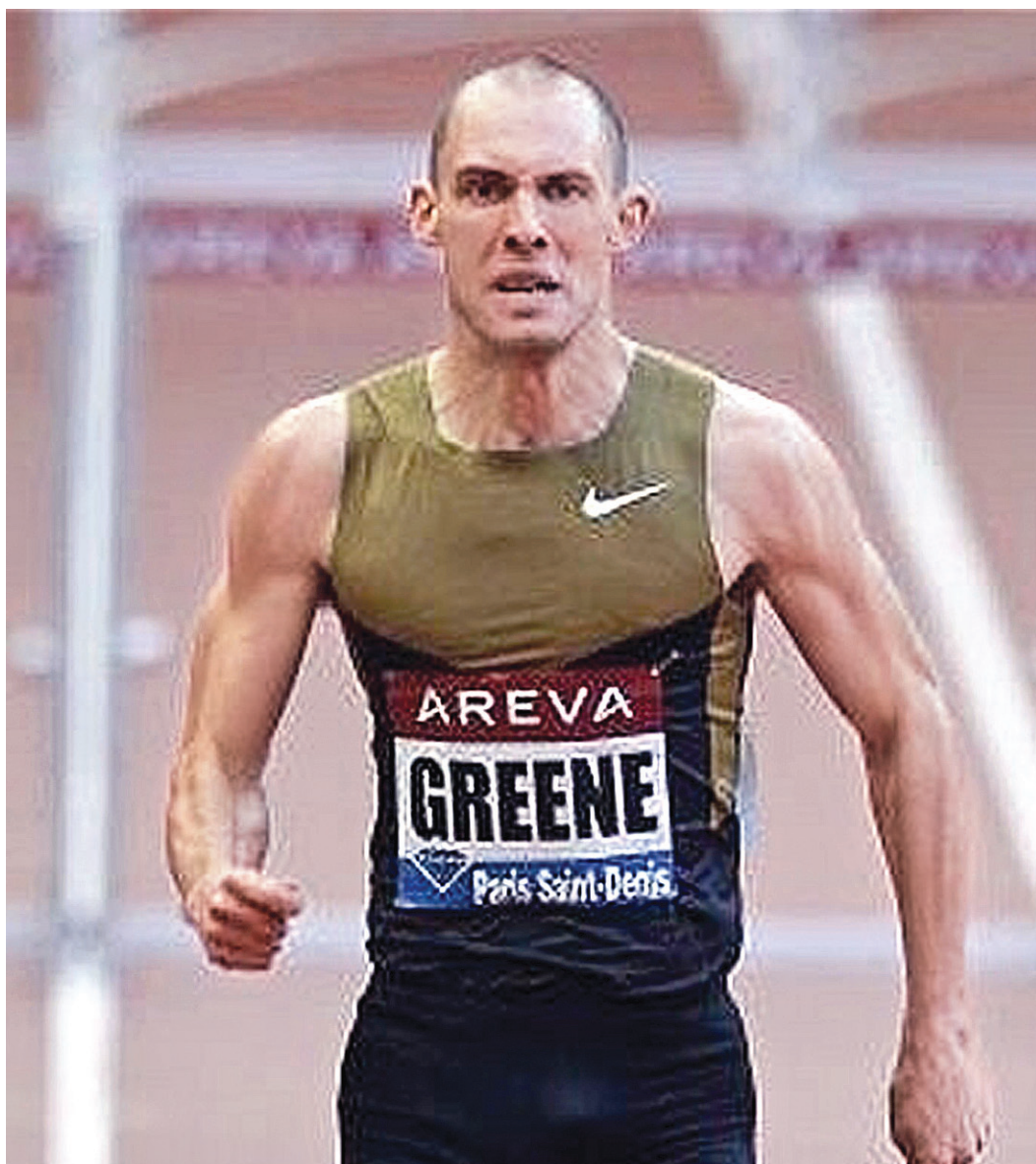


London 2012 Olympics



In the fast lane: Dai Greene powers to his personal best in the 400m

Dai Greene clocks personal best in Paris

Dai Greene, the world 400 metres hurdles champion, had insisted his speed was returning after a sluggish opening to the season. After Friday night's performance, we no longer need to take his word on trust.

