris last summer.
Adriana Vilagos SRB (67.22m)
The 21-year-old European under-23 champion started the season spectacularly with two world leads and national records. She dropped off slightly but won at the Lausanne Diamond League.
Elena Tzengko GRE (64.90m)
The 2022 European champion was a solid ninth in Paris has won this year in Xiamen, Shaoxing, Rabat, the European Team Championships and the Balkan Champs.

British challenge: Bekah Walton was short of the necessary UKA standard of 61.00m.

AW Prediction: 1 Kitaguchi JPN 67.23m; 2 Vilagos SRB 65.24m; 3 Hudson AUT 64.34m



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

MEN'S DECATHLON



Finishing: Sunday September 21
Championships record:
Ashton Eaton USA 9045, 2015
History maker: Dan O'Brien USA/Tomas Dvorak CZE – three golds
Defending champion:
Pierce LePage CAN 8909
Olympic champion:
Markus Rooth NOR 8796
World leader: Sander Skotheim NOR 8909

Olympic champion's injury opens the door to his fellow Norwegian.

ONES TO WATCH

Sander Skotheim NOR (8909)
This year's European and world indoor heptathlon champion has had a perfect 2025 with a win and Norwegian record at Götzis. He has made really progress since only coming tenth in Budapest and 18th in Paris.

Leo Neugebauer GER (8555)
Only fifth in Götzis but was a close second in Paris after his two final events were poor and came fifth in Budapest.

Kyle Garland USA (8869)
The US champion failed to finish in Budapest and was 11th in Eugene but was second in Götzis before a big improvement in the trials.

Pierce LePage CAN (8909 in 2023)
Has not completed a decathlon for over two years and, while he has competed in 2025, has been a long way from any individual PBs this year.

British challenge: No athletes competing.

AW Prediction: 1 Skotheim NOR 8924; 2 Neugebauer NOR 8895; 3 Garland GER 8780

WOMEN'S HEPTATHLON

Finishing: Saturday September 20
Championships record:
Jackie Joyner-Kersee USA 7128, 1987
History maker:
Jessica Ennis-Hill GBR/Carolina Kluft SWE – three golds
Defending champion:
Katarina Johnson-Thompson GBR 6740
Olympic champion: Nafissatou Thiam BEL 6880
World leader: Anna Hall USA 7032

Anna Hall has the perfect chance to experience her first golden global moment.

ONES TO WATCH

Anna Hall USA (7032)
Bronze in 2022, silver in 2023 and a clear world leader in 2025 courtesy of going second all-time in Götzis. Finished fifth in Paris but is far fitter in 2025.

Nafi Thiam BEL (7013)
The triple Olympic and European champion has a mere two golds and a silver from her world championships participation. Has competed lightly at a modest level in 2025 but can't be discounted.

Sofie Dokter NED (6576)
The 22-year-old was second in Götzis after a European indoor silver this year and a world indoor bronze last year as well as an Olympic sixth place.

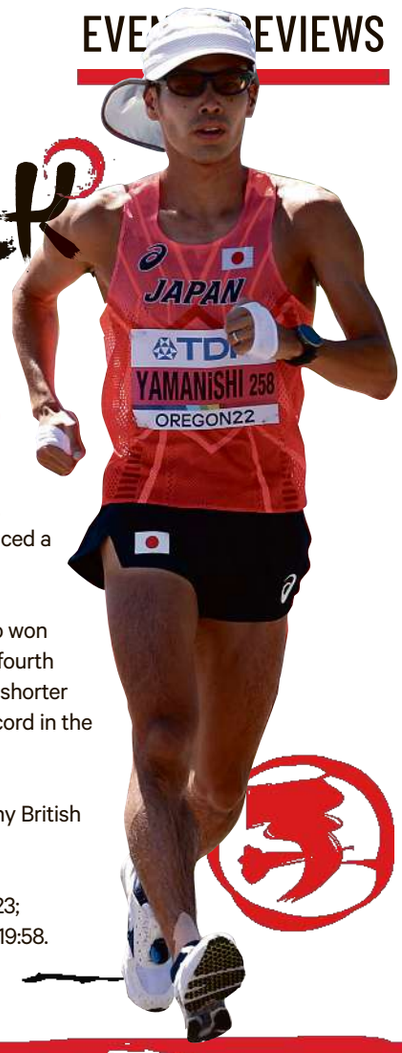
Saga Vanninen FIN (6563)
Easy winner of the European U23 title after winning world and European indoor golds. The former European junior champion is much improved.

British challenge: Two-time champion and Olympic silver medallist Katarina Johnson-Thompson has been below top form so far in 2025 but will raise her game again. Jade O'Dowda and Abigail Pawlett should join her on the team.

AW Prediction: 1 Hall USA 7065; 2 Thiam BEL 6856; 3 Vanninen FIN 6701. *Top Brit: 4 Johnson-Thompson GBR 6697*



MEN'S 20KM WALK



Saturday September 20
Championships record:
Jefferson Perez ECU 1:17:21, 2003
History maker: Jefferson Perez ECU – three golds, one silver
Defending champion: Alvaro Martin ESP 1:17:32
Olympic champion: Daniel Pintado ECU 1:18:55
World leader: Toshikazu Yamanishi JPN 1:16:10

There could be another home gold medal to celebrate in this event.

ONES TO WATCH

Toshikazu Yamanishi JPN (1:16:10)
The 2019 and 2022 world champion was only 24th in Budapest and failed to make the Olympic team but has not lost since May of last year and set a world record in Kobe in February, backed up by a win in La Coruna.

Cao Bonfim BRA (1:17:37)
Consistent performer who was third in Budapest, second in Paris and set a PB this year.

Daniel Pintado ECU (1:17:54 in 2024)
The Olympic champion has a best of fifth in his four previous World 20km races but has a better record at 35km, with a silver in Budapest, and hasn't raced a 20km this year.

Evan Dunfee CAN (1:17:39)
The 2021 Olympic 50km medallist also won a world 50km bronze in 2019 but was fourth in Budapest and fifth in Paris over the shorter distance and set a North American record in the winter. Better at 35km.

British challenge: There will not be any British athletes in action.

AW Prediction: 1 Yamanishi JPN 1:19:23; 2 Bonfim BRA 1:19:55; 3 Dunfee CAN 1:19:58.

WOMEN'S 20KM WALK



Saturday September 20
Championships record:
Olimpiada Ivanova RUS 1:25:41, 2005
History maker:
Liu Hong CHN – Four golds, one silver
Defending champion:
Maria Perez ESP 1:26:51
Olympic champion:
Jang Jiayu CHN 1:25:54
World leader: Elvira Khasanova RUS 1:24:20 (Nanako Fujii JPN 1:26:33)

Maria Perez firmly poised to land another world title.

ONES TO WATCH

Maria Perez ESP (1:27:22)
The world champion was second in Paris and has been unbeatable in 2025.

Nanako Fujii JPN (1:26:33)
Set a world lead in Kobe and has two top-seven finishes from past world championships but was only 32nd in Paris.

Kimberly Garcia PER (1:28:11)
The double world champion in 2022 was fourth in 2023. Only came 16th at the Olympics but is back to good form in 2025.

Elizabeth McMillen AUS (1:28:18)
Won the World University title at the age of 21 and looks a good prospect.

British challenge: The top Briton was world ranked 216th so there will be no representative.

AW Prediction: 1 Perez ESP 1:26:44; 2 Fujii JPN 1:26:50; 3 Garcia PER 1:26:54



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

MEN'S 35KM WALK

Saturday September 13
Championships record: Massimo Stano ITA 2:23:14, 2022
History maker (inc 50km): Robert Korzeniowski POL – three golds, one bronze
Defending champion: Alvaro Martin ESP 2:24:30
Olympic champion: event no longer contested
World leader: Massimo Stano ITA 2:20:43

Massimo Stano stands out.

ONES TO WATCH

Massimo Stano ITA (2:20:43)
The 2022 world champion dropped to seventh in Budapest set a world record in Podebrady this year.

Evan Dunfee CAN (2:21:40)
The Olympic 50km bronze medallist in 2021 was fourth in this event in Budapest and this year set a short-lived 35km world record.

Christopher Linke GER (2:23:21)
Fifth in Budapest in this event and 20km and this year has been a solid second in Dudince and Podebrady.

Hayato Katsuki JPN (2:24:38)
Only 30th in the Olympic 20km walk in 2021 but won the Asian Race Walking Championships event in Nomi in March.

British challenge: National champion Cameron Corbishley was awaiting selection confirmation.

AW Prediction: 1 Stano ITA 2:19:56; 2 Dunfee CAN 2:20:05; 3 Linke GER



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

WOMEN'S 35KM WALK



Saturday September 13
Championships record: Maria Perez ESP 2:38:40, 2023
History makers: Kimberly Garcia PER/Perez ESP – one gold
Defending champion: Maria Perez ESP 2:38:40
Olympic champion: not contested
World leader: Maria Perez ESP 2:38:59

Can Maria Perez complete a golden double?

ONES TO WATCH

Maria Perez ESP (2:38:59)
The double world champion in 2023 was second in the Paris 20km and this year has won all her races, including a European Team Champs win over 50km.

Antonella Palmisano ITA (2:39:55)
The 2021 Olympic champion at 20km won the European title at the shorter event in Rome last year but failed to finish at the Olympics. Second to Perez over 50km in Podebrady.

Ma Li CHN (2:40:49)
The fastest Chinese athlete in 2025 after a win in Hefei to go into the world all-time top ten and was also second in the Asian Championships at 20km.

Paula Torres ECU (2:44:26)
The Olympic 20km ninth-placer is just 24 years old and, in her first year at 35km, she won in Dudince.

British challenge: No Brits are in the rankings.

AW Prediction: 1 Perez ESP 2:42:56; 2 Torres ECU 2:43:35; 3 Palmisano ITA 2:44:34

MEN'S 4x100m RELAY

Final: Sunday September 21
Championships record: Jamaica 37.04, 2011
History maker: Usain Bolt JAM – four golds, one silver
Defending champion: USA 37.38
Olympic champion: Canada 37.50
World leader: South Africa 37.61

Another USA v Jamaica battle awaits.

ONES TO WATCH

USA (37.66)
The defending champions were second at the World Relays this year but have drawn a blank in the last five Olympics and are inconsistent with their changeovers.

South Africa (37.61)
This year's World Relays winners were also second at the Olympics, but they have not won a world medal since taking gold in 2001.

Jamaica (37.80)
The world record-holders were late qualifiers thanks to a quick win in London after failing to make the Olympic final but, with some of the fastest sprinters on the planet, should at least match their third place in Budapest.

Japan (37.84)
With home support the 2017 and 2019 medallists could surpass their fifth places in Budapest and Paris.

British challenge: The Olympic bronze medallists have been third and fourth at the past two world championships and should be in a similar position in Tokyo.

AW Prediction: 1 USA 37.34; 2 Jamaica 37.56; 3 Japan 37.80. *Top Brit: 4th 37.81*



WOMEN'S 4x100m RELAY

Final: Sunday September 21
Championships record: USA 41.03, 2023
History maker: Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce JAM: Four golds, four silvers
Defending champion: USA 41.03
Olympic champion: USA 41.78
World leader: Great Britain 41.69

Great Britain ready to mount a challenge to the USA and Jamaica.

ONES TO WATCH

USA (41.74)
The world and Olympic champions have the strongest squad and you have to go back to 2009 when they last failed to win a medal.

Netherlands (42.02)
The European champions and European Team Championships winners this year have surprisingly never won a world medal in this event.

Jamaica (42.33)
The 2021 Olympic champions were second at the 2022 and 2023 world championships but finished out of the medals in Paris.

Germany (42.52)
The Olympic bronze medal winners have a strong and well organised quartet and have not been outside the top six in a global final since 2011.

British challenge: The Olympic silver medallists are the fastest in the world this year and have gold medal potential after being third in Budapest and second in Paris.

AW Prediction: 1 USA 41.40; 2 GBR 41.55; 3 Jamaica 41.87



MEN'S 4x400m RELAY

Final: Sunday September 21
Championship record: USA 2:54.29, 1993
History maker: LaShawn Merritt USA – six golds
Defending champion: USA 2:57.31
Olympic champion: USA 2:54:43
World leader: South Africa 2:57.50

USA facing a real threat from Botswana and Britain.

ONES TO WATCH

USA (2:58.68)
The Americans haven't lost a global final since finishing second in 2017 and they should have the quickest quartet yet again.

South Africa (2:57.50)
Won the World Relays in a national record. Haven't won a global medal since 2011 and should improve upon their fifth place from Paris.

Belgium (2:58.19)
The European champions were second in the World Relays after fourth place in Paris and will be battling for medals as usual.

Botswana (2:58.27)
The Olympic silver medallists are bound to better their previous best world championships performance of sixth in 2022 and could push the USA all the way.

British challenge: If Matt Hudson-Smith, Charlie Dobson, Sam Reardon and Lewis Davey are fully fit they could be right in the mix and better their Budapest and Paris bronzes.

AW Prediction:
1 USA 2:55.50; 2 GBR 2:55.90; 3 Botswana 2:56.15



WOMEN'S 4x400m RELAY

Final: Sunday September 21
Championship record: USA 3:16.71, 1993
History maker: Allyson Felix USA – six golds, one silver
Defending champion: NED 3:20.72
Olympic champion: USA 3:15.27
World leader: USA 3:23.24
USA's firepower likely to win out once again.

ONES TO WATCH



USA (3:23.24)
Aside from 2023, when they were disqualified in the qualifying rounds, their last global loss was in 2015, when they were second, and they should have too much strength for all of their opponents.

Netherlands (3:24.34 indoors)
The Olympic silver medallists are the defending champions and, as ever, are heavily reliant on Femke Bol.

Spain (3:24.13)
Sprang a big surprise by winning the World Relays but they haven't made a global final since 1991.

Jamaica (3:37.75)
The 2022 and 2023 silver medallists failed to finish in Paris but should be close to the medals. Perhaps not as strong as in recent years when they were the USA's biggest challengers.

