

Don't write off Bolt: Captain

Veteran Jamaican sprinter Frater backs teammate despite fitness worries

By JUSTIN PALMER
in Birmingham, England
Reuters

Jamaican sprinter Michael Frater "wouldn't bet against" Usain Bolt retaining his Olympic 100 meters title in London, despite lingering concerns over his fitness and the threat to his track supremacy from compatriot Yohan Blake. "Usain Bolt is a phenomenon," Jamaican men's team captain and 4x100m relay squad member Frater said at Jamaica's training base at the University of Birmingham in central England on Tuesday. "I wouldn't bet against him win-

ning again."

Bolt, who saw training partner and younger rival Blake take in his world title in Daegu, South Korea, last year after he was disqualified from the final for false starting, has had a far from vintage season so far.

He withdrew from last Friday's Monaco Diamond League meeting, where he had been due to run the 200m, with what his coach Glen Mills called a "slight" problem.

Bolt then traveled to Germany to see renowned sports doctor Hans-Wilhelm Muller-Wohlfahrt but Don Quarrie, Jamaica's track



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JAMAICAN MEN'S TEAM CAPTAIN AND
4X100M RELAY SQUAD MEMBER

and field team technical athletics manager, said the 25-year-old triple Olympic champion from Beijing would be "ready to run in London".

"I can't really give details regarding his present form but I'm quite sure he is ready to go. He is 101 percent," Quarrie told reporters. "He has been working out on

the track (at the University of Birmingham) and his performances are close to what he was doing before the 2008 Olympics."

A few hundred schoolchildren watched a handful of Jamaican athletes going through some warm-ups and light-training on Tuesday in glorious sunshine and under cloudless skies at the leafy campus in the southern suburbs of England's second city.

The training group did not include Bolt or fellow Olympic sprint champions Veronica Campbell-Brown and Shelley-Anne Fraser-Pryce, while Blake and former 100m world record holder Asafa Powell were also conspicuous by their absence, much to the frustration of a large media gathering. Asked if he knew where Bolt

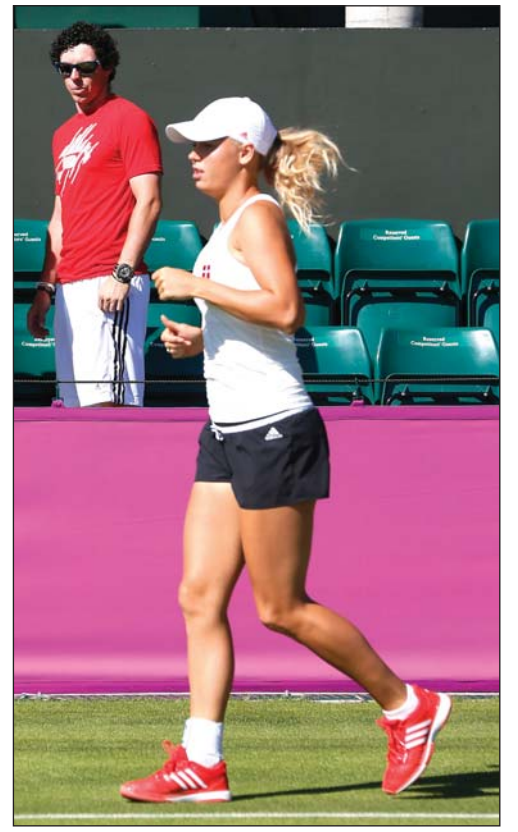
was, Quarrie retorted: "If you know, tell me".

"I don't know why he didn't come. I'm sure the other Jamaicans were here on his behalf," he added.

Jamaican team manager Ludlow Watts predicted London could be in "for a surprise" in the 100m final.

"They are both looking well in practice and I can tell you, you will see even more surprises," Watts said of Bolt's highly anticipated showdown with Blake, who beat him in both the 100 and 200 at the Jamaica trials in late June and early July.

"But nobody has forgotten Asafa (Powell), because when you have great sprinters lined up in the final any mistake can mean disaster."



LOVE AFFAIR

PHOTO BY STEFAN WERMUTH / REUTERS

Golfer Rory McIlroy (left) of Northern Ireland watches his girlfriend Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark during a training session at the All-England Club in London on Tuesday.



MATT DUNHAM / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Australian street artist James Cochran spray paints a portrait of Usain Bolt, Jamaica's world record holder in the 100 and 200 meter sprints, on the wall of a building beside a park in east London earlier this month.

Wanna bet? Gambling on the Olympics

By ASSOCIATED PRESS
in London

What are the odds of a UFO sighting during the London Olympics opening ceremony? Or of the final torch bearer tripping as they ascend to light the flame? Or would you prefer a more traditional wager on the battle for gold between Russia and Spain in synchronized swimming duos?

London betting houses will offer odds on almost anything, including all 26 sports at the games, from the 100 meter dash to fencing, from diving to soccer. The industry expects to handle a record 100 million pounds (\$155 million) in wagers during the July 27-Aug 12 competition — even some pretty outlandish parlays.

"We try to cater to most people's tastes," said Joe Crilly, a spokesman for William Hill, a gambling house that encourages punters — the UK term for gamblers — to contact them with any bet they can dream up. They also offer online gambling in 182 countries, though not in the United States or in other countries where it is prohibited.

Ladbrokes, another British

bookmaker, will offer 11,000 different wagers during the Games, according to spokeswoman Jessica Bridge. Those bets include that the Olympics will be over budget, that a British athlete will be photographed eating a McDonald's Big Mac, or that the athletes village in Olympic Park will run out of condoms.

