

Final Tune-up for Olympic Athletes at Life Is Medal Enhancing

Editorial Staff

MARIETTA, Georgia -- On July 17-21, a contingent of 700 Olympic-bound track and field athletes from 70 countries competed in Life College's International Challenge in final preparation for the Atlanta Games. Most importantly for chiropractic, the athletes had on-site access to chiropractic care.

With a gap between the last grand prix track and field meet in London (July 12) and the Olympics, the Life International Challenge gave the athletes a final competitive warm-up and a chance to acclimate to Atlanta. "Normally athletes are used to competing every three or four days, especially this time of year," said Life's International Sports Director Mike Spino. "With everyone here in the (Olympic) Village, especially those countries that might not have the money and transportation to go places, we're the last element for them, because track and field is in the second week of the Olympics."

The athletes are drawn to Life because of the college's extensive facilities, which include a five-mile cross-country running trail, complete with sand dunes, and a stadium equipped with a Mondo track identical to the Olympic Stadium surface. Nearly one-third of the competitors in the U.S. Track and Field Trials held at the Olympic Stadium in June trained at Life. Besides being able to test the track surface, the athletes were given a feel for Atlanta's unpredictable weather, which often changes from hot and sunny in the a.m. to overcast and rainy early in the afternoon.

"This meet is a good way to prepare for the Games," said Olympic gold-medalist Dan O'Brien at the Life competition. "It breaks up the monotony of just training, and this is a fabulous track." On Atlanta's fickle weather he commented, "It seems like the only time it rains is when I run, but I think I run better in these conditions."

More than a third of the competitors took advantage of the chiropractic care Life offered to the athletes. "At the end of the day, we're interested in anything that may help with athletic performance," remarked Nick Davis, the Irish national team coach and manager. Later, during the Olympic Games, Life offered chiropractic care through its clinics on Luckie Street in downtown Atlanta, at the CNN Center in the heart of the Olympic venues, in North Marietta, and on the main campus.

Kevin Young of the U.S., gold medalist in the 400-meter hurdles at the Barcelona Olympics, noted some of the many reasons why world-class track and field athletes like to train at Life: "It was really like no other track I have ever been on, including the best in Europe and Barcelona. It was truly impressive that a chiropractic college has one of the top track facilities in the world."

While the list of Olympic athletes training at Life or competing in Life's International Challenge is much too long to list, here are the athletes who medaled:

Men

Donovan Bailey (Canada) -- two golds: 100-meter; 400-meter relay
Vebjoern Rodal (Norway) -- gold, 800-meter
Robert Korzeniowski (Poland) -- gold, 50km walk
Glenroy Gilbert (Canada) -- gold, 400-meter relay
Dan O'Brien (U.S.) -- gold, decathlon
Artur Partyka (Poland) -- silver, high jump
Jonathan Edwards (Britain) -- silver, triple jump
Seppo Raty (Finland) -- bronze, javelin
Jean Galifone (France) -- gold, pole vault

Women

Mary Inyali (Nigeria) -- bronze, 200-meter
Falliat Ogunkoya (Nigeria) -- bronze, 400-meter
Patricia Girard-Leno (France) -- bronze, 100-hurdles
Elisabetta Perrone (Italy) -- silver, 10k walk
Charity Opara (Nigeria) -- silver, 1600-meter relay
Inessa Kravets (Ukraine) -- gold, triple jump
Heli Rantanen (Finland) -- gold, javelin

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