



from the editor

E. Garry Hill

AS A FAMOUS CRUISESHIP COMPANY used to say, “Getting there is half the fun.” The track & field equivalent is the eager anticipation of things-magical-to-come that creep into one’s brain in the days leading up to an Olympic Games. So, spurred on by our Olympic-medal guesses on p. 46, here’s my list of 8 things (it’s 8 cuz I ran out of space in which to ramble!) that are most invading my wool-gathering moments, night and day. These are the questions I want answered.

I hasten to note that these are competition-related only, much as I’d like to see the ravenous mad dogs of the press munch on IOC head Thomas Bach for Lausanne’s wimped-out stance on the Russian problem, or not to see/hear/feel a single mosquito during my couple of weeks in Rio.

The 8 questions I most want answered in Rio

So, in no particular order (but decidedly with a bias towards the speed events):

•After more than a decade of world-class sprinting, at age 29 (30 on the last day of the Games) and with ongoing infirmities, is Usain Bolt still the fastest man on the planet? I doubt that he’s any longer the dude who was the fastest who ever was, but I still doubt that anybody is faster, given that U.S. hope Justin Gatlin—reviled as he may be by many non-Americans—is at 34 even more likely to be on the downside.

•Speaking of Bolt & Gatlin—and 3 more of their countrymen—what will happen when the Jamaican and U.S. foursomes clash in the all-for-national-pride 4x1? Not to be negative, but will the U.S. even be in the final? Too many recent disasters hint at otherwise. But let’s be positive: both make it to the final in fine fashion, and on the anchor leg, Bolt...

•Fastest man? How about fastest woman? Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce has shown poor form all year, but would I bet against her winning a record third 100 gold in a row? No, even though that’s the consensus of our experts at this point. (Note: the women’s 200 lost its biggest-question status when SAFP wasn’t named to the Jamaican team and Allyson Felix came up short of the American squad. Dafne Schippers now has only—OK, “only”—Elaine Thompson to worry about.)

•How many points will Ashton Eaton score in the decathlon? Note that I don’t ask whether or not he can break his own World Record; I don’t care. I just love watching this unparalleled talent cranking amazing event after amazing event and whatever he scores will suit me just fine. Not that he’s a slam-dunk. Watch out for Canada’s Damian Warner.

•Will Jonathan Edwards’ longstanding WR in the triple jump finally go down? Christian Taylor was oh-so-close at the Worlds last year. If he’s free of that big ankle wrap he was sporting in Eugene, my guess is that the Brit is finally history.

•How about that men’s 400? When last year dawned, Kirani James and LaShawn Merritt looked set to dominate the event for many years to come. Oops! Then Wayde van Niekerk went wild in Beijing and the Big 2 were left on the outside looking in. My personal guess (again, counter to the group-think on p. 46) is that van Niekerk caught James and Merritt by surprise in the Bird’s Nest and this time he won’t. A lot depends on lane draw, but my call is James-Merritt-van Niekerk, with Michael Johnson’s World Record very much in danger.

•Will the U.S. women really sweep the 100 hurdles? Will any of the trio do enough to dislodge Keni Harrison from the No. 1 spot in the World Rankings? (And looking even deeper than that, can Harrison put together an Athlete Of The Year season without even competing in the Olympics? That would be a first.)

•Can Mo Farah pull off a distance double, or will the Kenyans and/or Ethiopians (or some dark horse candidate) finally figure out that there’s no way he can be outkicked if he’s close on the last lap?

The best part of an Olympics? Whatever the answers are, I’ll be thrilled.

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