

June 29 2012: busy shoppers at Westfield Stratford City pause to admire views of the Olympic Park



## SIMON ROBERTS' OLYMPICS

Award-winning photographer Simon Roberts will be taking exclusive images for FT Weekend Magazine throughout the Olympics. Previously the official Election Artist during the 2010 general election, he has now been accredited by the IOC to take an alternative look at the Games. Overleaf, Simon introduces this unique project

# IT ALL STARTS HERE





February 17 2012: security boats carry out checks along a tranquil River Lea as building work continues on the Olympic stadium

On Wednesday July 6 2005, the day London won the bid to stage the 2012 Olympics, I was in Moscow. I watched the scenes of jubilation on a grainy television screen and the next day I flew back to the UK after a year living in Russia. I only learnt about the 7/7 terrorist attacks as we sat on the tarmac at Heathrow, unable to disembark.

The significance of that momentous week has scarcely diminished. Here we are now, at the outset of the Games, confronted by many of the same cultural and political preoccupations.

Since returning home, I've been working on photographic explorations of contemporary Britain. Now, having been granted access to photograph the Olympics by the International Olympic Committee, I'm aiming to produce a series of photographs that are not focused solely on the sporting spectacle itself. To me, the drama is not just Usain Bolt crossing the finishing line but the alternative, often overlooked, stories:

photographs of how we congregate, how such a complex logistical exercise is staged, the assertion of national identities and the backdrop of the changing British landscape. Probably no other event since the end of the war has affected so many lives in London.

I have tried to enter into the spirit of the Games myself. I have spent the past six months in training (well, I've joined a gym for the first time in years) and decamped from my Brighton home to live in student digs in the capital in order to be fully immersed in the Olympic experience. Like so many, I'm looking forward to watching the world's best athletes (including Wiggo) compete on home turf. The countdown that began seven years ago is now over – in fact, it's likely that, as you read this, the first gold medal of the Games will have been awarded (at the women's 10m air rifle final) and sporting history will already be in the making. **FT**

[simonroberts.com](http://simonroberts.com)



July 19 2012: members of the army brought in to help protect the Games take a tour of the Olympic Park



February 17 2012: with just over six months to go, the key buildings (from left, Zaha Hadid's aquatics centre; the Orbit tower; the water polo arena; and the Olympic stadium) take shape against the London skyline

To see more images, go to [ft.com/simonroberts](http://ft.com/simonroberts)  
**Next week:** Simon Roberts presents photos from week one of the Games





# BRING ME MY BOW

Exclusive Olympics photographs  
by **Simon Roberts**

AUGUST 4/5 2012

# FT Weekend Magazine

PLUS: Will Self on author anxiety • Gossip king Perez Hilton • Gillian Tett on obesity





# SPECTATOR SPORT

It's London, but not as we know it. The Olympics, as seen in these exclusive images by Simon Roberts, renew the entire city. Introduction by Simon Kuper





**Central London**

(previous)  
 July 26 • Spectators wait to photograph the Olympic Torch procession as it travelled south over the Millenium Bridge. The torch was carried on this leg by Ade Adepitan, wheelchair basketball Paralympian

**Athletes' Village, Stratford** (left)

July 24 • Team GB's accommodation block, which has prime views over the Olympic Park. In the foreground is an outdoor food area for athletes, that includes Coca-Cola drinks dispensers. The Coca-Cola Company sponsored the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam and has supported every Olympic Games since

**The Serpentine, Hyde Park** (right)

July 24 • Members of the public go boating and swim in the Serpentine lake in the shadow of the Olympics spectator stand. The men's and women's triathlon and marathon swimming events will be held here



**Athletes' Village, Stratford** (left)

July 24 • A single bed, with Olympic bed cover and towels, in a shared room. After the teams leave the village the fittings from the Games will be removed and the apartments will be fitted with kitchens, to create 2,818 new homes, for both buyers and tenants, in what will be known as East Village

**Olympic Stadium, Stratford** (right)

July 27 • Danny Boyle's depiction of the Industrial Revolution during the "Isles of Wonder" segment of the Olympic opening ceremony. The four-hour event ended with a fireworks display







**Canada Gate, Green Park (left)**

July 28 • Spectators clamber on to the gates to catch a glimpse of the men's cycling road race as the competitors pass Buckingham Palace on their way to the finishing line on the Mall

**Horse Guards Parade (right)**

July 29 • The Canadian women's beach volleyball team Annie Martin and Marie-Andrée Lessard (far side) face Zara Dampney and Shauna Mullin of Team GB. The British pair came from a set down to win their opening Olympic match

I live in Paris, and on July 6 2005, the day the host of these Olympics was chosen, I stood in the crowd outside the Hôtel de Ville expecting to see my new hometown get the nod. Instead, London won, and the assembled Parisians sighed briefly before disappearing into the BHV department store for a spot of retail therapy. I was briefly disappointed too. But now I am thankful that London was named host. These Games are deepening and enriching my understanding of a city that I thought I knew. I lived in London for 15 years, but I'm now seeing it as if for the first time.