British challenge: Third in Eugene, Budapest and Paris, Britain have strong youngsters coming through to replace some of the reliable past members. Relying heavily on world indoor champion Amber Anning, they should win another medal.

AW Prediction: 1 USA 3:16.96; 2 Netherlands 3:19.23; 3 GBR 3:20.01

MIXED 4x400m RELAY

Final: Saturday September 13
Championship record: USA 3:08.80, 2023
Defending champion: USA 3:08.80
Olympic champion: Netherlands 3:07.43
World leader: Poland 3:09.43
Another shootout between the USA and the Netherlands?

ONES TO WATCH

USA (3:09.54)
With their 400m resources, the defending champions should win easily but they don't always pick the fastest runners and have been beaten in the last two Olympics and at the Eugene World Championships.

Netherlands (3:12.92)
The Olympic champions should have won in Budapest and their strength is in their two female runners.

Poland (3:09.43)
The 2021 Olympic champions set the world lead in the European Team Championships but were only eighth in Budapest and seventh in Paris.

Jamaica (3:11.10)
The 2019 silver medallists were fifth in Paris but should place higher given their one-lap strength and if they pick their strongest quartet.

British challenge: The Budapest silver medallists and Paris bronze medallists could win gold if they get their best men to compete but, like many teams, the mixed relay does not take priority.

AW Prediction:
1 USA 3:07.42; 2 Jamaica 3:08.05; 3 Netherlands 3:09.01.
Best Brit: 4th 3:09.23

PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES





TOKYO TIMETABLE

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 13

MORNING SESSION

Tokyo Time	UK Time	Sex	Event/Round
08:00	00:00	M	35km Race Walk FINAL
08:00	00:00	W	35km Race Walk FINAL
09:00	01:00	W	Discus Qualification - Group A
10:55	02:55	M	Shot Put Qualification
10:55	02:55	W	Discus Qualification - Group B
11:23	03:23	M	100m Preliminary round
11:55	03:55	X	4x400m Relay Heats

EVENING SESSION

Tokyo Time	UK Time	Sex	Event/Round
18:05	10:05	M	3000m Steeplechase Heats
18:30	10:30	W	Long Jump Qualification
18:55	10:55	W	100m Heats
19:05	11:05	M	Pole Vault Qualification
19:50	11:50	W	1500m Heats
20:35	12:35	M	100m Heats
21:10	13:10	M	Shot Put Final
21:30	13:30	W	10,000m FINAL
22:20	14:20	X	4x400m Relay FINAL

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 14

MORNING SESSION

Tokyo Time	UK Time	Sex	Event/Round
08:00	00:00	W	Marathon FINAL
09:00	01:00	W	Hammer Throw Qualification - Group A
09:35	01:35	M	1500m Heats
10:45	02:45	W	Hammer Throw Qualification - Group B
11:28	03:28	W	100m Hurdles Heats

EVENING SESSION

Tokyo Time	UK Time	Sex	Event/Round
18:35	10:35	M	400m Heats
18:40	10:40	M	High Jump Qualification
19:10	11:10	W	Discus FINAL
19:25	11:25	W	400m Heats
20:20	12:20	W	100m Semi-final
20:40	12:40	W	Long Jump FINAL
20:43	12:43	M	100m Semi-final
21:05	13:05	W	1500m Semi-final
21:30	13:30	M	10,000m FINAL
22:13	14:13	W	100m FINAL
22:20	14:20	M	100m FINAL

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 15

MORNING SESSION

Tokyo Time	UK Time	Sex	Event/Round
08:00	00:00	M	Marathon FINAL
09:00	01:00	M	Hammer Qualification - Group A
09:05	01:05	W	Pole Vault Qualification
09:15	01:15	W	3000m Steeplechase Heats
10:45	02:45	M	Hammer Qualification - Group B
11:20	03:20	W	400m Hurdles Heats

EVENING SESSION

Tokyo Time	UK Time	Sex	Event/Round
19:35	11:35	M	400m Hurdles Heats
19:40	11:40	M	Long Jump Qualification
20:10	12:10	M	Pole Vault FINAL
20:20	12:20	M	110m Hurdles Heats
21:00	13:00	W	Hammer FINAL
21:05	13:05	W	100m Hurdles Semi-Final
21:30	13:30	M	1500m Semi-Final
21:55	13:55	M	3000m Steeplechase FINAL
22:20	14:20	W	100m Hurdles FINAL

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 16

EVENING SESSION

Tokyo Time	UK Time	Sex	Event/Round
19:35	11:35	M	800m Heats
19:40	11:40	W	Triple Jump Qualification
20:35	12:35	M	High Jump FINAL
20:40	12:40	M	110m Hurdles Semi-Final
21:00	13:00	M	Hammer FINAL
21:05	13:05	W	400m Semi-Final
21:35	13:35	M	400m Semi-Final
22:05	14:05	W	1500m FINAL
22:20	14:20	M	110m Hurdles FINAL

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 17

EVENING SESSION

Tokyo Time	UK Time	Sex	Event/Round
19:05	11:05	M	Triple Jump Qualification
19:10	11:10	M	Javelin Qualification - Group A
19:30	11:30	W	200m Heats
20:10	12:10	W	Pole Vault FINAL
20:15	12:15	M	200m Heats
20:45	12:45	M	Javelin Qualification - Group B
20:50	12:50	M	Long Jump FINAL
21:00	13:00	W	400m Hurdles Semi-final
21:30	13:30	M	400m Hurdles Semi-Final
21:57	13:57	W	3000m Steeplechase FINAL
22:20	14:20	M	1500m FINAL

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 18

EVENING SESSION

Tokyo Time	UK Time	Sex	Event/Round
19:05	11:05	W	5000m Heats
19:15	11:15	W	High Jump Qualification
19:23	11:23	M	Javelin FINAL
19:55	11:55	W	800m Heats
20:55	12:55	W	Triple Jump FINAL
21:02	13:02	M	200m Semi-Final
21:24	13:24	W	200m Semi-Final
21:45	13:45	M	800m Semi-Final
22:10	14:10	M	400m FINAL
22:24	14:24	W	400m FINAL

EVENT TIMETABLE

PLOT YOUR PATH THROUGH THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS WITH THIS GUIDE TO WHAT'S ON AND WHEN

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 19

EVENING SESSION

Tokyo Time	UK Time	Sex	Event/Round
17:33	09:33	W	100m Hurdles Heptathlon
18:20	10:20	W	High Jump Heptathlon
19:30	11:30	W	Javelin Qualification - Group A
20:05	12:05	M	5000m Heats
20:30	12:30	W	Shot Put Heptathlon
20:45	12:45	W	800m Semi-Final
20:50	12:50	M	Triple Jump FINAL
21:00	13:00	W	Javelin Qualification - Group B
21:15	13:15	M	400m Hurdles FINAL
21:27	13:27	W	400m Hurdles FINAL
21:38	13:38	W	200m Heptathlon
22:06	14:06	M	200m FINAL
22:22	14:22	W	200m FINAL

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 20

MORNING SESSION

Tokyo Time	UK Time	Sex	Event/Round
07:30	23:30	W	20km Race Walk FINAL
09:00	01:00	M	Discus Qualification - Group A
09:25	01:25	M	100m Decathlon
09:50	01:50	M	20km Race Walk FINAL
10:00	02:00	W	Shot Put Qualification
10:05	02:05	M	Long Jump Decathlon
10:35	02:35	M	Discus Qualification - Group B
11:30	03:30	W	Long Jump Heptathlon
11:45	03:45	M	Shot Put Decathlon

EVENING SESSION

Tokyo Time	UK Time	Sex	Event/Round
19:00	11:00	W	Javelin Heptathlon
19:05	11:05	M	High Jump Decathlon
19:35	11:35	M	4x400m Relay Heats
19:54	11:54	W	Shot Put FINAL
20:00	12:00	W	4x400m Relay Heats
20:25	12:25	M	4x100m Relay Heats
20:45	12:45	W	4x100m Relay Heats
21:05	13:05	W	Javelin FINAL
21:11	13:11	W	800m Heptathlon
21:29	13:29	W	5000m FINAL
21:55	13:55	M	400m Decathlon
22:22	14:22	M	800m FINAL

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 21

MORNING SESSION

Tokyo Time	UK Time	Sex	Event/Round
09:05	01:05	M	110m Hurdles Decathlon
09:55	01:55	M	Discus Decathlon - Group A
11:05	03:05	M	Discus Decathlon - Group B
11:35	03:35	M	Pole Vault Decathlon - Group A
12:20	04:20	M	Pole Vault Decathlon - Group B

EVENING SESSION

Tokyo Time	UK Time	Sex	Event/Round
17:35	09:35	M	Javelin Decathlon - Group A
18:47	10:47	M	Javelin Decathlon - Group B
19:30	11:30	W	High Jump FINAL
19:35	11:35	W	800m FINAL
19:50	11:50	M	5000m FINAL
20:00	12:00	M	Discus FINAL
20:25	12:25	M	4x400m Relay FINAL
20:40	12:40	W	4x400m Relay FINAL
20:55	12:55	M	1500m Decathlon
21:10	13:10	W	4x100m Relay FINAL
21:20	13:20	M	4x100m Relay FINAL



PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

Magic moment

It's 25 years since Cathy Freeman brought Australia to a standstill and produced one of the truly great Olympic performances. She talks to **Euan Crumley** about embracing the pressure and unwittingly becoming the symbol for something far bigger than sport



September 25, 2000. "Magic Monday". Mythical might actually be a better word for it. Certainly, there was something otherworldly about what was happening on the track for 49.11 seconds of that evening, with Stadium Australia bursting at the seams. The capacity crowd of 112,524 were entranced, while the woman they were all watching found herself entering another dimension.

The video evidence proves otherwise but, even 25 years on, Cathy Freeman maintains that she didn't feel her feet touch the ground for the closing 80m of the Olympic women's 400m final in Sydney.

"I was being carried," she says. "It just sounds so odd, doesn't it?"

Odd, perhaps, but also in-keeping with a sporting moment that has more than stood the test of time. That race brought Australia to a standstill, becoming one of those rare "where were you when?" occasions. Just last year, it topped a poll by The Guardian to find Australia's greatest sporting moment, while the estimated TV audience of 8.8 million – this was before the current ratings system was established – stood as the nation's biggest until 2023, when it was overtaken by the women's World Cup semi-final between The Matildas and England.

And the whole thing rested on one person. Freeman, then 27, had won two world titles in a row – in 1997 and 1999 – but the top Olympic prize had thus far been elusive.

Her athletic talent had been clear from an early stage and she was just 16 when she became the first indigenous Australian to win Commonwealth gold, in the 4x100m, in 1990. Her big individual breakthrough came, however, when she won Commonwealth 200m and 400m gold in 1994. One year previously, it had been announced that Sydney would host the 2000 Olympics. The path was set for a victory that would ultimately be about so much more than sport.

> **The enormity of it could have so easily overwhelmed me, and the sentimental aspect of it, to Australians. I was just moving through with a very simple approach to everything**

After every one of her major victories, the now 52-year-old who describes herself as: "A dirt and wood girl who grew up in the outback of Queensland and Bush regions of Australia," flew the aboriginal flag. At first, it was seen as a controversial move – Australia's chef de mission in 1994 even tried to stop her from doing it – but, by the time she stood at the foot of a precipitous staircase, about to light the Olympic flame in Sydney, Freeman had become the public symbol of reconciliation in her country.

The process of improving relations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians had long been on the agenda but it had never been more prominent than in 2000. May of that year had seen the "Walk for reconciliation" across Sydney Harbour Bridge, the largest political demonstration in Australia's history at the time.

Before she had even run a step, Freeman's very presence at that opening ceremony was hugely symbolic.

She might have prepared for the Games in England, under coach Peter Fortune and alongside fellow Olympic finalist Donna Fraser, but in the host city her image, her presence, was everywhere.

"The glare," she says, speaking to AW from her Melbourne home, when asked what immediately comes to mind when she thinks back to those Games. "The theatre of it all, the spectacle, what it meant to people and how people still connect with those Games. The strength of that connection to those Games is just unflappable. People are just still so attached and so connected to that time."

Freeman had a strong support group but, looking back at the footage and the images, it's striking how often she seemed to be entirely on her own. For the vast majority of people, just being able to function under that kind of pressure and attention would be an achievement in itself but there was a seeming

PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

effortlessness to how she navigated through it all. The key, she says, was keeping it simple.

"The enormity of it could have so easily overwhelmed me, and the sentimental aspect of it, to Australians, particularly to the First Nations community of Australia," she says. "I was just moving through with a very simple approach to everything – to do what we'd always done and treated each day as no different to the day before in terms of attitude, mindset, approach, philosophies. We knew that the big occasion would somehow pull out of me as a competitor what I needed to release in terms of my competitiveness.

"I learned and honed a way of moving through it all so that I was able to maintain my feeling of joy and freedom that I felt when I raced and when I ran. I was determined to live my life exactly how I wanted to live it and that was really clear, I feel. And it showed."

Before she could embrace the familiarity of competing on the track, though, her ceremonial duties needed to be completed – no easy task in themselves. When Freeman took the torch from 1998 Olympic 400m hurdler Debbie Flintoff-King at the opening ceremony, she had what now seems like a faintly ludicrous number of steps to run up, before then essentially lighting a ring of fire around herself that would rise above her, looking a little too close for comfort. It's hard to imagine it passing the health and safety checks of today.

With her job seemingly done, Freeman stepped away, expecting to see the "cauldron" ascending to its place at the top of the stadium. With three billion people watching, however, it failed to launch. For four long minutes, Freeman remained the consummate professional, holding her torch aloft until the problem was fixed.

"I feel a little bit unwell thinking about those moments, because it was quite intense," she laughs now. "The numbers when you look at the viewership all around the world and in Australia are just mind boggling. It's only now I sit and I ponder those numbers and think: 'Oh my goodness'.

"Because I was so focused, I kind of compartmentalised lighting the flame at the opening ceremony. I kept it separate from the focus and that part of my life and my mind where I was there to race and I was there to compete to the best of my ability.

