

Sprinters Set For Olympic Stage

By Adam Gauthier

Last Friday morning, many Canadians woke up to watch the opening ceremonies of the twenty-seventh Olympic Summer Games in Sydney, Australia. The hopes and dreams of many young and veteran athletes will be realized over the fifteen days of competition.

The powerhouse that is the United States of America is most likely to finish on top of the medal standings at the end of the games as they did at the 1996 Games in Atlanta. Canada finished with 22 medals at the Atlanta Games, the best finish ever for Canada at a non-protested Games.

The most memorable event in Atlanta, besides Mohammed Ali lighting the Olympic Flame, was the 100 meter dash which featured Canadian sprinter Donovan Bailey. Bailey won the gold medal in the race and set a world record time of 9.84 seconds in the process. A



week later, Bailey won his second gold of the games when he ran the anchor leg of the 4X100 relay for the Canadian team.

Since Atlanta, Bailey has gone through a rash of injuries including a devastating break of his Achilles tendon which he hurt playing basketball. Although he claims that rehab has made him even stronger than he has ever been, Bailey hasn't been the same since the injury.

He is yet to win a significant race against some of the best runners in the world including his new

arch rival, American sprinter Maurice Greene.

Greene, who is the current world record holder in the 100 meters with a time of 9.79 seconds, has been tearing up track meets; winning almost every competition that he has entered in the last year. Along with his athletic ability, Greene has an undeniable cockiness that will no doubt help his chances of winning the gold.

Bailey is also very cocky, which has been obvious since he defeated Michael Johnson in 150 meter race in Toronto in 1997, which was to determine who was the fastest man in the world. He is also the defending Olympic champion, which is not to be lost on the minds of many, including Bailey's competition.

Another one of Bailey's competitors is also his Canadian teammate, Bruny Surin. Surin, who did not qualify for the championship race in 1996 but did win gold on the 4X100 team, has improved greatly over the past four years.

Earlier this year, Surin tied Bailey's Olympic time of 9.84 seconds in a competition in which he finished second to Maurice Greene. Surin has to be considered Canada's best sprinter going into the Games.

What Surin has going against him is the hype surrounding Bailey and Greene, but that isn't necessarily a bad thing.

Within the last month, all three runners have had leg problems, particularly with their quad muscles. But all three runners say that they will be ready for the Olympics, which is great news for the most anticipated and hyped event in Olympic history.

Stay tuned for Olympic coverage because this is not an event to be missed.

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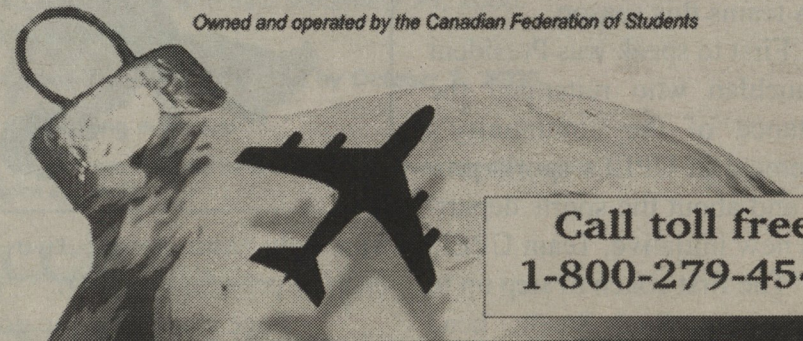
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