On the day of the opening ceremony I happened to have a meeting in Marylebone, 300m from my old shared flat above a now defunct off-licence. I ran to Baker Street Tube, as I've done a thousand times before. Then I got on a media bus to the ceremony, passing Southwark Bridge and the FT building where I used to work in the 1990s. It was like a dream: you move through a familiar landscape that has been transformed, in this case for the Olympics.

Danny Boyle's "Isles of Wonder" opening ceremony helped turn the Games into a reflection on London and Britain. The next day, after four hours' sleep, I got up and rushed around: from the cycling on the Mall to the beach volleyball just next door, then to the football at Wembley, and even to a play about the Berlin Olympics of 1936 at Sadler's Wells theatre. It's been crazy, invigorating, exhausting and unforgettable.

Sometimes that's thanks to the athletes. When the hitherto unknown Yorkshire cyclist Lizzie Armitstead wandered into the press conference with the first British medal of the Games (a silver), and began politely explaining to the waiting nation why she was a vegetarian (she doesn't like eating corpses), you felt joy at seeing a nice person become a national heroine in an instant. But what I like best about these Games is the voyage of discovery through London.

Simon Roberts' pictures capture that voyage. The usual version of sport we get in the newspapers is the action photo: a long-lens picture of the athlete crossing the tape, or beaming with his medal. The action photo is designed to elicit an instant "Wow!", although it doesn't always, because over the decades it has become a cliché. Roberts does something different: he uses the Olympics to photograph London and England.

There have been a million photographs of Big Ben. Most are cheap postcards. Photographing any London landmark in a fresh way is almost impossible, but that is what Roberts achieves here. Shooting from the stands at the beach volleyball on Horse Guards Parade, he treats the athletes as mere foreground. Because Big Ben appears off-centre in the background, almost as if it had happened to wander into the shot, we can see it anew. Seeing London during these Games, we rediscover the beauty of a place that we know too well to see. **FT**

These Games are deepening and enriching my understanding of a city that I thought I knew. I lived in London for 15 years, but I'm now seeing it as if for the first time







**Box Hill, Surrey**

July 29 • Athletes in the women's cycling road race pass cheering crowds as they ascend the hill. British cyclist Lizzie Armitstead went on to win silver, the first medal of the Games for Team GB





**North Greenwich Arena** (left)

July 30 • The family of Team GB gymnast Kristian Thomas celebrate as the men's artistic gymnastics team secure the bronze medal, their first medal for 100 years

**Olympic Broadcasting Services** (right)

July 28 • All the sports TV coverage for the Olympics is done on behalf of the IOC by OBS, using increasingly sophisticated equipment to cover the sports from every conceivable angle. The OBS staff seen here are covering events at the Aquatics Centre



**Aquatics Centre, Stratford** (left)

July 28 • Swimmers warm up in the Olympic pool before the evening session of races, which saw Ryan Lochte take gold in the men's 400m individual medley (fellow-American Michael Phelps finished fourth) and 16-year-old Ye Shiwen of China break the world record in the women's 400m individual medley

**Greenwich Park** (right)

July 30 • Spectators watch from above, with Canary Wharf as a backdrop, as riders in the equestrian individual eventing tackle the cross-country course



Next week  
Simon Roberts presents photos from week two of the Games.  
To see all of Simon's images from the Games, go to [ft.com/simonroberts1](http://ft.com/simonroberts1)



Don't want it to end? Exclusive images by [Simon Roberts](#) capture the 30th Olympiad in action

# RIGHT ON TRACK





# As the world's fastest men sprint for the medals, Matthew Engel spares a thought for the hopefuls

Just after 10 o'clock last Saturday morning a diffident young man in an orange vest and grey cycle shorts positioned himself on the starting blocks in the Olympic Stadium. His name was Timi Garstang from the Republic of the Marshall Islands (pictured below left), a series of Pacific microdots, population 68,000, compared with the 80,000 in the stadium for his race. "I thought it would be more like 20 people," said Garstang.

He was in the preliminary round of the 100m, the beginning of the quest. Usain Bolt and the like would arrive rounds later. But the planet's most obscure countries are given special indulgence to take their place in the comity of nations and send a handful of athletes, whether or not they have reached the formal qualifying time.

Which Timi Garstang had not. Indeed, he performed no better than a reasonably gifted teenager on a school sports day. He trailed in last, a second and a quarter behind Tuvalu's representative, in 12.81 seconds. Everything was a little foreign to him. Back home, he runs on an unowned field, and they have to mark out 100m with a tape measure. Now he knows what's involved: "I'd like to give it another try. I know I can do better than this." I wasn't sure whether to feel sorry for him, or jealous. He had no doubt: "It was a good race, a great feeling."

Some events at the Olympic Games – the triple jump, the keirin, the dressage, the sailing – are arcane and complex. Nothing could be simpler than the 100m. Nothing could be more innate. Hard to imagine there is anywhere on earth that kids do not instinctively race against each other to see who is fastest (though one does wonder a little about the Marshall Islands). Nowhere is this more intense than in Jamaica.