"It was absolutely an amazing honor but nobody can really prepare you for that kind of amazing responsibility. Folks often say: 'Did it make you feel like you were under any more pressure?', as if I wasn't under enough expectation already? But I think competitors have this silent but deadly self belief that I held sacred.

"I knew how to protect my inner sanctity and I think it also helped that my two training partners (Freeman also trained with Australian runner Sean McLoughlin), when I found out that I was lighting the cauldron, were very much across what lay ahead of me, and I think that helped me cope as well.

"In rehearsal, the day of the opening ceremony, everything was perfect, but when it came to the actual night of the opening ceremony, it's now public knowledge that the cauldron broke down and malfunctioned for four minutes. I thought it was far less than that but, gee whizz, the fact that it broke down...it's still hard to wrap my head around that it even occurred. It could have so easily become a bit of a true disaster."

A more comforting memory comes from recalling the crowd's reaction to her first accepting the torch. The film clearly shows Freeman being somewhat taken aback by the wave of affection being sent in her direction.

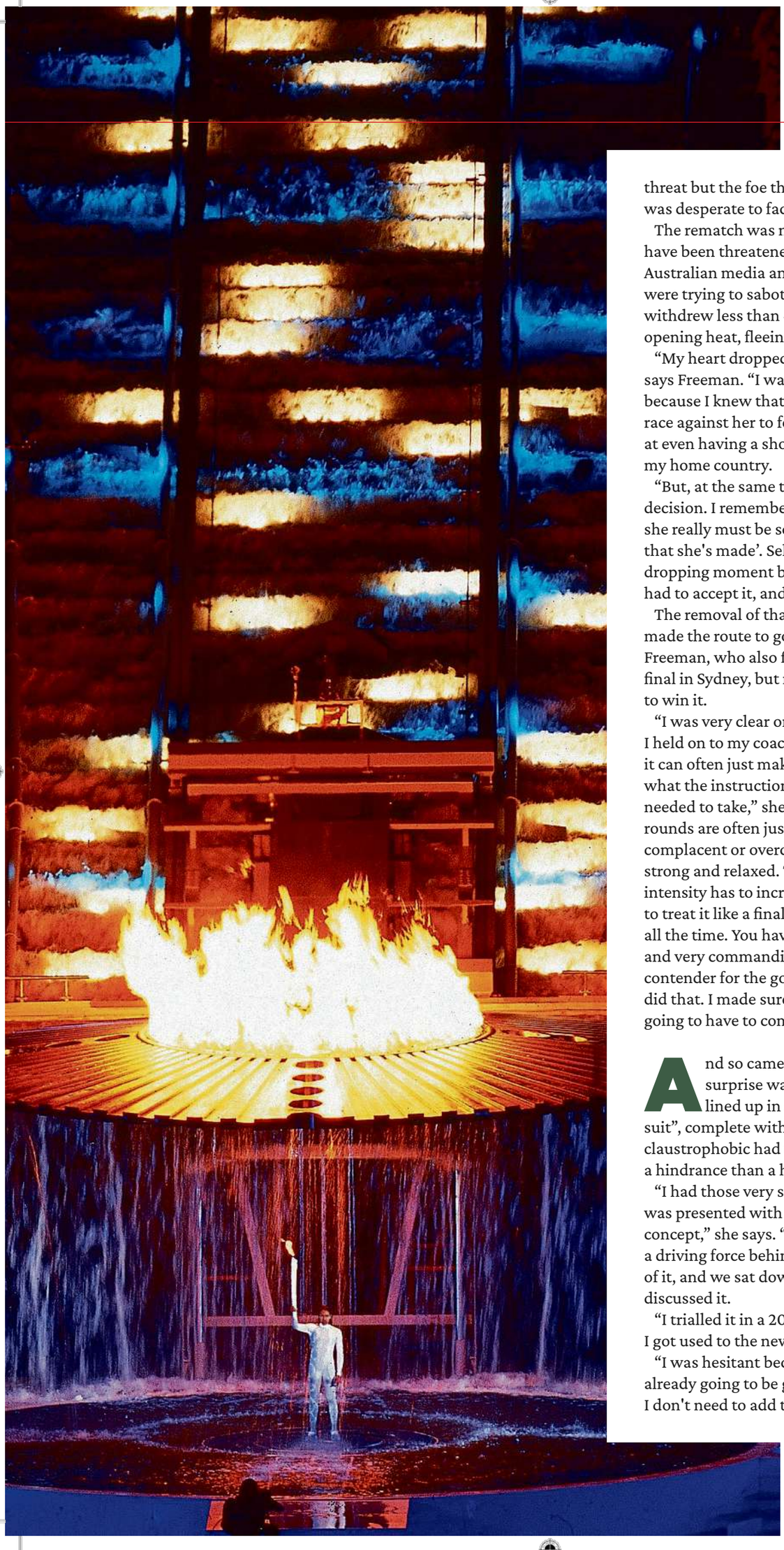
"I had a sense for how people were going to react – not entirely, but I allowed myself to think about it at times," she says. "I knew that once I got on the track and started racing, that would be where I felt in my element at my most natural. But certainly the reaction when Debbie Flintoff-King gave me the flame certainly was really quite beautiful. The reaction I felt was lovely. I haven't really thought about it before, so thank you for asking, but it was warm and sincere. I was feeling very, very honoured indeed."

> **I cherish my gold medal but not running 48 seconds is an itch that will always need scratching. It's the strangest sensation**

But, still, there were 10 days between that moment and the race that would define her sporting life. 10 days for the story to grow and the pressure to build. Sydney was Freeman's third Olympics. Four years previously, in Atlanta, she had been beaten to silver by Marie-José Pérec and the French two-time champion was not only seen as the biggest



Cathy Freeman waits for the cauldron to get going at the opening ceremony in 2000



threat but the foe that the Australian favourite was desperate to face once again.

The rematch was not to be. Claiming to have been threatened and harassed by the Australian media and public, whom she felt were trying to sabotage her chances, Pérec withdrew less than 48 hours before the opening heat, fleeing the country.

"My heart dropped when I heard the news," says Freeman. "I was quietly devastated, because I knew that I needed her. I needed to race against her to feel this sense of satisfaction at even having a shot at winning against her in my home country.

"But, at the same time, I respected her decision. I remember thinking to myself: 'Geez, she really must be so confident in the decision that she's made'. Selfishly, it was a heart-dropping moment but, on the other hand, I had to accept it, and I respected her wishes."

The removal of that showdown might have made the route to gold that bit clearer for Freeman, who also finished sixth in the 200m final in Sydney, but now she was fully expected to win it.

"I was very clear on what I needed to do, and I held on to my coach's every word, because it can often just make you feel safe – knowing what the instructions were and the steps I needed to take," she says. "The first and second rounds are often just a case of not being too complacent or overconfident, but feeling strong and relaxed. The semi-final is where the intensity has to increase, and you almost have to treat it like a final, because surprises happen all the time. You have to be quite assertive and very commanding in your presence as a contender for the gold medal, so I made sure I did that. I made sure that the other girls were going to have to compete against me."

And so came the final, where a striking surprise was sprung by Freeman, who lined up in a full body Nike "swift suit", complete with hood. Surely something so claustrophobic had the potential to be more of a hindrance than a help?

"I had those very same questions when I was presented with the idea and the whole concept," she says. "[Designer] Ed Harber was a driving force behind the research and design of it, and we sat down and got into it and discussed it.

"I trialled it in a 200m race in Gateshead and I got used to the new pre-race ritual.

"I was hesitant because I thought: 'I'm already going to be given enough attention. I don't need to add to the drama'. But, to be

really truthful, it made me feel really good. As soon as the gun went off, I forgot I was even wearing it. I remember actually feeling like I was slicing through the air and it felt beautiful, it felt really good. I would not have worn it if I hadn't felt good in it."

There are two aspects to the race itself that Freeman recalls particularly clearly. The first was feeling like she wasn't being challenged.

"We all knew that I had every advantage under the sun and I remember the girls, even with 110, 120m to go, nobody forged their assertiveness in terms of: 'I can win this'. Nobody really pushed it."

As the field came off the final bend, Freeman, Lorraine Graham of Jamaica and Britain's Katharine Merry were shoulder to shoulder but it was there that the Australian strode out.

"You can see that I don't really make a move until we're well into the home straight because you just can sense, energetically, nobody believes that they can win this thing," adds Freeman. "If Marie-José Pérec had been in the race, in top form, the tactics of the race would have been completely different. It would have been far more intense from the moment the gun went."

It was also, at that point, where the leader had that sensation of losing touch with terra firma.

"It literally felt like my feet weren't touching the ground and I was being carried," she adds. "It just seemed like everybody was gunning for me to win this thing and it was just so surreal to not feel your feet touch the ground. It's one of the most bizarre set of circumstances."

That sensation is one of the reasons why, as soon as she came through the line, Freeman not only sat down, but removed her shoes.

"I spent a lot of my childhood barefoot," she says. "I think I needed to just feel the ground under my feet, to feel grounded because there was absolute...I wouldn't call it pandemonium but there was some magic emotion happening around me. It was extraordinary."

There were some mixed emotions, too.

"I remember, I was mid-air, and I thought: 'So this is what it feels like to be an Olympic champion'," says Freeman. "And then I remember looking at the time and being disappointed. I was really, really hoping to get under 49 seconds (Freeman's PB is 48.63), and I didn't. I ran 49.11 and for a quarter miler, running 48 seconds, it's exceptional. It's a special result.

"I cherish my Olympic gold medal but there's always this thing about not running 48 seconds. It's an itch I cannot scratch or it's an itch that will always need scratching. It's the









Cathy Freeman felt she was "carried" across the line, and then took her time to absorb the moment



Gout Gout is a star in the making

I hope Gout Gout stays true to who he is

Cathy Freeman knows a thing or two about bursting on to the athletics scene as a prolific teenaged talent. She also knows a thing or two about coping with the expectation of a nation at a home Olympics, so she is better placed than most to imagine what is coming for Australian sprinting talent Gout Gout.

The 17-year-old has produced a string of remarkable performances in 2025 and will step on to the senior global stage for the first time at this month's world championships in Tokyo. After the Australian team took home seven medals from Paris 2024, their best Olympic return since Melbourne in 1956, the sport is on the up Down Under and the excitement and optimism is already building ahead of the Games coming to Brisbane in 2032.

The event might still be seven years away but Gout is already being seen as a potential star of those Olympics, with the attention and spotlight only likely to intensify. Freeman, however, is sounding a note of caution to the youngster not to forget the heart of the matter.

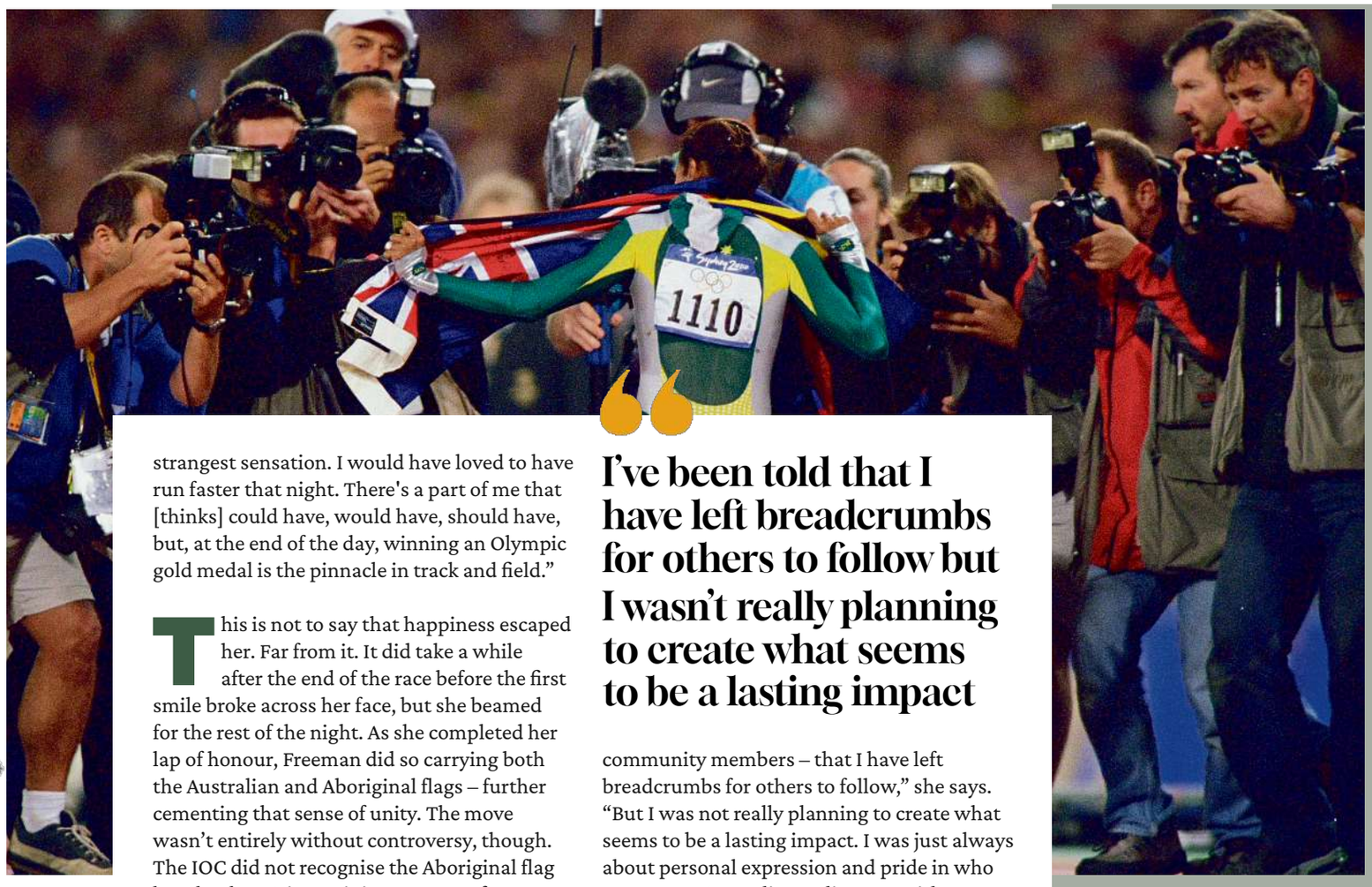
"I hope he doesn't enable the excitement to throw him off his private journey," she says. "I hope he stays true to who he is and maintains that love for running and love for racing. I think if you can compartmentalise: 'Okay, I have an obligation to the media', or 'I have an obligation to the corporate sector', or to the schoolchildren or you know to the charitable foundations out there and not allow himself to get to... there is a little bit of fatigue sometimes when you give yourself so much, when you share yourself.