William Hill offers perhaps the longest odds of the Games: 1,000-to-1 that a flying saucer will appear over Olympic Stadium during Friday's opening ceremony. Tough luck, presumably, if aliens don't make first contact until the next day.

Other longshots get slightly better odds, like 250-to-1 that every team in the 4x400 relay final drops the baton, or 33-to-1 that flamboyant London Mayor Boris Johnson accidentally lights his hair on fire with the Olympic torch.

And this being famously soggy London, of course they are taking bets on the weather, paying even-money that rain will mar the opening night. If that's not enough to make an Olympics fan cry, Ladbrokes will pay \$50 on a \$1 bet that it will rain every day, and 10-to-1



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JOE CRILLY
A SPOKESMAN FOR WILLIAM HILL,
A GAMBLING HOUSE

that a strike by transit workers will halt train service on the London Underground.

The gambling story is not all fun and games.

The British betting industry is worth \$9 billion a year, one of the biggest in the world, according to a 2010 study by accounting and consultancy firm Deloitte. Most houses offer

online gambling as well.

There have been fears that the massive gambling volume could lead to corruption, which would forever mar London's legacy. The IOC has barred athletes from betting on the Games — and sports, police and gambling industry officials plan to meet daily to ensure that no illegal bets are placed.

Jacques Rogge, the president of the International Olympic Committee, has said previously that illegal betting can fuel the scourge of match-fixing.

Crilly said the betting industry is heavily regulated and immediately reports suspicious activity to Britain's Gambling Commission.

"We have a lot of strict regulations in place to guard against any funny business," Crilly said. "If we were to see an unusually large bet for a sport we were not particularly expecting large amounts of money for, it would flash up ... If there was any suggestion that it was suspicious we would get authorities involved."

The most heavily wagered event during the London games is expected to be the 100, where Jamaican Usain Bolt, the reign-

ing Olympic champion, is still the odds-on favorite despite a rough run-up to the games that saw him bested in trials by countryman Yohan Blake. Soccer will also be an extremely popular wager, as will the women's heptathlon, where star British athlete Jessica Ennis is expected to compete for gold.

A major challenge for the gambling houses is setting the odds for the more obscure sports. Who is to say Dutch rider Adelinde Cornelissen should be a 15-to-8 shot in dressage, an equestrian discipline? Or if Sweden's Anders Gustafsson should be set as a 9-to-1 shot in the 1,000m men's single kayak race?

Crilly says ahead of the Olympics, betting firms assign teams to research each sport, spending weeks immersing themselves in facts and figures.

Punters can also bet on which country will win the overall medals table (the US is favored, with China a close second), or how many golds the host nation will take home.

Bridge says Ladbrokes has already taken a \$15,500 bet on Bolt to win the 100m dash and expects much larger wagers ahead of the big race.

Buzz intensifies around Games opening show

By ROBIN MILLARD in London
Agence France-Presse

Social media was buzzing on Tuesday with leaks from a rehearsal of the London 2012 Olympic Games opening ceremony, despite director Danny Boyle's plea for spectators to "save the surprise".

Tens of thousands of people attended a technical rehearsal at the Olympic Stadium on Monday, one of the final run-throughs before Friday's spectacular.

The ceremony's artistic director, filmmaker Danny Boyle, begged the audience — which included guests of the Games organizers and the families of those taking part — not to leak out details about the event, set to be watched by a worldwide television audience.

The Twitter hashtag "savethesurprise" was emblazoned on the stadium's giant screens.

Oscar winner Boyle, 55, and his creative team have done their best to keep most details of the opening ceremony secret.

But the director of the hit films *Trainspotting* and *Slumdog Millionaire* acknowledges that in the age of social media and camera phones, keeping everything under wraps will be impossible.

Despite his pleas, details began to emerge as people left the run-through unable to contain their excitement.

Spectators tweeted pictures of the event — one with a hand covering most of the action — while others commented on the show.

"Was blown away by the opening ceremony last night. Whatever your expectations are, forget them! It's beautiful," said Mims Reilly.

Mark Beaver wrote: "So lucky to have seen the Olympic rehearsal last night. The whole nation should feel justifiably proud on Friday."

Sue Hillman, who tweeted a picture of her ticket, wrote on her blog: "Although it was not the full lineup yet as several videos and some of the performances were not in last night, nor was the parade of athletes naturally, it was wonderful — strange in parts and absolutely brilliant in others."

"The movement of huge numbers of performers, the incredible scene changes, the fabulous music, the imagination — wow! You'll have to watch it on Friday to learn more as my lips are sealed."

There was praise too for Boyle, with some suggesting he should be knighted for his efforts.

"If you've got plans Friday night, cancel them. Opening ceremony is out of this world. Danny Boyle, I salute you," said Pete Hendrick.

"Amazing scene at technical rehearsal for opening ceremony," said former British foreign secretary David Miliband.

"Danny Boyle is a genius with a wicked sense of humor."

Organizers have already revealed that the ceremony will feature a recreation of the British countryside, including live farmyard animals.

Boyle showed off a model layout of the set last month, featuring clouds hanging over it and a hill at one end.

The theme of the ceremony is "Isles of Wonder", inspired by a passage from William Shakespeare's comedy *The Tempest*.

Fellow movie-maker Stephen Daldry, the creative director across the Games ceremonies, has revealed that the show will project "a journey which will celebrate who we are, who we were and who we wish to be."

It will champion "the rich heritage, diversity, energy, inventiveness, wit and creativity that truly defines the British Isles".