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USA still ahead of Australia

SYDNEY, Australia (AP) — Sweet revenge for 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. "Oh my God!"

Hyman led from the start and clocked an

Olympic record 2:05.88, narrowly missing O'Neill's 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 in Olympic baseball's brief history.

There were no pennant-clinching pile-ups. The Netherlands beat Cuba 4-2, just an out of Dutch players high-fiving each other in any other win.

But it was not.

Cuba had won 21 straight at the Olympics, ran away with the gold medal in the first baseball tournaments at Barcelona and Atlanta.

Ken Brauckmiller, who pitched for Sarco 12 years ago, held the tough Cuban line. He hit over eight innings and Hensley Meulens hit a bases-loaded double to lead off.

"This is one of the biggest accomplishments of Dutch sports," said shortstop Robert Elfrink.

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

The United States defeated the Netherlands 2 on Tuesday and plays Cuba on Saturday in a preliminary round.

SOFTBALL: After winning 112 games in 1996, the U.S. team dropped its second straight game.

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

Aikman cleared to return to Cowboy lineup

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 Wednesday.

"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 had met with team doctors, who told him he was clear to play.

"They say it's a decision I can make. I'm feeling good," Aikman said. "The idea is that I will be playing 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 first half of the opening 41-14 loss to Philadelphia on Sept. 3.

Randall Cunningham started at Arizona and Washington. Aikman practiced throughout last week but was held out again against the Redskins. The Cowboys won 27-21, with Cunningham

throwing for 185 yards and two touchdowns.

"It was evaluated from a medical standpoint as far as what would be in the best interest for me long term. It wasn't about how I felt following those practices," Aikman said.

Aikman has had three concussions in his last 10 regular-season starts, including in consecutive games last season that forced him to miss two games.

He was still having headaches from the latest concussion, but he said Wednesday he was not having any more concussion-related symptoms. Aikman appeared upbeat after practice, unlike he had last week.

"Troy knows he's the guy. He knows it. We just have to go out there and play around him and do the same things that we've done over the past two weeks ..."

— Emmitt Smith
Cowboys running back

While he has been especially susceptible to concussions the past few years, Aikman insists he has no concerns about getting hurt again.

"I wouldn't play if I felt going in tentatively. I don't contemplate that happening," Aikman said.

"It never has in the past, and I think that is the case now. I'll be the first one to say I'm not playing. You can't be too perfect if you're concerned about getting hit."

Campo has avoided any quarterback controversy by keeping all along Aikman would remain in the lineup when he was ready.

Cunningham's performance last 2.5 games (563 yards passing, two touchdowns, two interceptions) have no bearing on the decision.

"Troy knows he's the guy. He knows it," Cowboy running back Emmitt Smith said. "We just have to go out there and play around him and do the same things that we've done over the past two weeks, and make improvement."

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URBAN LEGENDS: FINAL CUT (R)	12:00 2:00 4:45 7:30 10:15
BAIT (R)	1:40 4:25 7:10 10:00
BRING IT ON (PG-13)	12:25 2:05 4:45 7:30 10:15
COYOTE UGLY (PG-13)	11:50 2:15 4:45 7:30 10:15
NURSE BETTY (R)	11:40 2:05 4:40 7:25 10:10
SAVING GRACE (R)	11:35 2:00 4:35 7:20 10:05
SCARY MOVIE (R)	12:45 3:00 5:20 7:45 10:10
SPACE COWBOYS (PG-13)	1:25 4:10 7:00 9:50
THE CELL (R)	11:35 2:00 4:30 7:15 10:00
THE ORIGINAL KINGS OF COMEDY (R)	1:30 4:15 7:00 9:45
THE REPLACEMENTS (PG-13)	11:45 2:00 4:30 7:15 9:50
THE WATCHER (R)	12:20 2:45 5:15 7:45 10:15
THE WAY OF THE GUN (R)	11:30 2:00 4:30 7:15 9:50
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