"I think being part of a very strong team [is crucial]. I believe his coach is very astute, he has a strong family unit, and I think that's really important to be able to retreat into that core support of his. The love for running, it has to be there and that realm of joy and freedom."

And Freeman certainly isn't about to deny the amount of joy Gout could potentially give to the watching world.

"I remember watching him and I had a chuckle because he looked like he was either running downhill or had been shot out of a cannon," she says. "He just has so much raw talent and you can't deny that. He's exceptional. It's captivating. He's exciting. I just hope that he's okay in it all, because it can get heavy.

"There could be opportunities to get really distracted, so making sure that his time is measured for everybody and protecting that part of life that is pure – being a pure athlete, being a runner, an athlete first and foremost and not trying to be something else for others [is vital]."



strangest sensation. I would have loved to have run faster that night. There's a part of me that [thinks] could have, would have, should have, but, at the end of the day, winning an Olympic gold medal is the pinnacle in track and field."

This is not to say that happiness escaped her. Far from it. It did take a while after the end of the race before the first smile broke across her face, but she beamed for the rest of the night. As she completed her lap of honour, Freeman did so carrying both the Australian and Aboriginal flags – further cementing that sense of unity. The move wasn't entirely without controversy, though. The IOC did not recognise the Aboriginal flag but the then Prime Minister went so far as to send a telegram supporting Freeman's actions.

"I was just so drowning in celebration, of feeling so personally satisfied and just so happy that I'd gotten through everything in one piece, that I just didn't give much thought to the naysayers or those who didn't quite understand or connect to why I flew both Australian flags," she says. "I've come to accept that you can't be understood by everybody.

Not everyone's going to embrace each other in the true spirit of solidarity. I'd always flown both flags in any major title I've ever won so it really shouldn't have been a surprise, especially to track and field fans or people who followed my story."

And it undoubtedly made an impact. Freeman retired from athletics in 2003 and, four years later, founded the Cathy Freeman Foundation – now called Murrup – to help with schooling for Indigenous Australian children. It's that lap of the track, though, that remains the biggest reference point.

"I've been told many times – and by my fellow First Nations community members or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

"I've been told that I have left breadcrumbs for others to follow but I wasn't really planning to create what seems to be a lasting impact

community members – that I have left breadcrumbs for others to follow," she says. "But I was not really planning to create what seems to be a lasting impact. I was just always about personal expression and pride in who I was as an Australian Indigenous girl. It was more about me sharing all of me with the world. But, certainly after all these years, it makes me really proud.

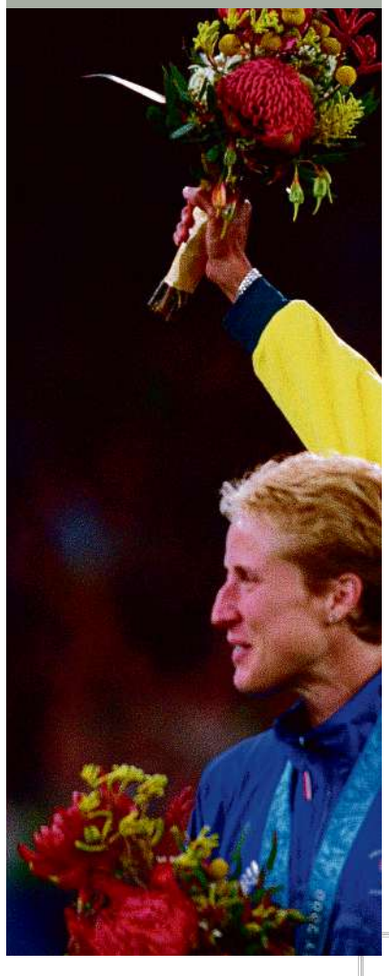
"You can go to some of Australia's most notable tourist sites or landmarks, in the cities and in the rural areas, and communities are proud to fly the Aboriginal flag. They proudly embrace the ancient culture of indigenous folk here in Australia and it's nice that I helped to create a platform, aided in the cause of being more visible or gave voice, or however you want to put it, I certainly unwittingly created this impact and that's the only way I can really respond."

That the story still resonates is a gift that Freeman doesn't tire of receiving.

"Anyone who was in the stadium that night will often share with me how they still get shivers when they reflect," she says. "From my point of view, it's a vastly different story but it's one of these moments where there really was true unity playing out. It was just so beautiful to be a part of and to see it in front of my very own eyes."

Does it still give her shivers?

"It absolutely takes my breath away." AW



I wonder if we'll ever get a moment of that magnitude again

Katharine Merry, 400m bronze medallist at Sydney 2000, shares her memories of that final

One of the best things Cathy did was to embrace everything. You think of Super Saturday at London 2012 with Mo Farah, Jess Ennis-Hill and Greg Rutherford. They all had pressure on them – perhaps less so with Greg – but they shared that pressure and expectation on that one night, whereas Cathy had nobody to share that with. It was huge.

The call room was quiet and no-one was looking at each other. Everyone knew what this race was about and it gradually got bigger and bigger in terms of expectation and volume as we walked in single file, in lane order, into the stadium.

It's like somebody was turning up the volume as we were walking closer and closer to the track, under the seats and then coming out into the arena. It was absolutely deafening when we walked in. I've never heard a sound like it and I never will again.

There was no pressure on anybody else. It was Cathy's to lose. A few of us thought: "We could have a pop here" and I tried to win it. I wanted to fly out of Australia with people throwing eggs at me, being that person that absolutely pooped the party!

We walked around to the first bend, taking it all in, and I saw my coach, Linford Christie, in the crowd. He lost a very expensive bracelet that night because it flew off when he got too excited. He never got it back. It's funny the things you remember.

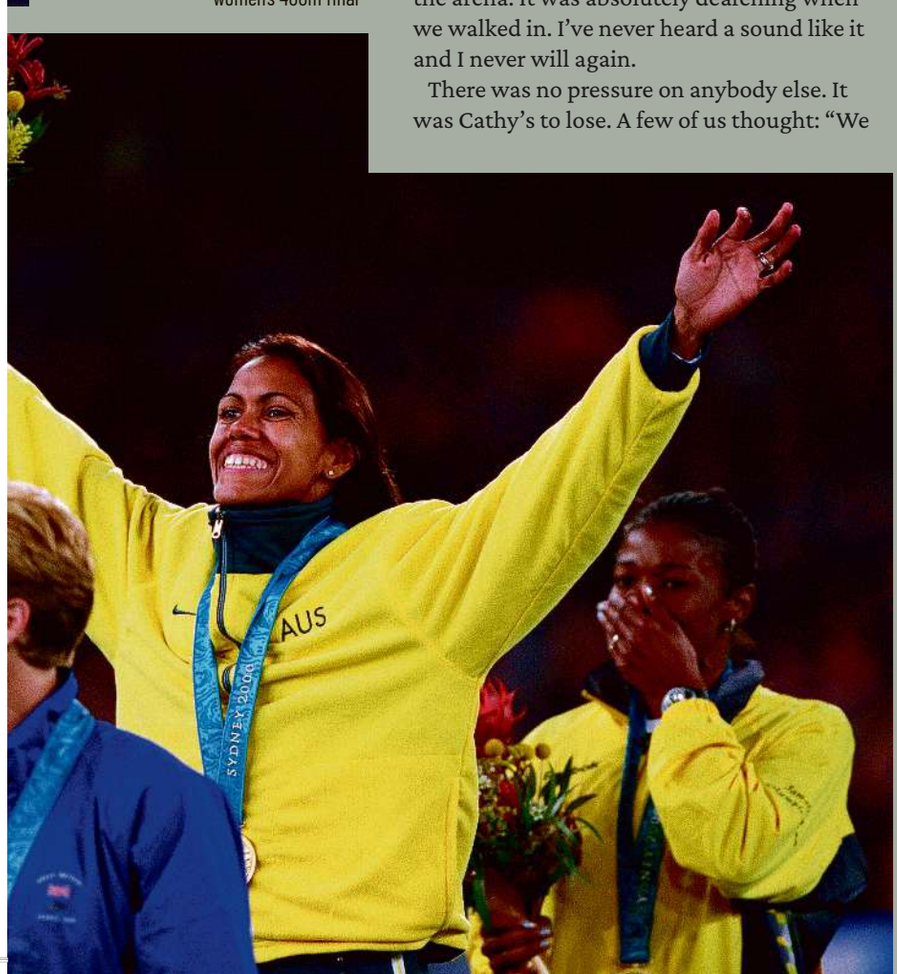
The starter got us on the blocks and it went really quiet. You could have heard a pin drop. I don't remember the gun going, I don't remember the first bend, but I do remember the back straight vividly, because that was just all cameras, bulbs, lights, which I hadn't catered for. That took my attention for a little bit.

Most of the back end of the race was in slow motion and I remember it in slow motion, because it was so bloody painful. That's when the wheels started falling off, and it was just gritting my teeth and thinking: 'Don't let anyone else past me'.

There were three of us pretty much in a line coming off the final bend and then Cathy pulled away. Lorraine Graham pulled away a little bit too and I realised: 'I'm third here, I can't see anyone else', but the line just wasn't coming because I was dying. Remember, we'd had four rounds in four days.

Cathy wasn't happy with the time she ran and she doesn't feel that anybody took the challenge to her, but I don't agree with that – we just weren't good enough. She was just better than us.

And it's a moment that's stood the test of time. I was in a taxi in Australia during the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games in 2018 and the driver found out that I'd come third in the final. He said: "I remember that night. I was driving my taxi and the road were gridlocked and I was thinking: 'I'm going to miss it. I'm going miss it. I need to see this race'. He pulled up to a random person's house, ran and knocked on the door, and everyone was just inviting everybody in to watch it on the TV. Nobody wanted to miss it. I wonder if we'll ever get a moment of that magnitude again.



Cathy Freeman celebrates after winning gold in the women's 400m final

Another level

Jason Henderson talks to Jonathan Edwards about Olympic gold, the state of play in athletics and still being better than anyone else – even 30 years on

There are few sporting sights as pleasing as Jonathan Edwards competing in the triple jump. In his heyday, he was the epitome of athleticism. A joy to watch, his lithe frame concealed huge amounts of strength and technical brilliance and he glided gracefully from one phase to another – in contrast to the crash, bang, wallop of many of his rivals.

He was often compared to a stone skimming across water and such ability led to him setting the current world record of 18.29m, in addition to winning Olympic gold in Sydney. His record-breaking feat celebrated its 30th anniversary earlier this summer, while his Olympic victory took place 25 years ago this month – a silver anniversary of a gold-plated achievement.

When it came to Sydney, it was a case of fourth time lucky. Edwards had finished well out of the running at the Seoul 1988 and Barcelona 1992 Games, whereas he struggled with the pressure of being world No.1 in 1996 and took silver behind Kenny Harrison of the United States in Atlanta.

In some ways it was appropriate for Edwards to eventually get to the top of the Olympic podium after a lengthy journey. When it came to athletics generally he was, after all, the classic slow developer.

Born in London in 1966, he grew up in north Devon as the son of a vicar and showed little sign of becoming a world-class athlete. The West Country doesn't traditionally produce many top field eventers – partly due to a lack of facilities – and Edwards' school, despite being better than most, only had a grass track and a cinder jumps area.

"I went to a very good school in north Devon called West Buckland," he says, "and they had all the sporting facilities. It was a classic sort of English private school where sport was a major part of the curriculum.

"That said, I think I did my first triple jump on a slightly downhill cinder track at the bottom of the first XV rugby field.

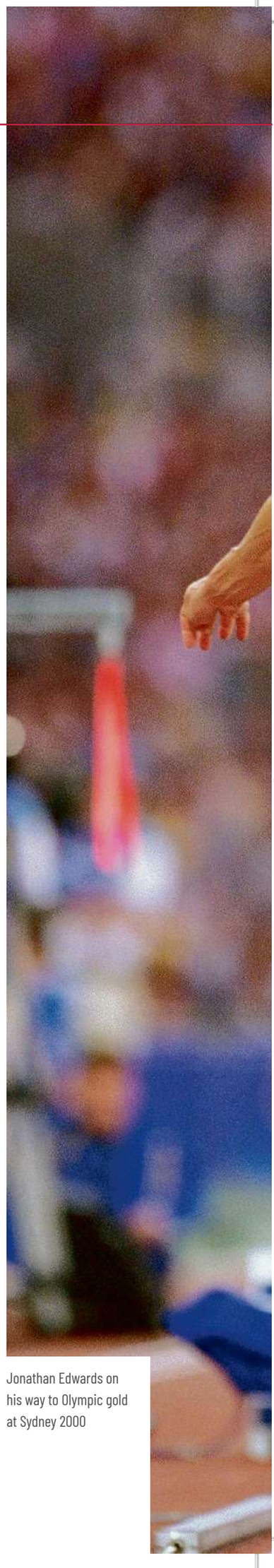
"It wasn't a sophisticated beginning to my athletics career at all and I didn't even think about having an athletics career. I just enjoyed my sport. In fact I enjoyed all sports. The big change was winning the English Schools title in 1984 in Thurrock."

Edwards won the senior boys' crown that year with a wind-assisted 15.01m, although he remembers: "Lawrence Lynch won the intermediate triple jump and he jumped further than me!"

