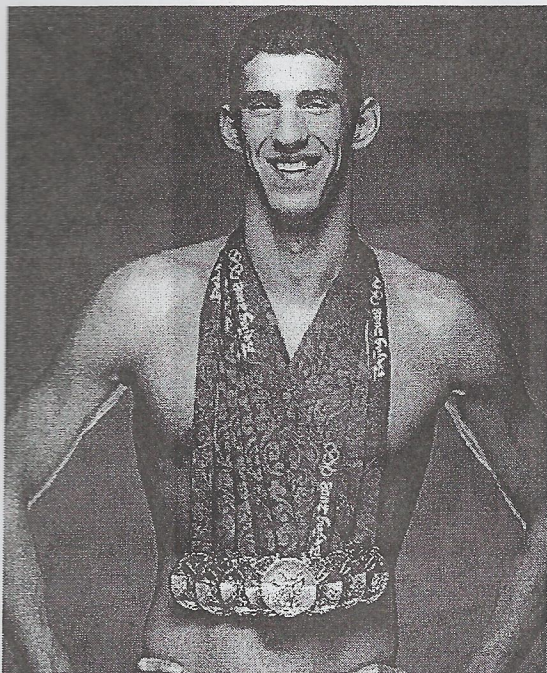


Michael Phelps: Greatest Olympian of All Time



"You can't put a limit on anything. The more you dream, the farther you get."

- Michael Phelps

History was made when Michael Phelps set a record for winning eight medals during one Olympic Games in 2008 in Beijing. Americans felt a sense of pride as Phelps stood on the highest level wearing his gold medals, the Star Spangled Banner blasting, Michael's parents crying, and the sound of people chanting for the U.S.A. During these Games, Michael Phelps had set a very high standard for fellow Olympians. His victories are printed in news papers around the world with pictures of him kissing his well earned gold medals. Michael Phelps would quickly become a household name and be given the title, "The Greatest Olympian of All Time."



The Beginning

On June 30, 1985 the greatest American Olympian entered the world as Michael Fred Phelps. Michael is the youngest out of three children. He and his family grew up in Baltimore. Growing up, Phelps was an all around athlete. He participated in soccer, lacrosse, and baseball (Wikipedia). Phelps began swimming when his two sisters, Whitney and Hilary, joined a local swim team. Michael's inspiration to swim first came from watching swimmers Tom Malchow and Tom Dolan compete at the 1996 Summer Games taking place in Atlanta (Siddons). Watching these Olympians compete sparked Phelps' interest to jump into the pool. Who would have thought that Phelps was once hesitant about swimming when he joined a swim class? The thought of submerging his head underwater frightened the child so he started with the backstroke. Taking his abilities to the next level, Phelps' parents signed him up to be taught by a top swim coach, Bob Bowman, at the age of eleven. He took Phelps under his wing and taught him everything he knew. He pushed Phelps in hopes to achieve excellence. Bowman required Phelps to swim fifty miles per week (Biography.com). At twelve years old, Michael stopped playing in all of his other sports to dedicate all his time and energy to swimming. Phelps would work harder than ever.



“Michael Phelps’ vigorous training, the way he keeps is body in great condition, and his young age will allow him to have a long and successful career ahead of him.”

