



VIEW POINT ON THE BEIJING OLYMPICS

By Ina El Kobbia, Germany

▲ *Isabell Werth on Satchmo showing disobedience during the Piaff*

On 8/8/2008 at 8.00 pm local time all eyes were on China! China in return left nothing to chance; an impressive number of 2008 drummers opened the 29th summer Olympiad in Beijing's newly built main stadium that is nicknamed bird's nest due to its particular architectural structure. The world witnessed a spectacular opening ceremony that gave an overview of China's more than 3,500 year old history up to today leaving the audience with no doubt that China, with its 1.3 billion people is a world power. The closing ceremony was equally stunning. During the Olympic Festival industrial productions were reduced in order to improve air quality and dog's meat was struck from the

traditional Chinese menu cards to make international guests feel as comfortable as possible. China has spared no effort to host the Olympics. Yet, these Olympics will most likely be remembered as the most politicised games since the Cold War; Chinese officials found themselves confronted with severe international criticism regarding individual human rights and freedom of press which even led to boycott threats especially from Western countries. Additionally, at the commencement of the Olympics a new political crisis arose; the world learned that a conflict has broken out in the Caucasus with Russian troops marching towards Georgia.

However, the admittedly stunning organisation of these Games and the outstanding performances of the athletes made many put politics aside for a moment or two. Who will not remember the King of the Kings: American swimmer Michael Phelps: 8 starts, 8 wins, 8 gold medals and 7 world records! Many called him supernatural and asked themselves: why don't his muscles ever get tired?? And yet another king captivated the masses; he did not run over the finish line, but instead jogged over it and danced his way from record to record, the unbelievable Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt! He left his competitors far behind with a smile setting 3 world records and taking 3 gold medals!

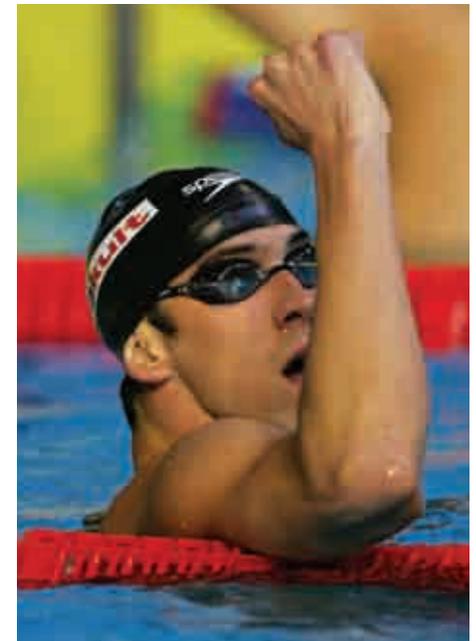


▲ *German Eventing team*

▼ *Usain Bolt*

▼ *Michael Phelps*

Remembering equestrian sport at the Olympics, true low points were Germany's jumping riders! For the first time in ages Germany had to watch other nations receive gold, silver and bronze medals; the German team found itself far behind with a disappointing 5th rank together with the Dutch team; and as if that had not been enough, German jumping rider Christian Ahlmann was disqualified and had to leave the Olympics earlier due to doping allegations concerning his Olympic horse 'Coester'; he was not alone though, Brazilian rider Bernardo Alves, Norwegian Tony André Hansen and Irish Denis Lynch also faced doping allegations. It looks like equestrian jumping sport is far from being a "clean sport"! In contrast, a true highlight was American jumping rider Beezie Madden, who took the individual bronze medal and additionally together with her strong team mates the team gold medal. Canadian Eric Lamaze was the big surprise of the equestrian Olympiad; known previously for his heavy drug consumption, he proved his riding talents by winning not less than an Olympic individual gold medal in jumping edging out Swedish renowned rider Ralf-Goran Bengtsson!



A true highlight at least for Germany was indisputably eventing; Germany won both, the team gold medal and the individual gold medal. Another highlight was dressage; unbeaten until today the German dressage team took the gold medal ahead of its permanent rivals from the Netherlands. Then there was the

dramatic Kur of the world's top dressage couple German Isabell Werth and 'Satchmo'; nobody thought that this would ever happen, nobody understood where it came from, but as if this outstanding performance had enough of all the competitions and of his rider he showed during the piaff clear and strong signs of disobedience, then continued the Kur, which consisted of highest degrees of difficulty, as if nothing had happened. It was a moment of shock for the rider who thereby had to give up hopes for an individual gold medal, nevertheless Isabell & 'Satchmo' ended up with the silver medal. Dutch Anky van Grunsven was next, she showed a good but not spectacular Kur and as regularly seen before her horse 'Salinero' did not show

the end-halt, yet the judges considered the performance good enough for an individual gold medal.

To conclude this viewpoint, I would like to note that the 2008 Olympics were bigger, higher and more spectacular than its predecessors and most probably the next Olympics to come will try to even top these results! It is also probably fair to say that the Olympic Movement, which declares the intention to contribute to a peaceful and better world by the means of sport, remains an everlasting goal that however far it seems is worth to carry on from one Olympiad to the next; in that sense I would like to say: "Goodbye Beijing 2008, hello London 2012." **HT**