

Olympic Leaps in Technology

Advances in technology are changing the way the Games are played and watched.

By Christine Junge

Technology affecting everything from computer speed to genetic engineering has taken Olympic-sized leaps and bounds in the last few years, and the behind-the-scenes equipment for this summer's games is no exception. The clothes the athletes wear, how viewers

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Believe it or not, what athletes wear has more to do with scientific research than the ebb and flow of fashion. For example, this year's male swimmers won't be sporting the usual bikini briefs (much to the chagrin of some female spectators). The new Fastskin swimsuit, which has tiny V-shaped ridges to

mimic the skin of sharks—said to help water pass over the swimmers more efficiently—covers the swimmer from neck to ankle. It's also been reported to help compress athletes' muscles, thereby reducing fatigue and lactic acid levels. The seams provide tension that imitate the body's tendons; since the suits are created individually to match up with a swimmer's muscles, Speedo is claiming that times could be improved by 3 percent. Jenny Thompson, of the U.S. swim team, agrees.

"I really like the new suit. I have a personally fitted one, so I feel fortunate. It fits me perfectly. It's sleeker and more streamlined, and has much less suit-to-skin transition."

Runners are not far behind in the race for new and improved athletic wear. Some will be trying out a full-length, hooded body suit to combat the cool weather expected in Sydney. And on the shoe front, adidas-owned technology (adidas.com)

helps reduce vibrations in runners' legs, increasing muscle performance. Adidas realized that continued insertion and extraction of traditional track spikes were a waste of athlete's energy, so their new spike grips the track rather than penetrating it.

For those of us not sporting any athletic wear at the Games this fall, new technology has been in the works to make watching the events a more interactive—if not an up-to-the-minute—experience. Video highlights will be shown on NBC's web site (nbcolympics.com), but complications with broadcasting rights means that there won't be any live web casts of events.

The official web site of the Olympics, olympics.com, has athlete biographies, competition schedules and information on participating countries. This is the first year a site was declared the official site of the Olympics, and officials are pre-



The new Olympic torch is designed to withstand wind and rain—and it's environmentally friendly too.

Matt Turner/Allsport

dicting it will break records in terms of the number of visitors. Other sites, including ibm.com/fanmail, will allow fans to send messages to athletes.

Even the Olympic torch is technologically advanced, in an attempt to avoid the blow-outs that occurred during the torch run before the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta. A collaboration between the Australian-based Adelaide University's mechanical and chemical engineering departments, and a fuel and combustion firm, produced a new, weatherproof torch. The supposedly wind and rain immune flame is environmentally friendly as well.

So technology will change the summer Olympics even before they start. Let the Games begin! •



U.S. Olympic swimmer Ian Thorpe sports adidas' new EQUIPMENT Bodysuit, which reportedly helps athletes use energy more efficiently.

JOBTRAK Poll

Over 50 percent of students expect to be millionaires by the time they turn 40. More than 2,000 college students and recent graduates responded to the question, "How old will you be when you make your first million?" Here's what they said:

Under 30	25%
Between 30 and 40	27%
Between 40 and 50	13%
Over 50	6%
Never	29%

Source: JobTrak.com