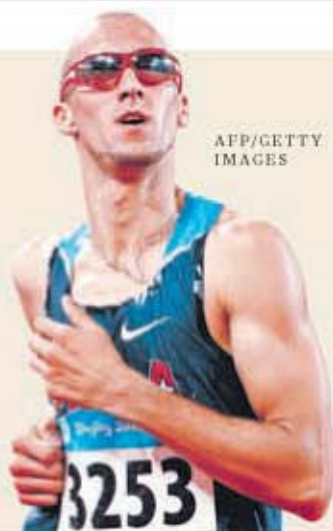


Events to watch

■ **Beach volleyball:** Yes, men play the beach game, too. Todd Rogers and Phil Dalhausser try to bring home the gold for the United States against Marco Araujo and Fabio Luiz of Brazil. Match time is 10 p.m. CDT Thursday.

■ **Volleyball:** It's been an encouraging Olympics thus far for volleyball on all fronts for the U.S. The U.S. men play for a spot in the gold medal match against Russia at 11:30 p.m. CDT Thursday.

■ **Track and field:** Aside from the likes of Usain Bolt, sure things have been hard to come by at the Bird's Nest thus far. Texan **Jeremy Wariner**, however, can give the U.S. another pick-me-up with a strong showing in the 400 meters final, which goes off live at 8:20 a.m. CDT Thursday.



AFF/GETTY IMAGES

■ **Modern pentathlon:** Sheila Taormina, participating in her third Olympic sport, probably could handle a modern pentathlon or octathlon, given her previous experience in swimming and triathlon. She begins with the shooting portion of the event, 10-meter air pistol, at 7:30 p.m. CDT Thursday, followed by epee one-touch fencing, swimming, equestrian show jumping and a 3,000-meter run.

■ **BMX cycling:** Thursday's (late Wednesday CDT) scheduled competition was rained out, which gives Kyle Bennett of Conroe another 24 hours to recover from a shoulder injury suffered in the quarterfinals. The event has been rescheduled for 8 p.m. CDT Thursday. Bennett is seeded into the same semifinals with U.S. contenders Mike Day and Donny Robinson.

TODAY'S EVENTS

All times Central

Athletics
 Events 6 a.m.
 Women's 1,500 semis; men's decathlon high jump; women's javelin final; men's 800 semis; women's 400 relay; men's triple jump final; men's 400 relay; men's 400 final; women's 200 final; men's 110 hurdles final; men's decathlon 400.
 Events 6:30 p.m.
 Men's 50km walk final; men's decathlon 110 hurdles; men's decathlon discus; men's decathlon pole vault.

Baseball
 Semifinal 9:30 p.m.

Basketball
Men
 China vs. Australia 7 a.m.
 Russia vs. U.S. 9:15 a.m.
Beach volleyball
 Men's bronze match 8 p.m.
 Men's gold match 10 p.m.

Canoe
Kayak (Flatwater)
 Events 2:30 a.m.
 Men's K1 500, men's C1 500, women's K1 500, men's K2 500, men's C2 500, women's K2 500.

Diving
 Women's 10m platform final 7 a.m.

Equestrian
 Individual jumping 6:15 a.m.

Field Hockey
Men
 Netherlands vs. Germany 5 a.m.
 Spain vs. Australia 7:30 a.m.
Women
 South Africa vs. New Zealand 7:30 p.m.
 Australia vs. Britain 10 p.m.

Gymnastics
Rhythmic
 Individual, group all-around 5 a.m.
Modern Pentathlon
 Men's swimming 1:30 a.m.
 Men's riding 4 a.m.
 Men's running 7 a.m.
 Women's shooting 7:30 p.m.
 Women's fencing 9 p.m.

Soccer
Men
 Germany vs. Japan 5 a.m.
 Brazil vs. U.S. 7:30 a.m.
Softball
 U.S. vs. Australia 5:30 a.m.

Table tennis
 Women's singles 5 a.m.
 Men's singles 5 a.m.
 Women's singles 9 p.m.

Taekwondo
 Events 2 a.m.
 Women's under 57kg finals; men's under 68kg finals.
 Women's under 67kg 8 p.m.
 Men's under 80kg 10 p.m.

Team handball
Women
 Romania vs. France 1:15 a.m.
 Norway vs. South Korea 5 a.m.
 Hungary vs. Russia 7:15 a.m.

Volleyball
Men
 Semifinal 11:30 p.m.
Women
 China vs. Brazil 7 a.m.

Water Polo
Women
 Bronze medal 4 a.m.
 Gold medal 5:20 a.m.

Men
 11th Place 8:30 p.m.
 Classification 9:50 p.m.

Wrestling
Freestyle
 Men's 84kg, 96kg, 120kg 3 a.m.



TAEKWONDO

MEET THE PRESS (AND EVERYONE ELSE): Sugar Land taekwondo athletes and siblings Diana, Mark and Steven Lopez (from left) arrived in Beijing to a crush of fans and reporters, but now it is time to get down to business — their quest for Olympic gold.

