



Swim star and local sports phenom **Michael Phelps** goes for gold in Beijing this summer. **Will he make Olympic history again?**

WATER WORLD

Six-time Olympic gold medalist and world-record-holder Michael Phelps doesn't come up for air very often these days. The 6'4", 22-year-old Baltimore native who, at 16, became the youngest American male swimmer to turn pro, is busy preparing for his third summer Olympic Games in Beijing, China. *Flyer* caught up with the swimmer to ask about his massive breakfasts, his fondness for flip-flops and his hopes for the future of swimming.

BY MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN

q&a

What are your goals for the Beijing Olympics?

Only my coach and I know my goals for Beijing. I keep a list of them by my bed so it's the first thing I see when I go to bed

at night and when I wake up in the morning. One thing I would like to do is get a better understanding of the Chinese language. I have *ni hao* (hello) and *xie xie* (thank you) down, but I'd like to add some more vocabulary before I go back.

Do you feel different as you approach these Games compared with the 2004 Games?

Physically, I have added weights to my dry-land training, which has helped with my strength and endurance. In Sydney [2000], I had no idea what was going on. I was like a deer in the headlights. Athens [2004] was an incredible experience, but even there I didn't quite know what I was getting into, given the program I was swimming. Heading into Beijing, I have that much more experience between Athens and the World

Championships last year in Australia. I am looking forward to competing in Beijing's Water Cube.

When you travel to far-and-away locales for meets, do you get to explore the destination?

When we travel for meets, we don't usually get to see a lot of the city. Our schedule is pretty regimented and doesn't allow for much sightseeing. But after World Championships, [fellow swimmers] Katie Hoff, Ryan Lochte, Megan Jendrick and I went to Beijing as part of the Visa Friendship Lanes Tour. It was a great experience and allowed us the opportunity to see some of the sights, experience the people and culture, conduct a few swimming clinics and help promote the Special Olympics World Summer Games.

What is more exciting for you: breaking records or winning medals?

The records are great, but nothing beats winning a medal for your country. It's simply an amazing feeling.

What are your plans after Beijing this summer?

Right now, my focus is on preparing for the Olympics. Other than that, I haven't really given much thought to life after Beijing. I have not ruled out competing in London in 2012, so we'll see.

When you're in the area, where do you train?

I always love coming back home to Baltimore. It will always be "home" to me. When I'm in town, I always train at the North Baltimore Aquatic Center. It's where my sisters and I all got our start in swimming.

Where do you unwind when you're not training?

I usually unwind at home with my dog, Herman, an English bulldog.

How many hours a night do you sleep?

Sleep is an important part of my training. Swimming twice a day with a few dry-land workouts can take a lot

out of you, so I need my rest. I usually try to get seven to eight hours of sleep a night and then get a two-hour nap between practices.

What's a typical breakfast for you?

Breakfast can vary, but it has been known to include oatmeal, two breakfast sandwiches, chocolate-chip pancakes and some bacon or home fries. Right now, I am taking in anywhere between 8,000 and 10,000 calories a day. I burn so many calories during my workouts that I need to make sure to get plenty.

Given a week to do anything you wanted, where would you go and what would you do?

The beach! I love relaxing on the beach—any beach, really.

If you were to visit Washington—and training wasn't on the agenda—how would you fill your day?

A tour of the White House, some shopping and lunch in Georgetown, and a trip down the Mall never gets old. Still gives me chills when you ride down Constitution and see all the monuments.

What's your favorite footwear?

I do wear flip-flops a lot. Even with the cold winters in Ann Arbor [Mich., where Phelps trains], you'll definitely still find me in my flops.

You've made a documentary and you co-founded Swim with the Stars, a program designed to inspire young swimmers to succeed in the sport. What will it take to bring swimming to the next level?

I'd love to see swimming become as popular as it is in Australia. We have a lot of work to do to achieve that, but I am proud of the progress we have made. *Unfiltered* earned a screening at the Family Film Festival at the Tribeca Film Festival, and the camps and clinics we have run through Swim with the Stars have been great, too. I think Beijing is a big opportunity [for the sport], especially considering that finals will be broadcast live in prime time here in the U.S. It will give Americans a great chance to see what the sport is all about.

For us recreational swimmers, what advice would you offer for keeping a workout fresh, challenging and interesting?

I am a big believer in setting goals for yourself. And as you achieve those goals, expand on them and push yourself further. You'll be surprised to see how much you can accomplish over time. ☺

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GOLDEN EYE



Gary Russell

Michael Phelps isn't the only contender going for gold this summer. Flyer trains its sights on other Olympic hopefuls who have in common talent, ambition—and ties to the area.

Katie Hoff Hoff, who swims with the North Baltimore Aquatic Club (as did Phelps), walked away from the FINA World Championships with three gold medals, including a world record-breaking win in the 400 IM. At 18, she was a two-time gold and silver medalist at the 2006 U.S. Nationals and became USA Swimming's Female Athlete of the Year in 2005.

Jessica Long Also from nearby Baltimore, the Paralympic swimming gold medalist just turned 16 and already has several world records under her swim cap. She set records at last year's GTAC Disability Open and Spring Can-Am Swimming Championships and took home nine golds in the 2006 IPC Swimming World Championships. Long, who was adopted from Russia when she was a year old, was born without many of the bones in her lower legs and had both of her legs amputated before she was 2. She was named USA Swimming's Disability Swimmer of the Year in 2006 and 2007.

Katie Ziegler Great Falls, Va., native Ziegler, who will turn 20 in June, is a world-record-holder distance swimmer and won two gold medals at the 2005 World Aquatics Championships in Montreal and two more at the 2007 event in Melbourne.

Gary Russell Weighing in at 119 pounds, and also turning 20 in June, Russell started boxing in 1995 and won both the U.S. Championships and the Golden Gloves in 2005—one of only two boxers to win both before his 17th birthday. The fighter, who is coached by his father, is a native of the District and lives in Capitol Heights.

Alan Webb Watch out for this Reston, Va., hometown, a runner who holds the U.S. record in the mile, with a time of 3:46:91. Webb, 25, ran cross-country and track for the University of Michigan before he left school to turn pro in 2002. He also ran on the U.S. team in the 2004 Olympic Games and won the national championship in the 1,500-meter run last year.



Medal man Michael Phelps gears up for Beijing.

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Katie Hoff

AL BELONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES



Alan Webb

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