A personal-best time of 47.84sec at the Diamond League meeting in Paris provided tangible proof that the Welshman is coming into the form of his life, having shaken off the after-effects of knee surgery that had threatened his Olympics prospects at the start of the season.

It is still too early to start hanging an Olympic gold medal around his neck because, ominously, his performance was good enough only for second place behind Javier Culson of Puerto Rico.

But had the race been over 405 metres, then victory would certainly have been Greene's, such was the strength of his finish as he closed rapidly on his rival.

Javier, who finished second behind Greene at last summer's World Championships in Daegu, has been the form athlete all season and won with a world-leading time of 47.78sec, but Greene will be delighted that he was able to run him so close.

In their last Diamond League clash in Oslo last month, Greene finished more than a second behind Culson in a weary 48.89sec.

It was after that race that Greene chose to go public with the news that he had undergone knee surgery in the winter and had lost a large chunk of training time during his rehabilitation.

But, after several weeks of tough training at his Bath base, he is now clearly firing on all cylinders as he sliced 0.04sec off his previous personal best and came within just 0.02sec of Kriss Akabusi's 20-year-old UK record.

Christine Ohuruogu, the defending Olympic 400m champion, is also enjoying a return to form this season after several years of injuries and her time of 50.59sec was her quickest since 2009.

Her problem is that the women's 400m is one of the deepest and most competitive events in the athletics programme and there were still three runners ahead of her. The winner, Botswana's world champion Amantle Montsho, won in 49.77sec.

In the men's 5,000m, Ethiopian Dejen Gebremeskel displaced Mo Farah at the top of the world rankings with victory in a super-fast 12min 46.81sec that proved he will be a big threat in London.

Countryman Kenenisa Bekele, the Olympic champion, is in danger of not being selected for the event after finishing ninth.

- *The Telegraph*

19 days more



Gareth Warburton wins London 2012 Olympics reprieve

WELSH 800m ace Gareth Warburton has revealed the roller-coaster of emotions he has experienced which culminated in his Olympics selection.

Warburton has been added to Great Britain's athletics team for London 2012 after winning an appeal over his initial non-selection. The 29-year-old was left out of the 77-strong team announced on Tuesday, having failed to achieve the second 'A' qualifying time he needed during last week's European Championships – missing the time of 1:45:60 by just two tenths of a second. However, the North Walian's appeal was successful, meaning he takes the final third discretionary place and joins Andrew Osagie and Michael Rimmer in the 800m at London.

"I am still in shock," admitted Warburton, who runs for Cardiff AAC.

"The last few days have been very hard but it is all worthwhile now. "Getting to the Olympics is not supposed to be easy, but I have really done it the hard way.

"I was devastated when I was told I was not in the team because it is what I have been working towards for the last four years.

"But I knew I had grounds for appeal because I felt I had met the criteria and was always going to fight tooth and nail to get in.

"If I did not feel I had a good chance I would have not gone through the process. "The support I have had from people

on Facebook and Twitter has been overwhelming. "Since my appeal result has been heard the phone has not stopped, and I have had so many well done messages."

Warburton had travelled to Helsinki having already achieved the 'A' qualification standard once, setting a Welsh record of 1:44:98 in Oslo last month.

But after only finishing fourth in the Trials at Birmingham two weeks ago, Warburton was told he needed the 'A' standard again. "I was not planning to go to Helsinki but I was told I needed another 'A' standard which I was not aware of," he said.

"Having already achieved it once I thought that was enough.

"But I went to the Europeans and gave it my best shot in the heat. "It was wet and cold and I had run two rounds in the Trials just a few days before and my body was tired."

Warburton has also spent part of the week in France running in Reims on Wednesday night.