As he prepares to win his third Olympic gold medal, Sugar Land's **STEVEN LOPEZ** is taking nothing for granted

READY TO BATTLE

By **DAVID BARRON**

CHRONICLE OLYMPIC BUREAU

BEIJING — It's not the best of conversations a coach has with an athlete, and it's certainly not something an older brother tells a younger brother.

But for your ears only, Jean Lopez, the oldest of four Lopez siblings at the Beijing Olympics and coach of the U.S. taekwondo team, admits his taekwondo amaze at the exploits of his younger brother, Steven, who Friday morning (tonight CDT) launches his quest for a third Olympic gold medal.

"I don't tell him this, because I have to keep him at the level he needs to be at," Jean Lopez said. "But when I reflect as a coach on all the variables in winning and losing, for Steven to win four world championships and two Olympic gold medals is an incredible feat.

"He's the kind of guy who if he played basketball, he would be LeBron James, Kobe Bryant. If he were a boxer, he'd be Ali. He has the same mentality you see in all the top athletes."

It's a mixture of sublime



THREE'S COMPANY: Jean Lopez (left), who coaches Steven Lopez, knows his younger brothers are marked men as they begin competition in taekwondo.

confidence and underlying paranoia — with the qualification that for Steven Lopez, 29, of Sugar Land, everybody really is out to get him.

"In my mind, I always feel I'm the underdog, which is what keeps me from being complacent or stagnant," Steven Lopez said. "But I chose this path. I chose to be an athlete. My mom told us we had to stand apart and be anything but mediocre, and I'm living up to her expectations."

The luck of the draw for Friday's Olympic welterweight division complicates the nature of

medal match is at 8:15 p.m. (7:15 a.m. CDT Friday).

Steven Lopez, though, knows how good he is at his sport of choice, and he knows that everybody he fights knows it, too.

"I get two kinds of opponents," he said. "One says, 'I'm going to give this guy as much as I can.' The other says, 'Shoot, I'm fighting the best,' so they don't give me their best."

He remains confident in his ability to control the pace and outcome of each match.

"If (his opponent) does something defensively, it's because I'm making them do something defensively," he said. "It's the same with offense."

"It's almost like it's a chess game. I may look weak, but it's because I want to look weak. If I'm aggressive, it's because I want them to think I'm being overly aggressive when I'm really being defensive."

"I stick to my game. That way, everybody has to change their game to fight me. And when they do that, they're always one step behind."

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Taekwondo
 10:30 p.m. today

Steven Lopez's challenge. He will fight at 11:30 a.m. Friday (10:30 p.m. CDT Thursday) against Bahri Tanrikulu of Turkey, whom he beat in the 2004 gold-medal final at Athens.

Fighters bracket the winners bracket advance to the quarterfinals round beginning at 4 p.m. (3 a.m. CDT Friday). Losers will fight in the repechage rounds beginning at 6:30 p.m. (5:30 a.m. CDT Friday). The gold-

Fighter won't face more sanctions

BEIJING — Dzhakhon Kurbanov, the light heavyweight from Tajikistan who bit his opponent on the shoulder in a quarterfinal bout, won't face additional sanctions or suspension by the International Boxing Association (AIBA).

Spokesman Richard Baker said Wednesday that Kurbanov's disqualification from the Olympic boxing tournament will be his only punishment for the infraction, which occurred in the third round of his bout with Kazakhstan's Yerkebulan Shynaliyev.

— CHRONICLE NEWS SERVICES

Coverage passes 2004 17-day total

BEIJING — With five nights still to go, NBC's audience for its over-the-air and cable networks through Tuesday has surpassed its 17-day total for the 2004 Athens Olympics.

Total viewership was estimated at 203.3 million, up from 191.5 million for the first 12 days from Athens and up four million for the first 12 days from the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, which holds the 17-day record at 209 million viewers.

Tuesday's prime time show on NBC earned a 16.3 Nielsen rating and 27 share, with 71 million total viewers and average audience of 26.6 million viewers.

Viewership was up from 25.0 million for the second Tuesday in Athens, and the Nielsen rating was up from 15.7/26 in Athens.

prime time shows have averaged a 17.1/29 Nielsen and 29.3 million average viewers, up from 15.8/27 and 26.1 million for Athens.

In Houston, KPRC (Channel 2) recorded a 17.0 Nielsen rating and 27 share for the Tuesday prime-time broadcast for an average audience of 348,594 households. Through 12 days, Channel 2 is averaging a 16.2 rating and 28 share.

In the Bay Area, Monday's broadcast on KNTV (Channel 11) had a 19.3 rating and 36 share for an average audience of 466,952 households. Through 12 days, Channel 11 is averaging 20.2/41.

In San Antonio, WOAI (Channel 4) had an 18.1 rating (143,432 households) and 27 share. Through 12 days, Channel 4 is averaging 19.0/29.