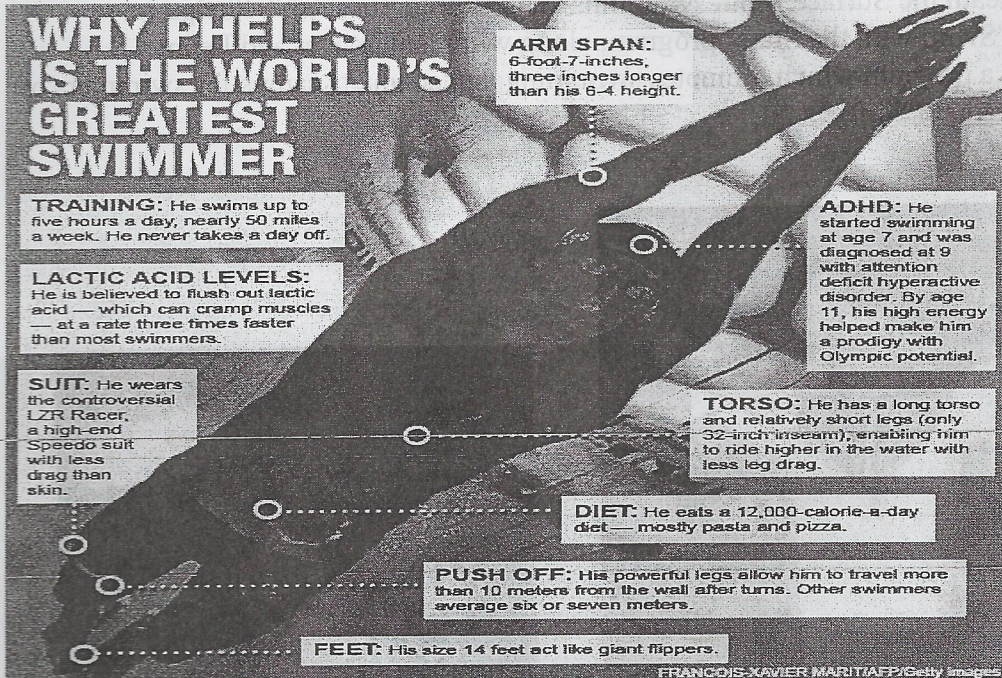
Training

Michael Phelps has the physique made for a swimmer. He stands at six feet four inches tall and weighs one hundred ninety-five pounds. His size fourteen feet help him push off the wall of the pool. Phelps has broad shoulders, large chest, long arms and his arm span is nearly 80 inches which is about 3 to 4 inches longer than his height (Sports Illustrated). His upper body tapers down to an almost girlish waist with

less than 30 inches. With a body like this, most people compare this Olympian to a fish.

Being the greatest Olympian requires a lot of mental and physical training and determination. Phelps swims six days a week for six hours a day. He will swim a program that mimics the Olympic schedule. He swims approximately fifty miles each week, which is over eight miles per training day. All of this training can strain your muscles so Phelps has two massages everyday and also takes ice baths to help his body to recover (Munfitnessblog.com). Phelps has said that he has never lifted weights in his life but he does

other strength trainings, 3 times a week for one hour. These workouts focus on building his muscle endurance and flexibility to help improve his stroke power. Instead of running which is hazardous to Phelps' knees, he uses a stationary bike (Mauro). Phelps is no stranger to pushing his body to the limit to achieve his goals.



Achievements

"My goal is one Olympic gold medal. Not many people in this world can say, 'I'm an Olympic gold medalist.'" Michael Phelps exceeded this goal when he started setting records for the most medals won during one Olympic Games. In early 2001, when Phelps was just fifteen years old, he became the youngest male swimmer to set a world record for the 200-meter butterfly. In August of 2002, Michael set the world record at the U.S National Swimming Championship in the 400-meter individual medley (Sullivan). He won five gold medals at the U.S summer nationals in College Park, Maryland. Here he became the first male swimmer ever to do that at a U.S national's event. Phelps accomplished even greater feats in 2004 during the Olympic Games in Athens when he won eight medals, six of which were gold. The 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing is when Phelps was hailed the greatest Olympian of all time (Biography.com). He won gold medals in the medley, butterfly, individual medley, and freestyle medley. Every gold medal performance set a new world record except the 100-meter butterfly. This set a new Olympic record. Phelps also set the all-time single Olympics gold-medal record which beat fellow swimmer, Mark Spitz's, record set in 1972 of seven gold medals (Mauro). Phelps won fourteen career gold medals which is the most won by an Olympian. At the 2009 World Aquatics Championships, Phelps won a total of 6 medals, 5 gold medals, and 1 silver. Michael has earned the World Swimmer of the Year Award in 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and American Swimmer of the Year Award in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009 (Wikipedia). His success at the Olympics earned him *Sports Illustrated* magazine's Sportsman of the Year (Sports Illustrated). Not only has he had success in the pool, Michael wrote two books entitled "Beneath the Surface" and "No Limits: The Will to Succeed." Phelps co-founded the "Swim with the Stars" program, along with Ian Crocker and Lenny Krayzelburg, a program which promotes swimming and conducts camps for swimmers of all ages (Beneath the Surface).



Determination

As Phelps was first beginning his competitive career, his coach, Bob Bowman, gave him advice that would always stay in the back of his mind. Bob told him to always have quality sportsmanship and accept his setbacks. Phelps has said, "I hate to lose. It motivates me to swim faster. My kickouts are all I can ask for." (Siddons) Michael had been described as very disciplined and strong-willed. Competition is what drives Phelps to victory. Being able to focus and relax is key for him. The higher the stakes, the better his performance is. Phelps is very determined. Since the time he was first started swimming, Michael has been setting goals for himself. Even on holidays like Christmas, you can find Phelps at the pool yet he has never complained about missing out on childhood events because of swimming (No Limits). Phelps has worked hard all of his life and he is receiving the recognition as the greatest Olympian that he rightfully deserves.



"I remember sitting at home with my family watching Michael Phelps in the Olympics in 2009; it was one of those things you do not forget. When Phelps broke several world records, I knew he was not an ordinary Olympian. Michael Phelps changed American history."

- A. Vicario

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