Durham University, to read physics, was Edwards' next stop. "I jumped 16.35m in 1987 and went to the World Student Games where I finished ninth," he says, "but I didn't even jump 16 metres in the final. So, even when I left university, I'd only jumped 16.35m."

He began to be coached by Carl Johnson – and later Peter Stanley and Norman Anderson – and when he left university he decided to take the plunge and take athletics seriously. "I must have been mad," he says.

Despite missing the 1988 Olympic trials due to his religious beliefs at the time and the fact the competition fell on a Sunday, he was picked for the Seoul Games and finished just 23rd in qualifying with 15.88m.



Jonathan Edwards on his way to Olympic gold at Sydney 2000



"I spent some time with Colin Jackson recently," he says. "We did some stuff with Puma for the 30th anniversary of my world record and, of course, Colin was breaking world junior records and trading various titles with Jon Ridgeon and he won the Olympic silver medal in 1988. So he was always a superstar in the making from the get-go, whereas I was very much a late developer."

Edwards' career did finally begin to take off and he matured into a bona fide world-class performer. At the 1992 Olympics he had hopes of finishing in the top six and had jumped 17.26m in the countdown to the event, but in Barcelona itself he managed only 15.76m to place 35th. Yet there was some consolation – and also a promise of things to come – when he won his event at the World Cup in Havana at the end of the season with 17.34m.

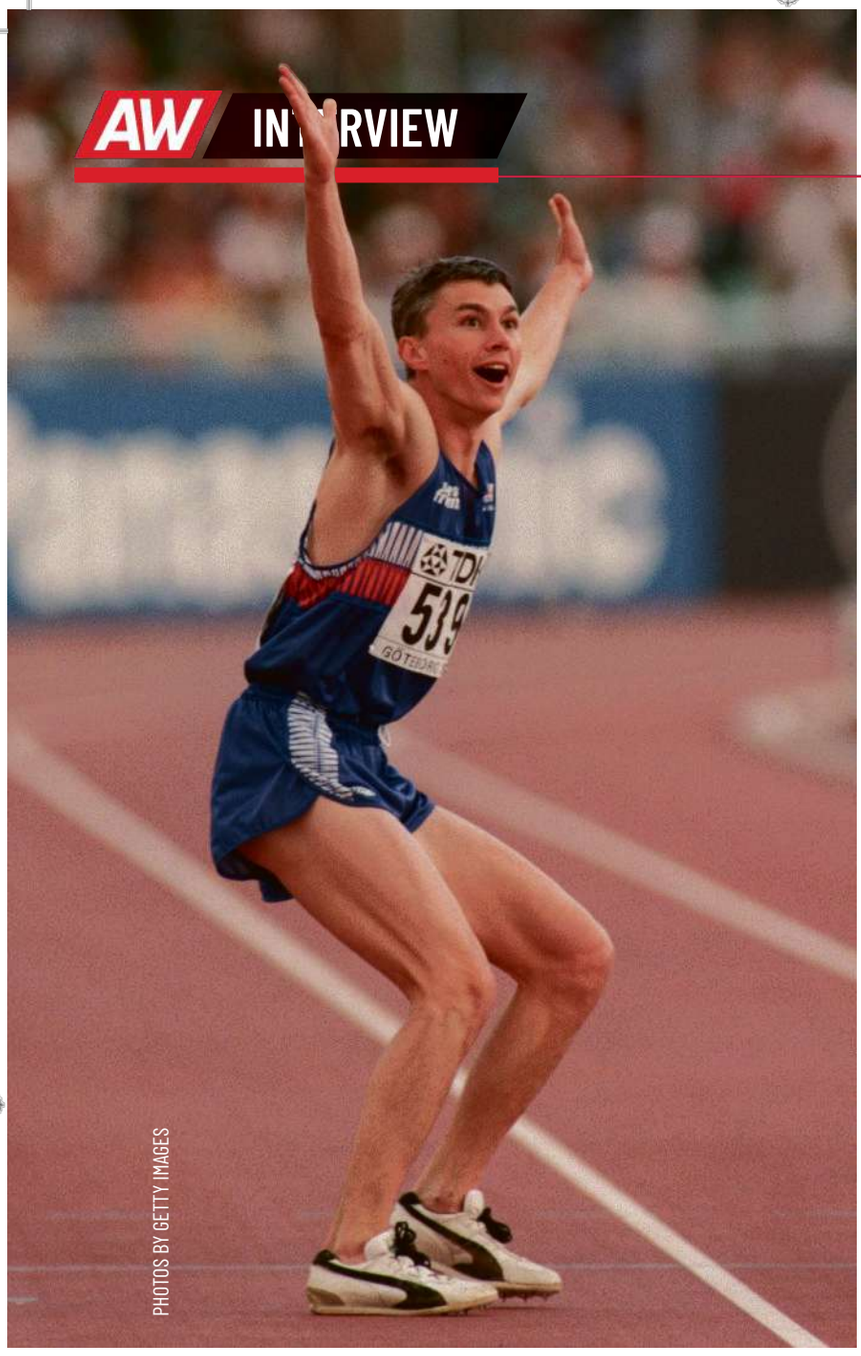
Around this time he began to start competing on a Sunday and he continued to progress as he built up to his peak season of 1995. At the European Cup in Lille that year he created a sensation when he soared out to wind-assisted leaps of 18.43m (2.4) and 18.39m (3.7m). The distances were so spectacular, some people thought it was a misprint and that the results should have read 17 instead of 18 metres.

In July he succeeded Willie Banks as world record-holder with 17.98m (1.8) in Salamanca but he wasn't satisfied and went to the World Championships in Gothenburg keen to jump over 18 metres legally. His first attempt in the Swedish city saw him smash the world record with 18.16m (1.3). Then he went even further with 18.29m (1.3) – the world's first 60-foot jump.

He hopped 6.05m, stepped 5.22m and jumped an incredible 7.05m to become the first triple jumper to set two world records back to back. Not surprisingly he scooped almost every award going at the end of 1995, including IAAF male athlete and BBC Sports Personality of the Year. The only downside was that everyone was already hanging the Olympic gold medal around his neck ahead of Atlanta.

Partly due to being a slow developer and lacking in success as a junior, Edwards says he struggled to feel he "belonged" in elite athletics and "wasn't acclimatised to success". He explains: "It caught up with me a bit in Atlanta in and I think I found the pressure really quite overwhelming."

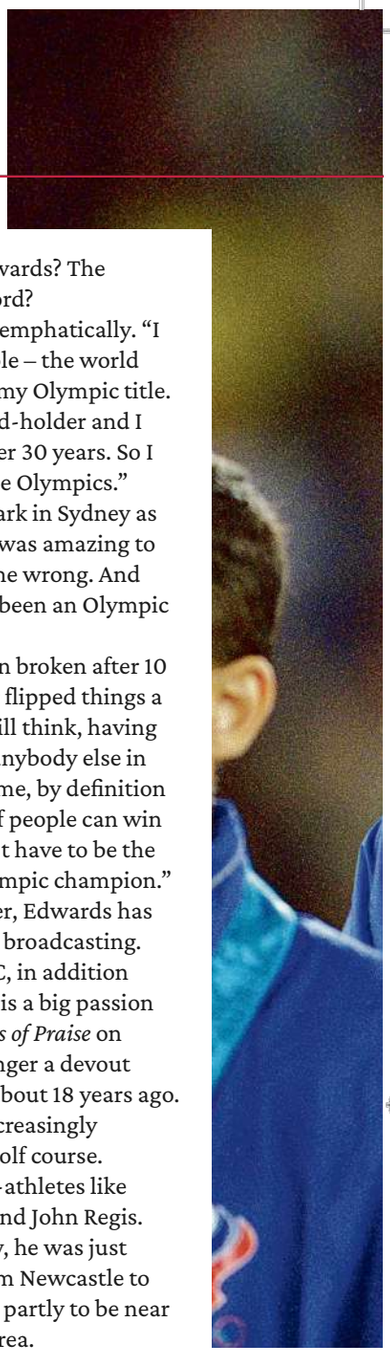
Despite having a 22-competition win-streak coming into the Games, he jumped a more than respectable 17.88m but finished runner-up to an inspired Harrison as the American jumped 18.09m – the third-best legal leap in history at that stage.



PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Edwards after breaking the world record in Gothenburg 30 years ago, a mark that still stands to this day

By the time Sydney rolled around four years later, Edwards was 34 years old – virtually a geriatric in triple jump terms. He had also had ankle surgery in 1998, which led to a disappointing 1999 season but it meant he was fitter and healthier for Olympic year. At the Games he leapt 17.71m in the third round – the furthest jump in the world all year, although inferior to his best jump from Atlanta four years earlier. Still, it was enough to see off the challenge of Yoel Garcia of Cuba and Denis Kapustin of Russia.



So, what means more to Edwards? The Olympic victory or world record?

"The world record," he says emphatically. "I think the reason is quite simple – the world record defines me more than my Olympic title. I'm known as the world record-holder and I still hold the world record after 30 years. So I think that trumps winning the Olympics."

He describes his winning mark in Sydney as "rubbish" but adds: "Look, it was amazing to win the Olympics, don't get me wrong. And it's incredibly special to have been an Olympic champion.

"If my world record had been broken after 10 years, maybe that might have flipped things a little towards Sydney. But I still think, having done something better than anybody else in your chosen discipline is, for me, by definition a unique achievement. Lots of people can win an Olympic title and you don't have to be the best in the world to be an Olympic champion."

Following his athletics career, Edwards has enjoyed a successful career in broadcasting. He presented athletics on BBC, in addition to cycling, the latter of which is a big passion of his. He also presented *Songs of Praise* on the BBC, although he is no longer a devout Christian as he lost his faith about 18 years ago.

He still cycles a bit, but is increasingly more likely to be found on a golf course. He plays with a number of ex-athletes like Kriss Akabusi, Denise Lewis and John Regis. As we spoke for this interview, he was just completing a house move from Newcastle to East Lothian in Scotland, too, partly to be near the great golf courses in the area.

How closely does he watch athletics these days? "I'll keep an eye on the triple jump when a major championship comes along," he says. "But no, actually, since I retired from being involved with the broadcasting side of things when Covid happened, I've lost track a little bit. Every now and then I dip in and out. But I'm definitely not an avid watcher of athletics now."

He feels the sport has lost its lustre in recent years in comparison to its heyday in the 1980s and 1990s. He also feels his talent would be overlooked if he was a young athlete today.

> **"In 1995 athletics was probably the No.2 behind football. Now it feels like it's well down the pecking order**



ABOVE: Jonathan Edwards on the podium in Sydney after taking Olympic gold

"A lot of my improvements when I first started training seriously just came from physical development and not from any training development," he explains, "so my talent would be lost to the sport simply because the system would tell you there's no point in doing this because you're not g ood enough."

Sydney 2000 represented a high point for British triple jumping, with Larry Achike finishing fifth and Phillips Idowu sixth. Idowu went on to win a world title in 2009, whereas in the women's triple jump Ashia Hansen enjoyed multiple international victories during that period. In comparison, Britain did not have a triple jumper at last year's Olympics and nor will they have any at this year's World Championships.

"Athletics has dropped off in terms of popularity and participation for sure," says Edwards. "I mean, there's a running boom, but that's more to do with health and fitness. I don't think athletics has really kept pace with the professionalisation of sport and certainly the rewards aren't there in athletics in the way they are with other sports.

"It's a tough sport. There's no getting away from it. If you want to run a fast 800m, you've got to go out and really break yourself in training to see any improvements. It's not like going out and having a game of football or a game of golf or tennis or basketball or skateboarding, some of the more modern sports that have come into the Olympics.

"I think the opportunities for young people at school are probably minimal when it comes to getting involved with athletics as it does require a lot of expertise. It's certainly fallen out of fashion. So you just haven't got the talent going into it, and particularly into field events which are even more demanding in terms of needing facilities and technical advice. I think athletics has lost pace with other sports."

Could he have predicted, back in 1995, that the BBC and AW would still be around, covering the sport 30 years later?

"I would have, but I would have assumed it would have grown, he says. "I don't think it's a surprise that it's there. I mean, back then athletics was the No.2 sport probably behind football. Now it feels to me like it's well down the pecking order. You have to really go and look for it. If you want it, it's not really there front and centre in all the big streaming platforms for sport."

Is he surprised his world record has stood the test of time?

"After jumping that distance, my immediate thought was that I would break it again!" he smiles. "I thought: 'I'll become a better athlete. I'll be faster. I'll be stronger. My technique will improve and I'll jump further because it's always the way when you do something really well.

"It feels very easy and it almost tricks you into thinking that, if I can do it that easily, I can do it again because it proved rather more difficult than that. And indeed, I only jumped 18 metres once more in my career.

"The thought that we're sitting here talking about it 30 years on is quite remarkable and quite mind-blowing, to be perfectly honest. Holding a world record is mind-blowing and the thing from athletics career which takes my breath away the most is that I've jumped further than anybody else in history.

"I think that's crazy and the fact it's lasted for 30 years is just as another level of craziness." AW

THE EXPERT PANEL



DR JOSEPHINE PERRY
Chartered sports and exericse psychologist



PAUL FREARY
Running footwear specialist



LOUISE SUTTON
Sport and exercise nutritionist



PAUL HOBROUGH
Running specialist physiotherapist



ANDY KAY
Strength and conditioning coach



JOHN SHEPHERD
Experienced track and field coach

ASK THE EXPERTS

The AW Performance panel is here to help you. Email us at **haveyoursay@athleticsweekly.com** and one of our experts could be tackling your question in a future issue of the magazine

FACING YOUR "NEMESIS"

Q: I've got a big race coming up but it's at a venue where I haven't run well in the past. Do you have any tips on how I can avoid getting too hung up on that and not let it affect my performance?
Andrew Paterson

A: DR JOSEPHINE PERRY

We often have a course that we don't like. There might be an element of it that annoys you (tricky to get to or too much wind on the back straight) or a bad memory (you tripped, had a rubbish race or were beaten by someone you dislike). We tend to call this our nemesis race and it is much more common than we might expect.

Our natural instinct would be to avoid racing there again, so the fact you are going back and facing it is a great first step.