— DAVID BARRON

Bricks in the Wall

Ni hao,
 The smiling little fellow is holding up a hand-written sign outside the Bird's Nest and a lot of the spectators on their way in to watch track and field are giving him a wide berth.

The sign says (in English and Chinese): Free Hugs. One world. One dream.

Look, I've been away from home for over three weeks now and I'll hug a cactus at this point. So we have a friendly embrace.

His name is Hans and he's a 39-year-old Hong Kong native who works for an American IT company.

The idea came out of Australia in 2006, where a bloke who

calls himself Juan Mann (get it?) began offering free hugs at a mall in Sydney. After returning from a trip overseas, he noticed how sad everyone looked and wanted to brighten their day.

Hans, wearing Chinese flag stickers on each cheek, says he's here to spread the Olympic spirit. He's gotten 15 to 20 hugs in the past hour.

A tall, bearded Canadian wraps him up after me.

"Any pretty girls?" I ask.

He smiles and points to his wife, who is standing about 15 feet away, taking pictures of his encounters.

As Ronald Reagan said: "Hug, but verify."

Zaijian,
 — Fran Blinebury



NBC*
10 a.m.-1 p.m. — Men's swimming, Marathon; gymnastics, women's water polo, gold-medal match; equestrian, individual jumping gold-medal final.
7-11 p.m. — Track and field, finals in men's 400, men's 110 hurdles, men's 200, women's javelin, and first day of men's decathlon; diving, women's platform gold-medal final; beach volleyball, men's gold-medal match (live).
11:35 p.m.-1 a.m. — Volleyball, men's semifinal (live); beach volleyball, men's bronze-medal match (live).

MSNBC*
11 p.m.-1 a.m. — Track and field, women's 20k walk.
4-7 p.m. — Freestyle wrestling, 84kg, 96kg, 120kg gold-medal finals.

USA*
1 a.m.-11 a.m. — Soccer, women's gold-medal match (live); canoeing, gold-medal game (live); canoeing, semifinals (live); freestyle wrestling, 84kg, 96kg, 120kg competition.

MSNBC*
4 a.m.-4 p.m. — Basketball, women's semifinal (live); soccer, women's bronze-medal match (live); water polo, women's bronze-medal match (live); volleyball, women's semifinal.

MEDALS TABLE

(Through 219 events)

Country	G	S	B	Tot
United States	27	28	28	83
China	45	15	21	81
Russia	14	14	18	46
Great Britain	16	11	11	38
Australia	11	12	13	36
France	4	12	14	30
Germany	11	8	10	29
South Korea	8	10	6	24
Japan	8	6	9	23
Italy	6	7	8	21
Ukraine	5	5	8	18
Netherlands	5	5	4	14
Canada	2	6	5	13
Belarus	2	3	8	13
Cuba	1	6	6	13
Spain	3	5	2	10
New Zealand	3	1	5	9
Romania	4	1	3	8
Poland	3	4	1	8
Kenya	2	4	2	8
Kazakhstan	1	3	4	8
Jamaica	4	3	0	7
Denmark	2	1	3	6
North Korea	2	1	3	6
Norway	1	3	2	6
Brazil	1	0	5	6
Czech Republic	2	3	0	5
Switzerland	2	0	3	5
Azerbaijan	1	2	2	5
Slovenia	1	2	2	5
Bulgaria	1	1	3	5
Indonesia	1	1	3	5
Hungary	0	4	1	5
Uzbekistan	0	2	3	5
Armenia	0	0	5	5
Slovakia	3	1	0	4
Georgia	2	0	2	4
Zimbabwe	1	2	0	4
Turkey	1	2	1	4
Ethiopia	2	1	0	3
Finland	1	1	1	3
Sweden	0	3	0	3
Austria	0	1	2	3
Greece	0	1	2	3
Lithuania	0	1	2	3
Taiwan	0	0	3	3
Estonia	1	1	0	2
Mongolia	1	1	0	2
Thailand	1	1	0	2
Argentina	1	0	1	2
India	1	0	1	2
Mexico	1	0	1	2
Algeria	0	1	1	2
Colombia	0	1	1	2
Croatia	0	1	1	2
Kyrgyzstan	0	1	1	2
Serbia	0	1	1	2
Bahrain	1	0	0	1
Cameroon	1	0	0	1
Panama	1	0	0	1
Tunisia	1	0	0	1
Chile	0	1	0	1
Dominican Rep.	0	1	0	1
Ecuador	0	1	0	1
Malaysia	0	1	0	1
Portugal	0	1	0	1
Singapore	0	1	0	1
South Africa	0	1	0	1
Trinidad-Tobago	0	1	0	1
Vietnam	0	1	0	1
Afghanistan	0	0	1	1
Egypt	0	0	1	1
Iran	0	0	1	1
Israel	0	0	1	1
Latvia	0	0	1	1
Morocco	0	0	1	1
Tajikistan	0	0	1	1
Togo	0	0	1	1
Venezuela	0	0	1	1