

XXVIII OLYMPIAD

Overshadowed Gatlin wins Olympic 100 in 9.85

By **ROB GLOSTER**
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ATHENS, Greece — Justin Gatlin ran the race of his life Sunday night, barely holding off the fastest Olympic 100 field in history to win the gold in 9.85 seconds.

Francis Obikwelu of Portugal got the silver in 9.86. Defending champion Maurice Greene won bronze in 9.87, falling short in his quest to crown himself the "greatest sprinter of all time."

A third American, Shawn Crawford, was fourth in 9.89. Five runners broke the 10-second mark, and another — world champion Kim Collins — finished in exactly 10 seconds.

It was the closest finish in an Olympic 100 final since the 1980 Moscow Games, when Allan Wells of Britain held off Silvio Leonard of Cuba as the two were timed in 10.25.

Gatlin's previous personal best was 9.92. He finished the race Sunday with his mouth wide open, then dropped to his knees and clasped his hands in prayer. Next he jumped into the stands.

"The race was magnificent. The only way I knew the race was great is because I watched it on TV," Gatlin said. "I couldn't even feel the race. I felt that I was 100 miles in front of everybody. It was so close, but that's what I felt."

It was the first time in Olympic history that five men broke 10 seconds in one race. Four did it at the 1996 Atlanta Games.

Greene was unable to become the first man since Carl Lewis in 1984 and '88 to win back-to-back Olympic 100s.

"You know what, I think we put on a great show," Greene said.

Gatlin, 22, is the youngest Olympic 100 champion since Jim Hines in 1968. Gatlin won six NCAA titles in his two seasons at Tennessee, then won the 60-meter title at the world indoor championships last year. But he had been overshadowed at the Athens Games by flamboyant training

partner Crawford.

Crawford gave Gatlin a huge hug after his victory. Both are trained by Trevor Graham, the former mentor of Marion Jones and Tim Montgomery — who holds the 100 world record of 9.78, but did not qualify for the Olympics and has been charged with steroid use.

Earlier Sunday night, Gail Devers' heartbreak in the Olympic 100-meter hurdles continued as she was felled by injury just steps into her first heat.

Devers, 37, who has three world championships in the event, pulled up short and screamed as she slid under the first hurdle. She sat on the track for about two minutes, rubbing her left leg and grimacing.

Devers hurt her leg in practice a week ago and wore a heavy bandage during three rounds of the 100 before being eliminated in the semifinals Saturday.

Her failure Sunday may lead to second-guessing about Devers' decision to run in the 100. She took the third U.S. spot in that event when Torri Edwards was suspended for two years for accidentally ingesting a banned stimulant.

Devers could have turned down the spot and focused on the hurdles, allowing Marion Jones to try to defend her Olympic title.

Devers holds the U.S. record of 12.37 seconds. She has three Olympic medals — she won gold in the 100 in 1992 and 1996, and was on the victorious 400-meter relay team in 1996.

But she slammed into the last hurdle while leading the 1992 Olympic final, crawling to the finish line in fifth place. In 1996, she missed an Olympic medal by a hundredth of a second. In 2000, she injured her hamstring in the semifinal and pulled up after five hurdles.

Also Sunday, Mizuki Noguchi of Japan won the marathon over the ancient course that gave the race its name. Deena Kastor was third, giving the United States its first

marathon medal since Joan Benoit's gold in Los Angeles 20 years ago.

Two Swedish men won gold medals in field events. Stefan Holm won the high jump — American Matt Hemingway got silver — and Christian Olsson was the winner in the triple jump.

Adrian Annus of Hungary won the gold medal in the hammer throw. Greece's Fani Halkia thrilled the sold-out crowd by setting an Olympic record of 52.77 seconds in her 400-meter hurdles

semifinal.

Befitting this drug-plagued year for the sport, international and Russian Olympic officials said that the first woman to win a gold medal at Ancient Olympia — a Russian shot putter — is under investigation for a positive test.

Irina Korzhanenko tested positive for the steroid stanozolol after Wednesday's competition, Russian Olympic Committee spokesman Gennady Shvets said. The backup B sample was being

analyzed to verify the result.

Gatlin also has had problems with drugs.

He tested positive for an amphetamine at the 2001 U.S. junior championships. The drug was contained in prescription medication Gatlin had been taking for 10 years to treat a form of attention deficit disorder.

The International Association of Athletics Federations gave him early reinstatement from a two-year ban in July 2002. The IAAF said a

second violation would lead to a life ban.

Gatlin, a Brooklyn, N.Y., native who now lives in Raleigh, N.C., said his victory was just the first of what he hopes will be many historic accomplishments.

"I said it was going to be the most exciting race in the world, and it was," he said. "This is what I train for, that's why I shoveled the snow off North Carolina tracks. That's why I'm here. I'm here to win the gold medal."



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Gold medalist Justin Gatlin, right, and bronze medalist Maurice Greene of the U.S. parade with American flags after the 100m at the 2004 Olympic Games Sunday in Athens, Greece. Gatlin surpassed his career best of 9.92 seconds to best the fastest field in Olympic history.

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