The second step is to reframe this race as an opportunity for redemption; wanting this race to help you find some love for the course. What will racing well here mean for you? Why would you like to learn to enjoy this venue?

The third step is to boost your race confidence. The most robust way to boost confidence is giving our brain evidence that we can do the thing in front of us. We do this most days when we run, as the movement pattern and the numbers on our watch afterwards prove to our brain we can handle the challenge ahead. When we can't physically do something (like get access to regularly run in a venue) then we can create a functional equivalence of this evidence through visualisation.

The fact you know the course already makes this process easier as it gives a really good framework for



PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

the mental rehearsal so your brain learns how to thrive in this venue and understands what to do, rather than what not to do.

Most important is to include all your senses as your smell, hearing, taste, touch and sight will need to feel stimulated in order for it to feel realistic and vivid enough to allow your brain to interpret them as similar to the actual event.

You can write your own script but a quicker route is to get ChatGPT to write a first draft for you. You'll need to give it some pretty specific prompts but it can create you a great script. If you like the script, download the audio. If you want to improve the script then download the text, play with it and record your final version as a voice note. Either way listen to it a couple of times a day until the event in question becomes a friendly venue you look forward to visiting. AW

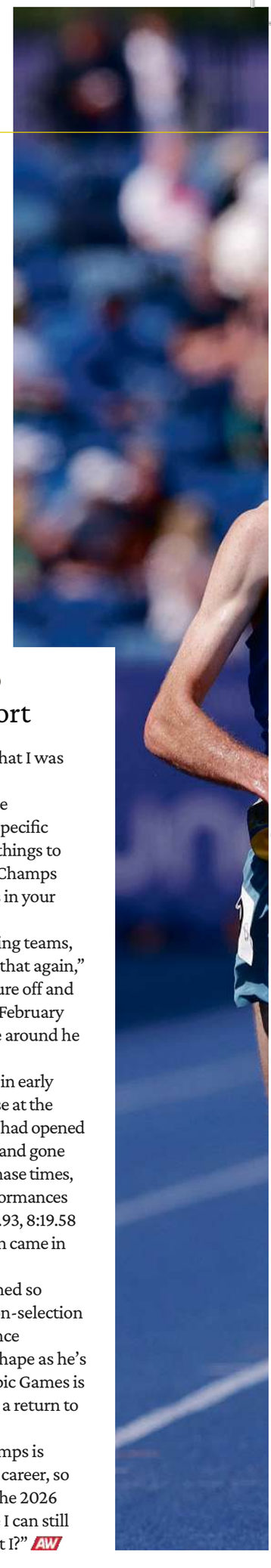
THE PROMPT FOR CHATGPT

The prompt for ChatGTP: Write a first person, three-minute visualisation script for a [distance] race at [the venue] in [the month] where I will perform in a way I am proud and matches my potential. At this venue I will be able to see [ ], hear [ ], feel [ ] and smell [ ]. I will be able to taste the [whatever you usually eat or drink] that I had warming up. I will have previously struggled at this venue but this time I will perform at my best and when I cross the line I will feel [ ].

HOW THEY TRAIN

PHIL NORMAN

AGE: 35 **COACH:** TOMAŽ PLIBERŠEK



Katy Barden talks to the steeplechase champion who decided to put Olympic heartache behind him and focus on enjoying his sport

Phil Norman successfully defended his British 3000m steeplechase title with victory at the UK Athletics Championships in August.

The result itself was not particularly exceptional – he ran 8:40.47 to take the win ahead of Zak Seddon in second (8:40.69) – but after the disappointment of his non-selection for the 2024 Olympic Games and a return to full-time work, it was an immensely satisfying performance that brought to life the possibility of a return to the Alexander Stadium for the European Championships in 2026.

The 35-year-old could have certainly been forgiven for sitting it out.

His last outing in the 3000m steeplechase was an 8:18.65 lifetime best and championship record in Manchester in June 2024. It was the fastest performance by a British steeplechaser in 30 years (sixth all-time, at the time) but was agonisingly short of the UKA qualifying standard for Paris (8:18.50). It was track and field at its best and worst. "Physically I am in the shape and form of my life... but mentally and emotionally I have nothing left to give," he admitted at the time. He told *AW* it would be his last ever championships, possibly his last ever steeplechase.

But Norman loves this brutal, beautiful sport, and nine weeks prior to the 2025 edition of the UK Athletics Championships he reached out to his Slovenia-based coach Tomaž Pliberšek with a clear goal: he wanted to defend his title.

"At the time I was just coaching myself," says the North Devon athlete. "At the end of last season, and after everything, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do going forward and I didn't think it was fair on him [coach Pliberšek] just to string him along. I told him I was going to carry on running, but I didn't want to put him out or have him put a plan together if I wasn't sure what I was going to do.

"When I called him I was in pretty good shape aerobically, I just felt like I needed to do some specific work. I said: 'If you can get me doing the right things to race in nine weeks' time then I'd like to do the Champs and try to defend my title'. He said: 'I'm always in your corner. If that's what you want do, let's do it'."

This year wasn't about chasing times or making teams, however. "I didn't want to put myself through that again," says Norman. It was all about taking the pressure off and enjoying it. He had taken paid leave from mid-February 2024 to focus on the Olympic Games; this time around he was working throughout.

He ran his first steeplechase race of the season in early July, clocking 5:33.74 for the 2000m steeplechase at the National Athletics League meeting in Derby. He had opened with an almost identical time the previous year and gone on to run a series of very quick 3000m steeplechase times, including a trio of impressive back-to-back performances in June that ranked in his top four all-time: 8:20.93, 8:19.58 and 8:18.65. In contrast, his 2025 British title win came in his first full-distance chase of the year.

This season – the prospect of which had seemed so unlikely amidst the disillusionment of Paris non-selection – has been a success, not just from a performance perspective (Norman believes he's in as good shape as he's ever been), but psychologically too. The Olympic Games is in the past; he is now looking to the future and a return to international competition.

"Bar the Olympics, competing at a home champs is one of the things I've most wanted to do in my career, so it would be nice to do that in Birmingham [at the 2026 European Championships]," he says. "I believe I can still perform just as well next year, so why wouldn't I?" AW



A TYPICAL TRAINING WEEK

(JULY 7-13 IN BUILD-UP TO BRITISH CHAMPIONSHIPS)

Norman, who trains alone, fits his training around his job as a pole tester for Openreach. He works full-time hours across four days (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday) and starts at 7:30am each day.

In spite of a return to work (compared to full-time training over this period in 2024) his training hasn't changed drastically: "I might not have done quite as much basic mileage going into the spring just because I didn't have the time to recover and fit it all in," he says; "but in terms of the actual sessions I'm doing, I'd say it's much the same."

- Monday: (am) 5-6 miles easy run before work (7:00-7:30min mile pace); (pm) 4 miles easy run followed by hurdles drills/strides and core workout (from home)
- Tuesday: rest
- Wednesday: (am) track session focused on speed such as 15 x 400m off 75 seconds (in flats), averaging just inside 61 seconds, plus 2.5-mile warm-up and 2.5-mile cooldown. "I'll sometimes practice the water jump with four or five run throughs before a session when I get closer to races," he says.
- Thursday: (pm) 9-10 miles easy run (around 7:00min mile pace) plus core
- Friday: (pm) 8 miles with hill strides (for example, 15-second hill strides)
- Saturday: (am) longer track session such as 5x1000m (2:30 recovery) average 2:42 pace – 8min recovery – 400m fast (around 52/53sec) – 6min recovery – 200m fast (24/25sec)
- Sunday: 12-13 miles easy around 7:00min miles or just inside – no quicker than 6:30

Favourite session: "Anything with the hurdles – even though I've got to set them up myself! I enjoy going over the hurdles and I've always naturally just taken to them. A lot of the time my splits aren't much slower over the hurdles than the flat reps. It might be that mentally it breaks the reps up a little bit when I'm training on my own, but I enjoy any session where I've got the hurdles out."

Least favourite session: "Over the winter it's probably long tempos. I'll do an eight-mile tempo, for example, and it's just a bit of a grind, really. It's not that exciting."

PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

HELEN CLITHEROE

“Managing dreams and expectations is really tough”





COACHING CONVERSATIONS

Katy Barden talks to the two-time Olympian about her coaching journey, her processes and why being able to call on her own experiences can be of great benefit

Helen Clitheroe working with Hannah Nuttall (left) and Elise Thorner

PHOTO BY SPORTSSHOES

Helen Clitheroe is the head coach of Team New Balance Manchester and a former international athlete who represented Team GB at the Olympic Games in Sydney 2000 (1500m) and Beijing 2008 (3000m steeplechase).

Her championship experience is extensive and spans 16 years, from the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Malaysia to her final international track race at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. Podium highlights include European indoor 3000m gold in Paris 2011 and Commonwealth 1500m bronze in Manchester 2002.

Clitheroe's current crop of athletes include Great Britain and Northern Ireland internationalists Hannah Nuttall and Elise Thorner, plus multiple Irish record-holder Andrew Coscoran. All three have been selected to compete at the 2025 World Athletics Championships in Tokyo.

How did you first get into coaching?

I did my first coaching qualification with Jenny Meadows in 2007 or 2008 while I was still competing. I was training in Loughborough at the time but living in Preston, so some of the local lads would come down and do the same sessions. I wasn't really coaching the group, it was a bit like: "This is what I'm doing", and they'd do what I'd been set.

A few years later I bumped into an athlete called Chris Livesey. Chris had been a really good junior – he'd run for Great Britain – but he'd disappeared off the scene for a while because of injuries. I said to him: "You need to come down and do the sessions, we've got quite a nice little group training together", and I soon realised I'd need to start adapting sessions for him because he was really good. I started coaching him around 2014 and he was the first person I really wrote a plan for.

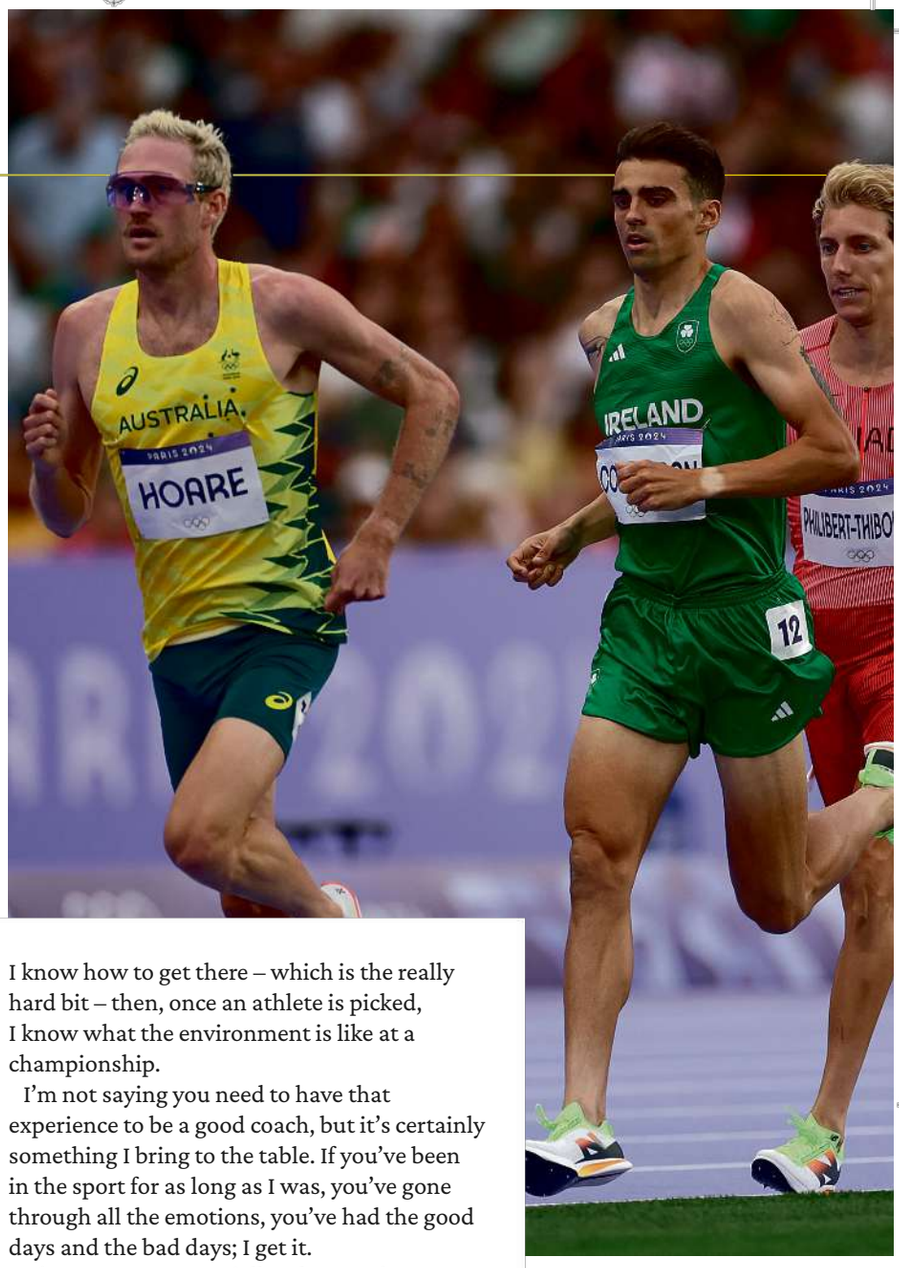
After I retired I was asked if I wanted to get involved with teams. I did the European Cross Country Championships for a few years, the European Under-23 Championships and then the Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast for England.

I'd started doing a bit of work with England Athletics, too – overseeing steeplechase workshops and things like that. There was a lot of voluntary stuff – mainly team duties – but I was also coaching at home and I had my own business as a personal trainer.

Through my work with England Athletics I got the opportunity to coach part-time at the Leeds Talent Hub, which was a great introduction to elite level coaching. The first year was a trial year, but the second year we had a few pretty good athletes, including Keely Hodgkinson – she was one of the first new recruits – so I'd hold the watch for her sessions. It was difficult due to the pandemic and lockdown, but she obviously went on to win Olympic silver [in Tokyo].

