

## >> BEIJING OLYMPICS 2008

# Olympic Hopefuls

As the countdown to the Olympics continues, London Sport brings you six more Brits aiming to bring glory back from Beijing

## MO FARAH

5,000 METRES

It was a sign of the barren period British middle-distance running had been through that when Mo Farah, the 30-year-old runner, was voted Britain's athlete of the year in 2006 he was the first distance runner to take the prize for so long.

The Somali-born runner set the second-fastest British 5,000m time in that year, also taking gold in the Cross Country Championships. Gold in the 2007 National Indoor (5,000m) and 2007 National Championships (5,000m) followed and he now feels that, despite the strengths of his rivals, he can succeed at Beijing.

"Everyone has a good chance," he told London Sport. "But it is no good just saying that. You have to get it right on the day."

"If you make the final, anything can happen. The final is normally not run really fast. It's run really tactical. If I get my tactics right anything can happen."

But there is another factor set to play a part at this year's Olympics: pollution. During his warm-weather training programme in South Africa last month, Farah tested specially designed masks developed by UK Sport and Brunel University. "Pollution is a big worry for everyone," said Farah. "Unfortunately I will not be able to race in the mask but I will be using it for training. But I can't think about pollution too much – I have to stay focused on my event."

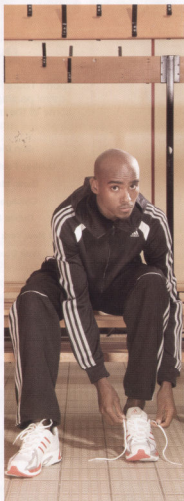
At 25, Farah is still a developing athlete. Beijing will be his first Olympics and he admits he would love to be at his best come London 2012.

"It would be unbelievable to get a medal in Beijing. It would be hard to lose that – perhaps if I did it London I hope I'll be peaking by then."

Farah knows just what it is like to experience home-town support. He raced the Jenner London Marathon when he was younger and started last year's junior race. The full London Marathon is an event he hopes to take part in one day.

"I hope to do a marathon some day, and debut in London – I watch it every year and love the event. But right now everything is focused towards my main target – Beijing."

It is that determination that means Farah will certainly be one to watch when the world's biggest sporting event kicks off in August. Mo Farah models the Official Formula London Marathon 2008 clothing range.



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## CANOEING

## ANNA HEMMINGS

Anna Hemmings has had to battle harder than most to make it to Beijing this summer.

In early 2003 she was diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

"My muscles just continually ached to the degree where it came painful just to lift my limbs," she told London Sport. "I didn't have the energy to get my heart rate up high to do the exercises. I was starting to sleep 12-13 hours a night. My body was just saying stop."

No treatment seemed to work. People suggested changes to her diet and vitamin intake, or to try acupuncture. One doctor told her that she had just done too much exercise, and needed to retire. That was a suggestion Anna absolutely could not accept.

"That was just ridiculous. It just went in one ear and out the other," she said. "I just thought I'll get back and prove them wrong. For a while I didn't know how I was going to get back, but I never gave up hope that I would get back. I always believed that I would get better. It was very difficult at the time and believing that is hard. But I had to, otherwise I would never have found a way out."

Eventually an employer of her sponsor of six years, Pindar, a print and graphics company came up with the solution – reverse therapy, a treatment program based off improving the balance between mind and body.

Anna changed her training regime. Over 5 months, she got better.

"It didn't happen overnight. It was really difficult," she said. "But, once I overcame it and got back to training, it didn't take me long to get back to the same level of training again."

These days, Anna is back on track. Her focus is now on the 500m sprint, as well as the marathon. In 2006, she reached the semi-finals in Sydney and she is determined to get back to the Olympics. In April she will compete in two selection races, followed by a trip to the European Championships where she must qualify standard. By the end of May, she will know if she is headed to Beijing.

"It's a truly amazing experience," she said. "You feel really proud to represent Great Britain. It feels really rewarding, because you dedicate your life to a sport and to a goal, and when you finally get there, it's really fulfilling."

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## OTHER BRITS TO WATCH:

### VICTORIA PENDELTON

#### CYCLING

Leading the hugely talented squad of British cyclists travelling to Beijing this summer will be World Track Champion, Victoria Pendleton. The 27 year old from Bedfordshire had a disappointing Athens Olympics where she only finished sixth and ninth but, after claiming her first major medal – World Championship gold in the Women's Sprint – in 2005, her career has taken off. She claimed three gold medals at the 2007 World Championships and seems in excellent shape in this Olympic year. She added to her World Championship medal haul last month in Manchester where she again showed her class. First, she, and BMX specialist Sharane Keable, defended their World sprint title before Pendleton took gold in the individual sprint and silver in the Keirin event.

### TOM DALEY

#### DIVING

The stage is set for Tom Daley. He will become Britain's second youngest male Olympic athlete in August. Last month he won gold on the 10m platform at the European Championships, and he has the potential to replicate that feat in Beijing. Daley has played down his chances at Beijing – he feels he has a much better chance of claiming medals at London 2012 – but his natural talent and form so far this season suggest that Olympic glory may be arriving four years earlier than he expects. What can't be denied though is that the Plymouth-born youngster has dramatically increased awareness of a sport British athletes have traditionally had little success in, and that has rarely caught the imagination of the British public.

### DAVID DAVIES

#### SWIMMING

British swimming hasn't known a gold medalist since Adrian Moorhouse swam to breaststroke victory in Seoul 1988. Twenty years on and Welsh swimming star David Davies, 23, may be set to succeed the former world number one. The Barry-born 100m specialist burst onto the scene with a superb swim at Athens 2004 where he claimed Olympic bronze with a new British and European record time, knocking 21 seconds off his previous personal best in the process. It was also the fourth fastest time ever over the distance. Medals in the World and Commonwealth games followed to re-affirm Davies as a major talent and, after winning silver at last month's European Championships, he seems well on course for more medal glory in Beijing.

### JESSICA PENNIS

#### HEPTATHLON

The dominance of Carolina Klüft in the heptathlon is set to finally come to an end in Beijing this summer. The Swede has opted not to defend her Olympic title this year but compete in the long jump instead. This has allowed heptathlon competition wide open and Britain's Jessica Ennis has been presented with a great chance of winning an Olympic medal. The 23 year old is currently ranked fourth in the world behind Klüft and fellow Brit, Kelly Sotherton, after just missing out on the podium in last year's World Championships. The rising Welsh field athlete had a hugely successful 2007 in which she smashed many personal bests. If she takes that form into Beijing she will not doubt be in contention for a podium place.