

## 9 runners banned in doping crackdown: IAAF

By NICK MULVENNEY  
in London  
Reuters

Nine track and field athletes have been handed lengthy bans for doping violations in a crackdown on the use of prohibited substances in the lead up to the London Olympics, the International Association of Athletics Federations said on Wednesday.

The athletes, including leading marathon runner Abderrahim Goumri, were all caught with the aid of the Athlete Biological Passport program, which will be used at an Olympics for the first time in London.

"Today's announcements underline the IAAF's continued and unwavering campaign against doping in athletics," IAAF President Lamine Diack said.

"They demonstrate the IAAF's commitment to use advanced methods to detect doping and to enforce increased sanctions when justified. We will not stint in our resolve to do everything in our power to eradicate cheating."

Three of the offences dated back to the World Championships held in Daegu, South Korea last year.

Inna Eftimova of Bulgaria tested positive for synthetic growth hormone, while the samples of Ukrainians Nataliya Tobias and Antonina Yefremova both contained traces of synthetic testosterone. All three were banned for two years.

Moroccan Goumri, who finished third in the London Marathon and second in the New York Marathon in 2008, was among the six athletes who were monitored after irregularities showed up in their "biological passports".

The others were Russians Svetlana Klyuka, who finished fourth in the 800m at the Beijing Olympics, 2011 European indoor 800m champion Yevgenina Zinurova and Nailiya Yulamanova, along with long-distance runners Irini Kokkinariou of Greece and Turkey's Meryem Erdogan.

The three Russians and Erdogan admitted their guilt and were given two-year bans.

Goumri was handed a four-year ban by the Moroccan athletics federation, while the IAAF is looking to enforce a ban of four years on Kokkinariou.

The IAAF's announcement came after the Moroccan favorite for the women's 1,500m, Mariem Alaoui Selsouli, was confirmed to have tested positive for a banned diuretic.

Selsouli, a silver medalist at the World Indoor Championships this year, has already served a two-year suspension for doping and now faces a lifetime ban under World Anti-Doping Agency rules.

WADA said on Tuesday that more than 100 athletes were caught doping and sanctioned in the months leading up to the London Olympics in a drive to eliminate cheats before they reach the Games.

There will be about 6,250 samples analyzed at the Games, more than any other Olympics. There were 20 proven cases of doping at the Beijing Games four years ago, including six horses, down from 26 cases in Athens in 2004.



ABDELJALIL BOUNHAR / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Morocco's Mariem Selsouli runs the women's 5,000 meter race at the International Mohammed VI track and field meet in Rabat, Morocco, on May 20. Selsouli has tested positive for a banned diuretic.

# Cocky Kobe must be dreaming

LA star says London squad better than '92 Dream Team, but Jordan begs to differ

By JIM SLATER in London  
Agence France-Presse

Two decades after Michael Jordan led the first US NBA Dream Team to Barcelona Olympic gold by amazing margins, Kobe Bryant says this year's London Olympic US NBA squad could beat that legendary lineup.

"It would be a tough one but I think we would pull it out," Bryant said. "People who think we can't beat that team for one game, they are crazy. To sit there and say we can't, it's ludicrous. We can beat them one time."

The Dream Team, which featured Michael Jordan and Magic Johnson among 11 players now in the Basketball Hall of Fame, begs to differ.

"There's no question about it — we would kill them," said 1992 US Olympic center Patrick Ewing.

"We were much bigger. Our bigs were much bigger and more athletic. We had Magic, Michael. I think we would dominate them."

The Americans completed a 5-0 pre-Olympic exhibition run with a 100-78 rout of Spain in Barcelona. Carmelo Anthony scored 27 points and LeBron James, fresh off leading Miami to an NBA crown last month, added 25 in what could be a preview of next month's Olympic final.

But much of the run-up to the game and the Olympics has evoked the memories of the epic 1992 US Dream Team led by Jordan, Johnson, Ewing and Charles Barkley and how the first NBA Olympic team might fare against today's icons.

"Every Olympic basketball team from now on will be compared to the Dream Team," said Kevin Durant, the reigning NBA scoring champion. "We really can't duplicate exactly what that team did. But we can put our own spin on it."

"We're glad they laid that blueprint out. But it's our time now."

James said: "That was a great team. They set the standard for a lot of us. We're trying to make our



MANU FERNANDEZ / ASSOCIATED PRESS  
Kobe Bryant (center) battles for the ball against Serge Ibaka (left) during an exhibition match between Spain and the United States on Tuesday in Barcelona, Spain, in preparation for the Summer Olympics.

own mark so that teams will come after us."

Anthony sees the 1992 squad as unmatched.

"I'm not here to sit and say we're better than them," Anthony said. "We're trying to make a statement with the game we have. What they

did back in '92 will never be duplicated. We're just trying to start our own thing."

Barkley noted the superior inside size edge the original Dream Team would have, largely due to injuries taking out such talent as Dwight Howard and Chris

Bosh from this year's side as well as playmakers Dwyane Wade and Derrick Rose.

