

hold out over the course of a Games that would deliver a record six gold medals, a seventh denied to him by teammate Matt Welsh 54.72 to 55.38 in the 100m backstroke. Thorpe's impact on the sport of swimming cannot be overstated. The same goes for Phelps. Same in the background for Frost and Bowman too. Which is what lay behind those comments and the uncomfortable truth of the matter in 2009: the effect of the LZR on Phelps and what happened to Biedermann in 2009 on the clock is simply not comparable beyond the generality of "in 2008 it was Speedo, in 2009 it was Arena." Thorpe sent a gracious and generous message to Biedermann in the wake of losing the world 400 m record by 0.01 seconds to a man who had improved 6 seconds and by the reckoning of his coach Frank Embacher gained something like half a second a lap from the suit he wore. Time will tell where that will go, but on a number of levels there were no winners from those moments in Rome, the suit having deprived all of the right to say "I won that fair and square," or "I was beaten by a faster swimmer." When I stopped to ask Frost how he felt about it all, he stared into the distance and walked away. That said it all.

MARK SCHUBERT (USA):

From coach to head coach and performance head, Schubert has worked to great effect with a team of coaches to ensure that the USA ended the decade where it began: on top. Sydney 2000 reminded the US of the following storm called Australia. Fukuoka delivered a rare victory for the Dolphins over the US. From that moment on, the US would not be beaten at a meet again, its ability to respond and live ahead of itself part of the foundation of one of the greatest success stories in the history of world sport. The US tradition of one generation feeding off the next is a model hard to replicate throughout much of the rest of the world. It is also a distinct advantage that the US embraces with all its might. "All the athletes really feel a strong part of that tradition," said Schubert at Melbourne 2007 worlds. "What I'm always impressed with is how they

helped each other from the time they came together on the training camp at Geelong. We saw things like Brendan Hansen giving Tara Kirk breaststroke lessons, sharing his knowledge, and we've seen that kind of support across the board. We have tremendous chemistry from kids all over the country who just want to see each other succeed. It's very gratifying. It's one of the best team performances we've ever seen. The spirit of helping is all the difference. They really feel part of each other's success. They are so supportive if someone is disappointed . . . they pick each other up. We have a tremendous advantage because of the number of people who swim and are involved in swimming. We've felt for a number of years that we've underachieved compared to the population we have in swimming. Right now, we're trying to focus on utilizing our talent. Developing talent like Phelps and Coughlin really helps that, and helps us to continue our tradition. I truly feel we can get better from here."

DON TALBOT (AUS):

One of the driving forces in Australian swimming's revival from relative decline in the 1980s, Talbot's crowning moment as head coach saw the Dolphins defeat the USA on the count that matters - gold medals - at the 2001 World Championships in Fukuoka. Though "retired" for much of the first decade of the new Millennium, Talbot's legacy is to be found at work in the culture of a swimming program flush with talent in water and on deck, and blessed with an environment hard to beat in a number of respects. The internal battles in Swimming Australia that hit the headlines at the end of a decade of progress and reinforcement of Australia's position as world No. 2 in the race pool saw the departure of many of those who had played a key role in the Talbot-led success story, among them the likes of Alan Thompson, Ian Hanson, several coaches, and some officials. Political games cost Australia a place on the FINA Bureau in 2009, a potentially costly mistake. It is yet to be seen how things will pan out Down Under, though, if those being tipped for the

jobs on offer actually take charge, many of the values that served Talbot so well will be in safe hands. Talbot learned his lessons down long years of experience. The young Talbot had driven himself to the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games "in a beaten up Holden sedan with the rear springs beginning to protrude." In Fukuoka, when he finished his final-night team talk, the Green and Gold shoal rose to their feet and applauded. And kept applauding, whistling, cheering, and then came the tears as they realized the enormity of the journey. "Fantastic. It was a very special moment," said John Devitt, an Olympic silver medallist back in 1956, an Olympic champion in 1960 in the 100m freestyle. "The team spirit down through the years has been a very important part of Australia's success. And we're fostering that even more now."

BILL SWEETENHAM (AUS):

It was not as if the Australian did not give fair warning of the pain inherent in any revolution. When he arrived in Britain in late 2000 in the wake of the first medalless Olympic outing for GBR since 1948, he spoke in Biblical terms when he said: "Some will be able to go with it, adapt, get through it and rise, others won't and there will be casualties. Whichever applies, everyone will feel the pain one way or another." And so they did - and there are still those who begrudge Sweetenham, who left Britain in late 2007, a mention when it comes to telling the tale of a swimming nation born again. But to leave the Australian out when considering what happened to Britain 2000-09 would be like mentioning Britain's rugby record without mentioning Sir Clive Woodward. On the eve of the 2003 World Championships, Sweetenham, impatient with progress on a conveyor belt of progress that never stood still, said: "I've gone against my philosophy, which says that you should never make people change more than 15 percent of their program in a year. We've broken the rules of change and changed everything - and we've got away with it. It's a balancing act. If you push too hard, you'll get rebellion, but if you don't push hard enough, you go back to 1912. In