"When I was trying to put together my appeal I was preparing for a result in France which was logistically quite tough – but I had committed to it a while ago," he said. "It was my fifth race in three countries in 10 days, so I was quite tired.

"I did not do well out there but my preparations was not great because I was thinking about the Olympics."

Ed Warner, chairman of UKA and the chairman of the appeals panel, explained why Warburton's appeal had proved suc-

cessful. "We appreciate this is a difficult time for athletes who were not selected to Team GB," said Warner.

"Appeals are heard on a matter of process and facts and not opinion, and the panel considered 11 appeals today of which only Gareth's was successful.

"We ensure the original selection committee has followed the selection criteria appropriately and have made their decisions based on full and correct facts.

"In the case of Gareth Warburton and in light of independent legal advice, the appeals panel decided that the combination of Warburton's current 'A' and current 'B' standards made him selectable under the UKA selection policy and he has been added to the team."

Now Warburton is looking forward to his first Games after taking the Welsh Olympic tally to 30 and joining fellow countrymen Dai Greene, Rhys Williams, Christian Malcolm and Brett Morse in track and field.

"This is an incredible opportunity for me and I intend to make the most of it," he said.

"I am joining a fantastic team of athletes and we're all focused on doing Britain proud."

Among the other athletes to appeal unsuccessfully were women's 800m trio Emma Jackson, Marilyn Okoro and Jemma Simpson, with Lynsey Sharp controversially selected despite only having the 'B' standard.

- *Wales Online*



Yohan Blake, left, beats Usain Bolt, second right, to win the 100m at the Jamaican Olympic trials. Photograph: Gilbert Bellamy/Reuters

Usain Bolt better start worrying about The Beast

So Usain Bolt has pulled out of the Diamond League meeting in Monaco because, his coach says, he has a "slight problem". Too right he does – it is 5ft 11in tall, runs the 100m in 9.75sec, and is called Yohan Blake. Never mind "slight"; after Blake beat him in the 100m and the 200m at the Jamaican trials I would say that right now Bolt has a pretty serious problem.

This is not the first time we have wondered whether Bolt can be beaten. Remember that last year he was not in great shape leading up to the world championships, and he went away, did some training, came out in South Korea and found three tenths of a second. He could do that again. But the difference is that this time he needs to. He knows full well that if he does not get it right Blake is going to shoot him down. That is a very different kind of pressure to knowing that a mistake is only going to be the difference between winning by five metres rather than eight.

Bolt loves to give off an air of a man who doesn't

care. He has his shtick, and he sticks to it. But I don't quite believe he is as carefree as all that. There is one image of him I have etched in my mind that told me all I needed to know about how he really feels about Blake. It was at the Diamond League meeting in Brussels last September.

That night Bolt won the 100m in 9.76, and he was feeling pretty pleased with himself. Later in the evening Blake won the 200m in 19.26, the second-fastest time in history. The camera caught Bolt as Blake crossed the line, and he looked as though he had just been whacked across the chops with a wet fish. That hurt Bolt, though he tried to hide it when he was doing his TV interviews that night.

Blake's reaction time in that 200m was 0.269, which was the slowest in the field by a long way. That means that from the moment the first foot went down towards the finish line Blake's run was probably the fastest 200m in history, faster even than Bolt's world record of 19.19. I think Bolt already knew how good Blake was.



African Championship Glory And Team Nigeria Olympics Quest

Nigeria penultimate weekend returned to the summit of African athletics by winning the 18th edition of the African Senior Athletics Championship held in Porto Novo, Benin Republic. The team won 10 gold, six silver and five bronze medals to beat close rival and defending champion, Kenya in a grand style on the final day of the championship after the two were tied on nine gold medals each before the grand finale of the men 4x400m relay event which Nigeria won to top the medals table. Kenya won 9 gold, nine silver and 8 bronze medals while South Africa had 6 gold, 9 silver and 10 bronze medals to finish third. The onus is now on Team Nigeria to fly the continent's flag high at the global arena in the forthcoming London 2012 Olympics games.

◀ Back