What was the incentive to join Team New Balance Manchester?

The opportunity came up to work alongside Steve Vernon at New Balance in 2022. That was exactly where I wanted to be in terms of



working in a professional set-up, and at the time it was the only professional team set-up in the UK, so I jumped at the chance.

When Steve left [to take up the position of World Class Programme Endurance Performance Manager for UK Athletics], I stepped up from part-time/assistant coach to leading the group. It was difficult to start with because there were obviously some athletes on the team who hadn't chosen to be coached by me, so there were challenges there, but I've been there three years now and it seems to be going pretty well.

There are other brands doing the same thing now and I think it's the way forward for professional athletes beyond college – especially if they're not on any funding programme – because it gives them a chance to fully commit.

For me, I feel very privileged to have this opportunity to work as a paid coach. It's a rare thing in sport.

How have your experiences as an athlete benefited you as a coach?

I'd always been keen to work in elite performance because I thought my experiences would serve me best to help at this level.

As an athlete I was fortunate to have the opportunity to work with various people. John Nuttall was the coach I worked with the most over the years, but I also trained with Trevor Painter and Terrence Mahon, and I went on camps with Alan Storey and Mark Rowland, so I had many influences and I learned so much from being an athlete and seeing their different ways and methods.

From John, I learned to be patient and to keep an element of fun in what can sometimes be high-stress situations, but I think the thing I've taken from everyone I've worked with is to see each athlete as an individual and how to get the best out of that person.

Don't get me wrong, things have changed massively in terms of what people do and the methodology of training, so I think it would be crazy to say: "This is my training diary, so this is what we're doing". There are obviously elements of my own training that I use, but it's also about taking the experiences I had and figuring out how different people work.

Writing a programme is probably the easiest part of being a coach. Building and maintaining personal relationships is the hardest bit – managing dreams and expectations is really tough.

I think my experience of going to as many championships as I did also helps. I feel like I know how to get there – which is the really hard bit – then, once an athlete is picked, I know what the environment is like at a championship.

I'm not saying you need to have that experience to be a good coach, but it's certainly something I bring to the table. If you've been in the sport for as long as I was, you've gone through all the emotions, you've had the good days and the bad days; I get it.

It's never easy, especially when you've got to make tough decisions, but I can draw on my own experiences and I can understand how athletes are feeling. Decision-making has got to be a collaboration. I'll always give my opinion and advice, but I'll look at it from both sides. I felt very strongly about that when I switched from being an athlete to sitting on a selection panel or being at a team competition – I tried not to lose that feeling of what it's like to be an athlete – and I think that's been really helpful. I understand the different emotions and why selectors might be battling with a decision. I've probably experienced it, or, if I haven't experienced it, I've maybe been the team-mate of someone who has. So, I think my experience as an athlete definitely helps as a coach, but it doesn't make it easier.



How would you describe your own coaching style?

First and foremost, I'm athlete-first. I think it's very important to get to know each athlete and figure out what makes them tick, what works and doesn't work. It's not just what they need



Olympian Andrew Coscoran is part of the New Balance Manchester group

PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES



Helen Clitheroe had a lengthy international athletics career

> **I can draw on my own experiences and I can understand how athletes are feeling. Decision-making has got to be a collaboration**

in terms of training, it's how their head works, too.

I guess I have a type of training style and thus far it's worked for the athletes we have, but one of the main things I see as my job is helping athletes to get the best out of themselves, whatever that might look like.

It's looking at an athlete and if they're already super-experienced and already a very good athlete, I think it would be irresponsible for me to say: "This is my way, so this is the way we're doing it". Obviously I have "my" way, but I want to know what they think and what has or hasn't worked for them in the past; it's just making sure that what we do works for that individual. I care quite hard for our athletes and I hope that's a good thing, just being a coach that's about them, rather than about me.

I don't write plans massively in advance either. I have an idea of where a plan is going, but I'll 100 per cent rip it up and adapt it, so if an athlete is knackered we'll switch things around, so there's an element of being reactive in how we do things.

I'm lucky enough to see our athletes a lot and we spend a lot of time on camps where we're basically together 24/7. I love that because you see everything and you can be more reactive in the way you coach in that environment.

Have you got plans to grow Team New Balance Manchester and how would you do that?

We're definitely looking to grow the group, but it isn't as easy as it might sound. We have brand values and we have a team dynamic we want to keep on an even keel. We need to consider which athletes will suit our style of training and then, with every athlete on the team, I'm thinking: "How do we add value?".

Some of our athletes live together too, so that brings a whole new element to the group dynamic. It's not just: "Can they train well together?", it's more than that.

We talk a lot about the type of person and the type of athlete we want to recruit, but we need to make sure it aligns with what we have now and the New Balance values. I don't see it being bigger than eight to 10 people if it's just me [coaching], but it would be great to have a few more bodies around for training.

Hopefully the group will become more appealing to people too. I've often questioned whether guys want to come to me, but I feel like James [British international James West] and Andrew have helped get rid of any prejudice that people might have. It's not a "girls" team and I'm not a girls' coach, it's a team and I'm a coach.

What's the most valuable lesson you've learned in your coaching career or the best piece of advice you would pass on to new/aspiring coaches?

If you're not sure about something, always give yourself a chance to think about it before giving an answer that you might regret.

I've learned a lot in the last 12 months, especially about myself, about people management, and about how to react, and I've realised that it's fine to say: "I'll come back to you on that". And, if you don't know the answer, it's okay to be honest. I'd say that's a life lesson rather than just about coaching. AW

HOKA MATAFE 5

Hoka.com **£170**



Built for long days on the trails, the Mafate has been HOKA's staple for off-road cushioning and protection. Here, the deep midsole is made up of a top layer of super-critical foam for a soft, energised ride atop a more stable CM-EVA base. With a broad geometry, the result is a very stable yet cushioned ride. A reinforced MetaRocker provides both protection and the familiar feeling of forward propulsion for smooth going on the trails.

The upper has a soft, stretchy vamp that allows the foot to naturally splay and again adds to stability and off-road adaptability. The 5mm deep Vibram Megagrip lugs excel on any terrain, making this a great all-around off-roader for any season.

BUILT FOR ADVENTURE



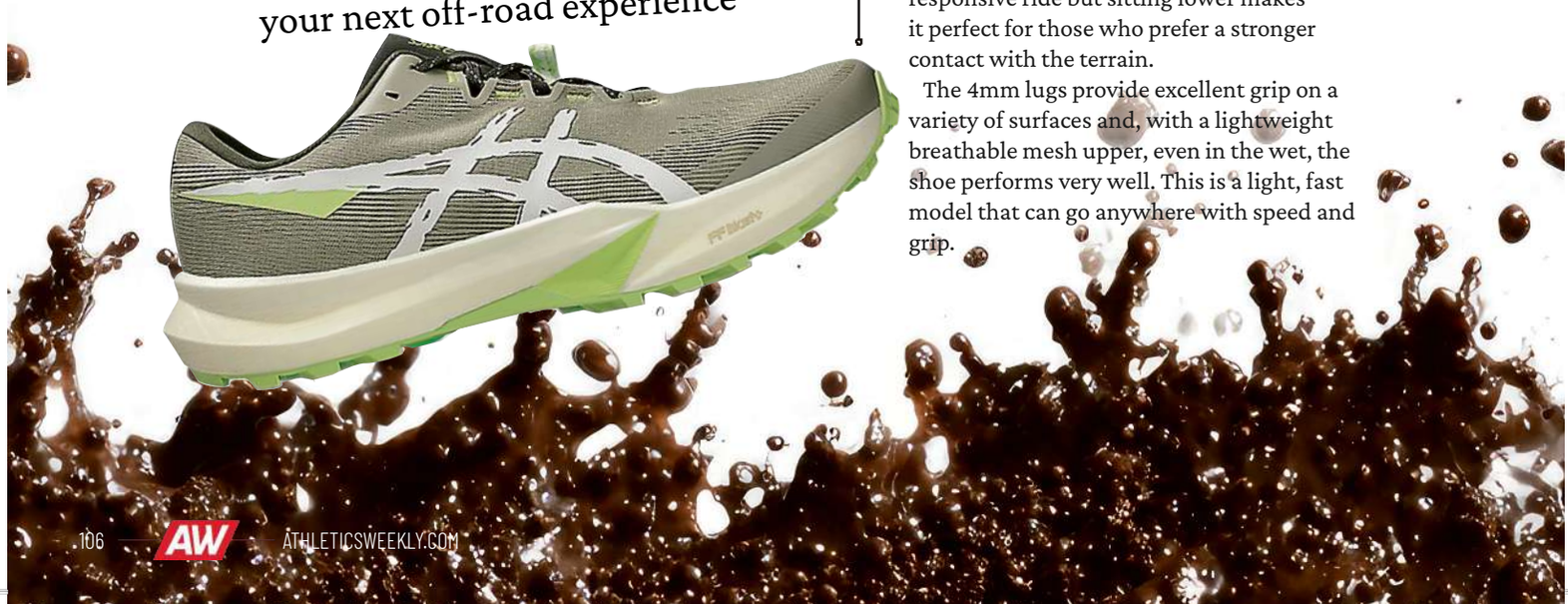
The market for trail shoes is now as wide and varied as the footwear choices found in road running. With exciting new models hitting the shelves, **Paul Freary** looks at some of the latest options for your next off-road experience

ASICS FUJI LITE 6

Asics.com **£125**

With a more minimalist design, the Fuji Lite provides a lower-to-the-ground, connected feel with aggressive lugs for traction. The FF Blast+ midsole provides a soft yet highly responsive ride but sitting lower makes it perfect for those who prefer a stronger contact with the terrain.

The 4mm lugs provide excellent grip on a variety of surfaces and, with a lightweight breathable mesh upper, even in the wet, the shoe performs very well. This is a light, fast model that can go anywhere with speed and grip.



SAUCONY XODUS ULTRA 4

Saucony.com **£150**



With maxed out cushioning designed for those long-haul adventures, the Xodus Ultra offers a deep stack of PWRRUN PB, Saucony's soft, bouncy midsole foam encased in PWRRUN for a stable yet responsive feel.

The Vibram MegaGrip outsole provides rugged traction for any surface and means the shoe can tackle the harshest terrain with ease. Given there is such plush, responsive cushioning, this model feels incredibly stable thanks to its broader base and the feel it provides of being more connected with the ground. The fit is close, hugging the foot and inspiring confidence on uneven terrain at any speed. For speed and comfort for longer distances, this is a great option.



ASICS FUJISPEED 4

Asics.com **£160**

Built with lightweight performance in mind, the Fujispeed is a fast, propulsive off-road shoe. With a dual layer of FF Blast+ midsole foam sandwiching a PEBAX plate, it feels fast and energised with a comfortably cushioned ride.

The plate creates the familiar toe-spring of many carbon road racers, but here it also contributes stability, being optimised for the contours of off-road running.

The 3.5mm lugs provide sufficient traction for fast-paced running, and the upper, while light and breathable, features neatly padded sections to create a plush experience, while protective overlays add durability.

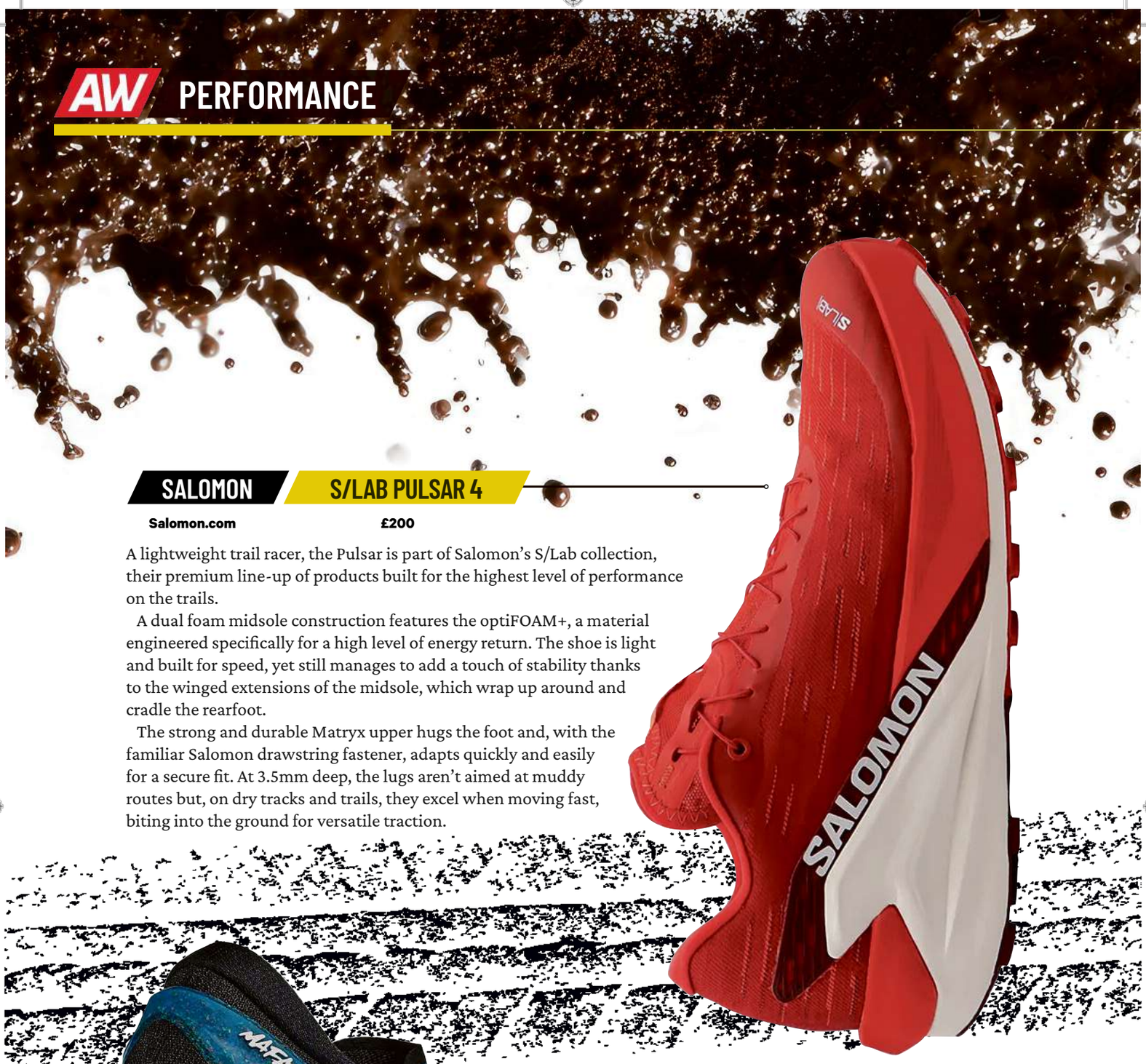
MERRELL MTL ADAPT MATRIX

Merrell.com **£170**



Packed with features, this range-topping off-roader from Merrell offers cushioning and traction and is built for covering ultra-marathon distances on the trails. The FloatPro+ Foam midsole gives a soft, stable ride and echoes the construction of a few competitors this season with a soft core for responsive comfort and firmer sidewalls for stability. This deep, broad construction is very stable and provides endless cushioning that you'd be happy to spend extended periods on your feet in.