"Kobe and LeBron, those are the only two guys who would make our team," says Barkley.

"We win by 15 or 20 points. We're too big for them. They've got a very small team and we could wear Kobe and LeBron down by putting a bunch of bodies on them. Patrick Ewing and David Robinson would just punish them inside."

Jordan said he laughed when he heard Bryant's comments, including that the original Dream Team had "players who were mainly at the end of their careers."

"I imagine he's saying it to legitimize his own Dream Team," Jordan said. "To me it's not even a question which team is better. They learned from us. We didn't learn from them."

In the end, each team will make its own history.

"The Dream Team will always be the team people recognize as the team of all time," USA Basketball Chairman Jerry Colangelo said. "But this team is a strong team and this team will be successful too."



## DAN'S THE MAN

PHOTO BY ANDRES LEIGHTON / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Reigning Olympic champion Lin Dan of China practices during a training session for the badminton competition of the Olympics on Wednesday in London.

## Table tennis boss rues one-horse race

By RICHARD EATON in London  
Agence France-Presse

China's dominance of table tennis is "devastating," according to the sport's top administrator, even though he considers himself an admirer of Chinese brilliance.

One of the three most important issues facing the sport is "challenging the Chinese," according to International Table Tennis Federation President Adham Sharara.

He said the other two, a better image and greater recognition, were not unrelated.

Sharara's comments have added significance because over the next two weeks China will be prevented from repeating its achievement of winning all six individual medals at the Beijing Olympics by a new rule which allows only two players per country to take part in each event.

So at least one medal in both singles events will go to another nation in London, even though at Wednesday's draw China was again seeded to win all four Olympic golds and had the top two players in the men's and women's singles.

However, Sharara claimed this rule

change was not directed against the sport's outstanding nation. Rather, he said, it met a need to have more countries taking part in table tennis at the Games.

"Due to the limited number of players allowed at the Olympics — 86 men and 86 women — and with no prospect from the IOC (International Olympic Committee) of increasing these numbers, we had to find a creative way to increase the number of National Olympic Committees taking part," he said.

"This, of course, opens the door for NOCs other than China to take part in the medal ceremony."

Nevertheless, Sharara reckoned "the current situation is actually worse than in Beijing — worse in the sense that the difference in technical level between the Chinese and the rest of the world has grown even further."

He continued: "This is good for the Chinese, but devastating for the rest. The Chinese are expected to win everything, so even within China the public is crying for a meaningful foreign challenge."

"This is not on the immediate horizon."

Although Singapore's women upset



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ADHAM SHARARA  
PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL TABLE TENNIS FEDERATION

China at the World Championships in Moscow two years ago they have been unable to follow-up the achievement.

There is though an emerging crop of good young Japanese and French players who between then offer the prospect of greater medal diversity.

The ITTF does not plan further interventions to help other nations, even though China has now won an astounding 20 gold, 14 silver and eight bronze medals in just seven Olympics.

"We cannot without bias help directly any one nation against another," said Sharara, who paid tribute to China's dominance of table tennis and warned its quest for success would not stop at the Games.

"I salute the Chinese for their abilities, skills, and professional approach to sport," he said. "Today they dominate table tennis, but in the future they may dominate many other sports as well."

## China's next flag bearer could be a woman

By SUN XIAOCHEN  
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The honor of bearing China's flag at the Olympics won't be a tall man's forever.

China's sports governing body said it will consider a woman to be the Olympic flag bearer for future Games.

Xiao Tian, the deputy chef de mission for the Chinese delegation, said during a news conference on Wednesday that women athletes should be among the privileged to carry the national flag at the Olympics.

"It's actually a good idea (to select a woman bearer)," Xiao said. "We will seriously consider it and hopefully we will see it happen very soon."

Speculation of who will carry the flag in London drew a lot of buzz but ended without much surprise on Wednesday after basketball player Yi Jianlian was confirmed as the flag bearer.

"The candidate should have a tall frame, elite performance and international influence as well to represent our developing country," Xiao said of the requirements for the country's flag bearer. "Given all these, he (Yi) is the perfect one,

and we believe it's the best choice we have."

Yi's selections marks the eighth consecutive time a basketball player will lead the Chinese delegation at the opening ceremony since China's Olympic debut at the 1984 Los Angeles Games.

The public has been clamoring for a woman flag bearer as more and more women athletes contribute to China's medal haul at the Olympics.

Chinese women have claimed 98 gold medals at the summer and winter Olympics since 1984, 26 more than their male counterparts, while women stars like Li Na, China's first Grand Slam tennis winner, have become more recognized internationally. Li is not expected to attend the opening ceremony on Friday night.

"We have noticed that a lot of women players are doing pretty well in high-profile events, and they boast a healthy image as well. I think the first woman flag holder will appear soon," Xiao said.

China's tennis chief, Sun Jinfang, said Li would skip the opening show to prepare for her first round match in singles, which will kick off Saturday.