



RINGSIDE

Five years after biting the dust in Atlanta, long jumper **Mike Powell** is back in the sand pit. The reigning world record-holder has shed 43 pounds since last Thanksgiving and recently jumped 26'5¼" to win the Modesto Relays by almost a foot. Next up: the U.S. nationals in June, where Powell, 37, hopes to earn a berth at worlds in August. His ultimate goal? Athens, of course: "I was really upset that we didn't medal in Sydney" ... The world's best sprinters are up in arms about a proposal that would disqualify them after one false start. The IAAF is looking for ways to shorten meets. But **Jon Drummond** is circulating an e-mail petition already signed by 400 athletes—including **Maurice Greene**, **Ato Boldon** and **Marlon Jones**—who fear the change would make sub-10 times impossible. Says 200m world champ **Inger Miller**: "Jumpers and vaulters get chances to miss. Why not us?" ... The NHL Players Association scored when the USOC agreed to postpone drug testing until after the playoffs. Surprise testing begins in August, and Olympians will have to avoid everything from andro (okay in the NHL) to over-the-counter cold medicines like Sudafed ... Old scandals never die—they just become goofy collectibles. Canadian Bill Hipson designed 10 Olympic pins immortalizing alleged SLOC bribes, including a Hooters-esque nurse for free health care and a festooned firearm for the rifles given to Juan Antonio Samaranch. So what's next? Ben Johnson T-shirts? -A.M.C.

With his godly name and golden credentials, **Ohno** has marketers invoking another slippery deity—**Eric Heiden**.



NEW BLADES

No longer skating on thin ice, **Apo Anton Ohno** is on the short track to success
BY ANNE MARIE CRUZ

BOREDOM NEARLY DRAGGED Apolo Anton Ohno down a path of truancy and exploding toilets. But instead of marking time in juvy hall, he's watching his career explode.

"I grew up pretty quickly," says the 19-year-old speedskater from Seattle, the current world No. 1 at all four short-track distances—500m, 1,000m, 1,500m and 3,000m—a feat no one else can claim. Raised alone by his father, Yuki, a Japanese immigrant who owns a hair salon, Ohno was a latchkey kid by third grade. (His mother left home when he was a baby.) Though he spent his afternoons swimming, rollerblading, skating and singing in the choir, the restless energy that made him a national inline champ by age 10 was put to the test once he reached junior high and started hanging with an older crowd. "They were smoking, drinking, robbing, gangbang-ing—you name it," Ohno says. "I didn't know which track to take."

After overhearing Apolo's pals plotting to blow up school toilets, Yuki sent his son to the Lake Placid Olympic Training Center, at the urging of its short-track coaches. "There

was *nothing* to do there except train," Apolo says, recalling his major resentment. But he couldn't hide his love for the Roller Derby-on-ice thrill of short track, its tight corners, harrowing passes and 30 mph speeds. In 1996, at age 13, he won the North American championship. A year later, he became the youngest-ever U.S. champ.

But once again it was too much too fast. Exhausted and overweight, Ohno finished last at the '97 Olympic trials. After a week of solitude on the Washington coast, he moved to Colorado Springs and began working with a sports psychologist to turn his emotional energy into a physical edge. "His power and endurance are incredible," national coach Susan Ellis says of the 5'9", 160-pound Ohno. "Once he drops the hammer, he's gone."

If Ohno survives the U.S. trials this December, he'll face a dangerous field in Utah, including world champ Li JiaJun of China and Marc Gagnon of Canada. But don't be surprised to see him unleash a big fat yawn right there on the starting blocks. "I'm not bored," Ohno assures. "I'm just relaxing."

W2W4

06/22
LONG-DISTANCE CALL
How far can whiz kid Dathan Ritzenhein go? See the future of SK at the U.S. track and field nationals in Eugene, Ore.



QUICK STUDY

When Natalie Darwitz finally showed up in the principal's office this spring, she'd been to school only five days since the beginning of October. But the 17-year-old junior from Eagan, Minn., had a good excuse. While her friends spent the year studying algorithms, Darwitz was hitting the books and the boards in Lake Placid as the youngest member of the U.S. women's ice hockey team.

The 5'2" forward, "Mighty Mouse" to teammates, corresponded with teachers via e-mail, maintaining a 3.5 GPA. She has skated with the national team since she was 15—the logical next step for a girl who made the varsity as a seventh-grader and was Minnesota Prep Player of the Year as an eighth-grader. "She's so efficient out there," says U.S. coach Ben Smith. "It's as if she's floating."

After the U.S. took silver behind Canada at the World Championships in April, Darwitz flew home and headed straight to Eagan High to play shortstop for the softball team. As for being back in school? "It's weird," she says. "It's hard to sit still for that long when you're used to moving around."

Maybe she'd feel more comfortable with a gold medal on her desk. -ANNE MARIE ANDERSON

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