Able to tackle rough terrain, Kevlar is used to create a single-layer upper that is lightweight, breathable and highly resistant to abrasion, while a neat, padded collar makes it snug and comfortable – again vital for those ultra events. With a 'bullet-proof' design and build, this really is a shoe built to go the distance.



SALOMON S/LAB PULSAR 4

Salomon.com **£200**

A lightweight trail racer, the Pulsar is part of Salomon's S/Lab collection, their premium line-up of products built for the highest level of performance on the trails.

A dual foam midsole construction features the optiFOAM+, a material engineered specifically for a high level of energy return. The shoe is light and built for speed, yet still manages to add a touch of stability thanks to the winged extensions of the midsole, which wrap up around and cradle the rearfoot.

The strong and durable Matryx upper hugs the foot and, with the familiar Salomon drawstring fastener, adapts quickly and easily for a secure fit. At 3.5mm deep, the lugs aren't aimed at muddy routes but, on dry tracks and trails, they excel when moving fast, biting into the ground for versatile traction.



HOKA MAFATE X

Hoka.com **£185**

The X in the name signifies that the shoe features a carbon plate which, in this case, is trail-specific with a forked design to provide both stability and propulsion. It is embedded within a deep stack of midsole, which uses a PEBA core set within a super-critical EVA to create a soft feel in a stable base. The result is a fast-feeling shoe that offers ample protection for the longest races and training runs. The Vibram Megagrip outsole rounds things off with deep, chunky lugs that are perfect for firmer trails, to which this shoe will be ideally suited.

The Mafate X feels incredibly protective and gives a confidence-inspiring ride that's both stable and balanced, yet with an ability to push the pace, should it be required.



KEEN SEEK

Keenfootwear.co.uk **£160**

Perhaps better known for their outdoor and adventure gear, Keen brings us their first trail running shoe, with this model tested to offer massive durability. Testing company Heeluxe rated the Seek as being capable of covering over 900 miles thanks to its hard-wearing outsole lugs!

Cushioning comes from the QuantumFoam X midsole and offers a similarly durable, yet ultra-responsive ride. The fit is a more rounded shape in the toe box, which allows the foot to spread and create natural stability, as well as allowing for any swelling on those warm days and longer runs. It's a long-lasting, well-made model that provides a smooth and steady ride off-road.



BROOKS CASCADIA 19

Brooksrunning.com **£135**

Taking the DNA Loftv3 nitrogen-infused foam and placing it in a go-anywhere model transforms trail running. The soft and responsive cushioning gives the new Cascadia road shoe comfort with trail shoe control.

It feels lighter, softer and more nimble than before, adapting to the trails with ease and making every stride a joy. The upper is a light, breathable mesh with rubberised overlays for durability and protection, which again makes it soft and flexible on the foot. The outsole traction is perfect for a variety of surfaces you might encounter on the trails and rounds off this versatile off-roader.

A LAP WITH...

BEN PATTISON

Tim Adams speaks to the world 800m medallist about building work and forcing his way back into the British team



PHOTO BY GRAHAM SMITH

After an uncertain start to the year, the hard work has paid off for Ben Pattison. Following knee and quad pain during winter training stints in both Flagstaff and Potchefstroom, the 2023 world 800m bronze medallist suffered a stress fracture in his femur, resulting in him being on crutches for a fortnight.

But, such was his enthusiasm to get back to full fitness that, on top of aqua jogging, cycling and cross-training, the 28-year-old built a log cabin in his Loughborough back garden when he was injured.

"That's now my new home set-up," he says, reflecting on a tough period. "I got a cross-trainer from *eBay* for about £150. I've got a *Zwift* bike in there and a treadmill as well. My parents came up and helped me build it.

"It was quite a stressful two weeks constructing it but you have to invest in yourself. So I thought: 'I'll get this done'. It's genuinely been life-changing and it just means that I can stop when something hurts, whereas if I had pain out and about I'd have to run or walk home. If that's three miles away, for example, then it's more problematic."

Pattison opened up his 2025 season with a time of 1:47.09 over 800m at Meeting Stanislas Nancy in France on July 4, before he reduced his season's best to 1:46.08 at the London Diamond League.

He undertook his biggest training week since December in the immediate build-up to London and, after running 1:46.82 in the heats at the UK Athletics Championships a couple of weeks later, felt like he was back to his old self.

A frustrating final followed, however – Pattison clocked just 1:51.58 for ninth in Birmingham. Putting that performance down to "gut issues", he knew he'd subsequently have to produce a statement run on the circuit to be in with a shot of selection for the World Athletics Championships.

Then came Budapest. On the same track that he secured world bronze two years ago, Pattison ran 1:44.14, a mark that was not only under the automatic qualification standard for Tokyo [1:44.50] but also the third-quickest by a Brit this season [after Max Burgin and Henry Jonas].

"I said to myself: 'Just don't give up'," Pattison says. "I gave it absolutely everything in the last 200m. It was such a relief. Before, everyone had written me off and rightly so – I hadn't done anything good enough to warrant selection."

Pattison then backed up his time in Budapest with a dramatic win over Jake Wightman in the 800m at the British Milers' Club meeting in Tooting Bec. Just one hundredth of a second separated the pair as they clocked 1:45.07 and 1:45.08 respectively.

"I ticked off the time in Budapest but I then needed to show the selectors that I could beat these calibre of guys," Pattison says. "When I saw Jake had entered I thought: 'If I beat him that's a good sign'."

"I know I've always been able to race well. I've just learnt to enjoy the moment and take the opportunities."

Pattison will now get the chance to race his way to a global podium once again, joining Burgin and Tiarnan Crorken in Tokyo.

Given Pattison's best is 1:42.27 – second to only Seb Coe on the UK 800m all-time list – write him off at your peril in the Japanese capital.

"I train to compete at the world level and I've been there before, so I know what it takes," he says. "One of my main targets this year was to break the British record [1:41.73]. Maybe that will happen next season but there are going to be some very quick races in Tokyo." AW

If you could choose one person to train/compete with, past of present, who would it be and why?

I think my ideal training partner would be Marco Arop. He's such a nice guy and we get along well. He would be great for the windy days as I could just sit in behind him. He also likes to take races on and I think that would be ideal for me. I'm not sure he'd be too happy about it, though, if I just sat on his shoulder all the time!



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Teenage kicks

It's very exciting to see so many young athletes producing such eye-catching performances this summer. The 16-year-old Cooper Lutkenhaus running 1:42.27 for 800m at the US Championships was remarkable and there have been a number of other teenagers doing extraordinary things in recent weeks.

However, I agree with Jason Henderson's well-written article on athleticsweekly.com which sounded a note of caution.

"As any experienced coach or long-term fan of athletics will know, though, teenage triumphs do not guarantee senior success in future. For every Usain Bolt there are countless teenage 'phenoms', 'talents' and 'prodigies' who fall by the wayside during the notoriously tricky transition into the senior ranks," he wrote.

I've seen so many promising athletes leave the sport when way too much pressure is applied far too soon. I'd prefer to concentrate on the closing sentiment of Jason's piece.

"Being the best at your event on a particular day against athletes in your age group is definitely something to be applauded. Win or lose, teenage athletics competitions provide fond memories that last a lifetime and competitors shouldn't forget this. They might never make an Olympic podium but they will still have achieved more than most athletes can dream of."

Craig Mortimer

Missing moments

Congratulations to all at *AW* for reaching the grand old age of 80 and the August issue of the magazine that selected some of the most significant moments since 1945 was a thoroughly entertaining read.

There are just a couple of observations I would like to make about the "80 moments" feature. The first is to ask why Steve Cram barely merits a mention? His record-breaking spree of 1985 and his world title in 1983 surely qualify him to make that list. Secondly, the omission of Keely Hodgkinson's Olympic win in Paris was a surprise, too.

Bob Reeves

AW: *Thanks Bob. Part of the reason for that feature was to generate discussion and there was lots to consider. Our July issue featured a lengthy interview with Steve all about his summer of world records, so we had recently covered those achievements in depth. As for Keely, we hope she's just getting started in terms of the great moments she's creating!*

Shelly-Ann's a star

Can I please offer a moment of appreciation for the career of Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce? She is approaching her last ever world championships and the end of her extraordinary career.

She has set such an amazing example and, hearing her speak at the recent Diamond League press conference, I hope she isn't lost to the sport when she stops competing. She will have so much insight and expertise to offer.

Carol-Ann Thompson

WHAT'S ON



PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

SEPTEMBER 5
- AJ Bell Great North 5km
  Newcastle/Gateshead
  greatrun.org

SEPTEMBER 6
- Birell 10km Night Race Prague
  runczech.com
- BMC Regional Races
  Gillingham
  britishmilersclub.com
- UK Youth Development League
  National final (Upper Age Group)
  Liverpool
  ukydl.org.uk

SEPTEMBER 6-7
Surrey County Combined Events and Track Relays Championships
London
surreyathletics.uk

SEPTEMBER 7
- AJ Bell Great North Run
  South Shields
  greatrun.org
- The Big Half
  London
  londonmarathonevents.co.uk/big-half
- New Balance Fifth Avenue Mile
  New York
  nyrr.org
- UK Youth Development League
  National final (Lower Age Group)
  Liverpool
  ukydl.org.uk

SEPTEMBER 12-13
- British Masters (BMAF) track and field championships
  Derby
  bmaf.org.uk

SEPTEMBER 13-21
- World Athletics Championships
  Tokyo
  worldathletics.org

SEPTEMBER 14
- BMC Regional Races
  Hull
  britishmilersclub.com
- Stratford Speed GP5 - Newham & Essex Beagles Outdoor Series
  London
  newhamandessexbeagles.co.uk
- Shaftesbury Barnet Harriers Late Season Throwsfest
  London
  sbharriers.co.uk
- Copenhagen Half Marathon
  cphalf.dk

SEPTEMBER 20-21
- Self Transcendence 24 Hour Track Race
  Battersea Park
  uk.srichinmoyraces.org/london-24
- ESAA Combined Event & Race Walk Championships
  Chelmsford
  esaa.org.uk

SEPTEMBER 21
- Black Country Hammerfest Junior Grand Prix 3
  Telford
- BMW Berlin Marathon
  bmw-berlin-marathon.com

SEPTEMBER 24
- BMC Regional Meeting
  Bury
  britishmilersclub.com

SEPTEMBER 25-28
- World Mountain & Trail Running Championships
  Canfranc-Pirineos, Spain
  worldathletics.org

SEPTEMBER 26 - OCTOBER 5
- World Para Athletics Championships
  New Delhi
  paralympic.org

SEPTEMBER 27
- Vitality Westminster Mile
  London
  londonmarathonevents.co.uk/westminster-mile
- TCS Lidingöloppet
  Lidingö, Sweden
  lidingoloppet.se

OCTOBER 5
- Oysho Cardiff Half Marathon
  Cardiff
  cardiffhalfmarathon.co.uk
- AJ Bell Great Scottish Run
  Glasgow
  greatrun.org

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FROM THE AW ARCHIVE

Looking back to 2015 and the day when Usain Bolt "saved his sport"

It was in Beijing, at the 2008 Olympics, when Usain Bolt truly announced himself to the world and began his era of dominance. As the August 27 issue of Athletics Weekly points out, however, his return to the Bird's Nest stadium for the 2015 World Athletics Championships was the point at which many were predicting that his reign might come to an end.

Injury problems had blighted Bolt's preparations and he faced a formidable foe, the in-form Justin Gatlin, but he produced arguably the greatest victory of his career, winning what had been billed as a "good v evil" battle between himself and the American, who had served two doping bans.

Bolt was nowhere near his world record of 9.58 but he beat Gatlin, by 0.01, with a run of 9.79.

The Jamaican had not lost a major race, barring his false-start disqualification in Daegu in 2011, since 2007 when Tyson Gay beat him in the Osaka 200m. But he was out of form and world No.1 Gatlin went into Beijing on a 28-race unbeaten run.



It was Gatlin who progressed most serenely to the final. He was drawn in lane seven, with Bolt in lane five, but there was a surreal interlude when "the world's fastest piano player" was brought out to play a tune for 9.58 seconds – Bolt's world-record time.

Gatlin was quick to assume control of the race, yet the Olympic champion gradually closed and had the better dip for the line. The athletics world breathed a sigh of relief.

"Coming back from injury, I've had a lot of doubters," said Bolt. "It's been tough. For me to come to the championships and defend my title is a good feeling. After the semi-finals my coach said: 'You are thinking about it too much. There's too much on your mind. All you have to do is remember is that you've done this a million times so just go out there and relax'. That's what I did. That was still not the best. I still stumbled, but I came out relaxed, no stress and brought it home." AW


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