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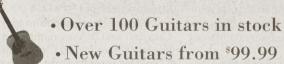
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USA still ahead of Austra

the U.S. swimmers followed a Dutch treat at the Sydney Games.

Jenny Thompson set a women's record for career swimming gold medals with seven Wednesday, anchoring an American 800-meter freestyle relay that nipped Australia in 7 minutes, 57.80 seconds.

Thompson's performance came minutes after American Misty Hyman shocked world-record holder Susie O'Neill — another Aussie — in the 200-meter butterfly.

The U.S. victories avenged men's losses to Australian hero Ian Thorpe and his teammates, who beat the Americans by a fingertip in the men's 400 free relay earlier in the week, then blew them out in the 800 free relay.

Thompson, who has won all her golds in relays, surpassed the six swimming golds won by Kristin Otto of Germany.

The United States was in second place when Thompson jumped in the pool. But she overtook Petria Thomas, pulled away down the stretch and brought the relay home in Olympic record time.

Hyman seemed as surprised as the Australian fans that she won. "Oh my God!" she screamed.

Hyman led from the start and clocked an in Olympic baseball's brief history.

world mark. Later, she threw back her head and drank in the moment as she stood on the medal podium and sang along with the national anthem.

The Netherlands also had its flag raised on a magic day for the small European country.

Pieter van den Hoogenband won gold in the 100 free, his second of the games, and denied Russian Alexander Popov an unprecedented third straight Olympic title in the event

That is not all the Dutch did Wednesday.

The Netherlands stunned Cuba 4-2 in baseball, the first Olympic defeat ever for a Cuban team, and Inge de Bruijn topped it off by breaking her own world record in the semifinals of the women's 100 free.

De Bruijn finished in 53.77 seconds and beat Thompson, who will need an amazing race in the 100 free final to win the individual gold she is chased unsuccessfully through three Olympics.

The United States and Australia stayed on top of the medal count after competition Wednesday. The Americans led with 23 medals (10 gold, 7 silver, 6 bronze) while Australia had 22 (7-8-7). China was third with 17 (6-4-7).

BASEBALL: The guys from the low country stayed low key after pulling off the biggest upset

the Netherlands beat Cuba 4-2, just an one of Dutch players high-fiving each other any other win.

But it was not.

Cuba had won 21 straight at the Olym cal law that ran away with the gold medal in the first petition to ball tournaments at Barcelona and Atlam books from

Ken Brauckmiller, who pitched for San co 12 years ago, held the tough Cuban lines en hits over eight innings and Hensley "Ba Meulens hit a bases-loaded double to leadth

This is one of the biggest accomplish all of Dutch sports," said shortstop Robert Ed

The United States stayed unbeaten in thanks to Doug Mientkiewicz. His eight grand slam gave the Americans a 4-0 m South Korea.

The United States defeated the Nethers 2 on Tuesday and plays Cuba on Saturda preliminary round.

SOFTBALL: After winning 112 gam daughter.

row, the U.S. team dropped its second stra

This time it was an excruciating 2-0 loss, na in 14 innings. Japan beat the United St. in 11 innings Tuesday.

Aikman cleared to return to Cowboy line

IRVING (AP) - While Troy Aikman has been cleared to play and expects to start against San Francisco, Dallas coach Dave Campo was not as certain about the quarterback's status

"I feel like enough time has passed and I don't feel like I'm putting myself at risk," said Aikman, who has missed two games since his ninth concussion, sustained in the season opener.

Even after Aikman took a majority of the snaps with the first team during the Cowboys' two-hour workout Wednesday, Campo said the quarterback's playing status had not been determined.

'It's an evaluation process. This is no different than last week," Campo said. "We feel like he's an experienced quarterback. If he's ready to go, he'll be our starter and we go from there. I think it's just a case of us at the appropriate time making a decision."

Aikman did not talk to reporters after practice, a session that was not attended by team owner Jerry Jones.

Before practice, Aikman said he ham throwing for 185 yards and two had met with team doctors, who told him he was clear to play.

said. "The idea is "Troy knows he's that I will be play-

ing this week. I feel like I'm capable of doing that, and am looking forward to it." Aikman has not played since being sacked for the fourth time in the

loss to Philadelphia on Sept. 3. Randall Cunningham started at Arizona

first half of the

opening 41-14

Washington. Aikman practiced throughout last week but was held having any more concussion-related out again against the Redskins. The symptoms. Aikman appeared upbeat

touchdowns.

"It was evaluated from a medical 'They say it's a decision I can standpoint as far as what would be in make. I'm feeling good," Aikman the best interest for me long term. It wasn't about how

I felt following those practices, the guy. He knows Aikman said. Aikman has it. We just have to had three concusgo out there and sions in his last 10 regular-seaplay around him son starts, including in consecuand do the same tive games last things that we've forced him to done over the past miss two games. He was still

from the latest

two weeks ... " - Emmitt Smith Cowboys running back

Cowboys won 27-21, with Cunning- after practice, unlike he had last week.

ceptible to concussions them, Aikman insists he has not about getting hurt again. "I wouldn't play if I felly

going in tentatively. I don't pate that happening," Aikma 'It never has in the past, and think that is the case now. I'll be the first one to sayle n't be playing. You can'th fectively if you're concerne getting hit.'

quarterback controversy by all along Aikman would return lineup when he was ready.

Cunningham's performan last 2.5 games (563 yards passing touchdowns, two interceptions in his red C have no bearing on the decision

having headaches "Troy knows he is the guy told police h knows it," Cowboy running thing to kill th concussion, but he said Wednes-Emmitt Smith said. "We just he murder. go out there and play around Stephens do the same things that well over the past two weeks, and make improvement."

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