The island has fewer than three million people, but the tradition of sprinting is a long one, dating back to Herb McKenley, who lost the 1952 Olympic title in a photo-finish. Ben Johnson, Jamaican-born but competing for Canada, lost the 1988 title in a doping control lab. In 1992 and 1996, Linford Christie and Donovan Bailey, both Jamaican-born migrants, did win gold for Britain and Canada. And then in 2008 appeared Usain Bolt.

One West Indian professor has theorised that Jamaicans have high levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin, "making them determined and aggressive". Another says that a relatively homogenous gene pool plays a part in producing champions. Some say that role models breed imitators. Some put it down to the way of life: Bolt had a tough upbringing in the hills of

Trelawny. His father put Usain's success down to the health-giving properties of the Trelawny yams. Bolt himself once said that, if you hear a loud noise in crime-ridden Kingston, you better start running.

Historically, the 100m was not the centrepiece of the Olympics. Before sophisticated slo-mo, it was too quick to be a satisfying spectator event. Then from the 1980s onwards, the lists of champions became peppered with proven or suspected drug-takers. As a sport, athletics was in the doldrums, attracting little interest between Olympics. And then came Bolt.

And he did come from the blue. Hardly anyone had heard the name when he started running fast, aged 21, in early 2008. He was supposed to be a 200m man. And he was an improbable contender even for that: unusually tall; a slow starter, which was not unconnected; so disorganised that he ran the Olympic final in Beijing with a shoelace undone; reputedly a lazy trainer and good-time Charlie. That day he prepared on chicken nuggets rather than yams.

He won, and broke the world record with 9.69 seconds, having slowed down to celebrate before crossing the line. He didn't stop celebrating, either. Bolt had overturned the theory that it was frequency not length of stride that mattered. Here was a figure capable of saving his sport, not only with his brilliance but with his flamboyance.

Yet the mood that night was short of unquestioning admiration. There was muttering along the lines of "too good to be true". "Wait for the drugs tests," some athletics experts whispered. But no word came. The doubters backed off, and Bolt's stature only grew. At the world championships in Berlin a year later, he clipped his own world record to 9.58; mathematicians began to suggest that he could easily do 9.4.

Then came the setbacks: at the 2011 world championships he was disqualified for a false start, handing the title to his training partner Yohan Blake, three years younger, the man Bolt called The Beast. Some theorised that Bolt had been pressurised into breaking early by fear of his new rival. In 2012, Blake would beat him at the Jamaican Olympic trials. The London 100m was going to be the ultimate sizzler: the Champ v the Kid. It was already the hottest ticket of the Games: more than two million people had applied, said the organisers, a number even further beyond Timi Garstang's ken.

A couple of hours after Garstang, the principals came out: seven heats, top three to go into the semi-finals, plus the three fastest losers. The times were fast: Justin Gatlin, the 2004 winner, back after serving



Nothing could be simpler than the 100m. Nothing could be more innate

two separate drug bans, was the first to break 10 seconds, his reaction suggesting total self-justification. The new young American Ryan Bailey was even faster in heat 3.

Bolt was next. He appeared on the track like Voldemort, in a dark tracksuit. There was a theatricality even about the way he stripped off, to reveal the bright yellow vest and those extraordinary limbs, which seem to be attached to his body only loosely and could be unclipped in repose. Bolt did not break 10 seconds. He won insolently, toying with the opposition like a daddy not quite letting the kids beat him.

Blake, short but all shoulders and muscles, did the fastest time in heat 6. Only one of the major players failed to get through: Kim Collins did not turn up. Collins, a 36-year-old grown-up and world champion in the pre-Bolt era, had been sent home by the St Kitts and Nevis team because he had gone to stay with his wife and kids at a hotel. Sporting officials: tough on false starts, tough on conjugal relations, keen on third chances for drug-users.

In this event, the three semi-finals come on the night of the finals. The stadium could not have been fuller on the Sunday evening than it was on Saturday morning, but now the atmosphere crackled. And yet, somehow, one

felt the final was over the moment the semis had been run. Gatlin, Bolt and Blake were the winners. One of them looked in command of the situation, running within himself. Now we knew, barring accidents. He knew. And we knew he knew.

Eight men came out for the final just after 9.30pm: three Jamaicans, three Americans, a Trinidadian, Richard Thompson, and Churandy Martina from Curaçao, running for Holland. Not a white, brown or yellow man in sight.

The announcer ran through the field: Thompson on the inside, lithe and hyperactive; then Asafa Powell, the third Jamaican and former world record-holder but perpetual bit-player in Olympic finals. Tyson Gay of the US, second-oldest man in the field and second-fastest man in history, gave a fairly perfunctory wave; Blake, in contrast, thrust his hands forwards and made a face to indicate that he was, as Bolt said, The Beast. Gatlin was obviously contemptuous of such nonsense, but Bolt, to his right, went into a complex series of mimes to perplex but delight the crowd. Bailey looked cool, pleased to be there. Martina just waggled his finger.

It is hard to describe a 100m race in detail, and there is not much need. Bolt was away slowly, but once he unwound to his full height and stride, it was over. When the line came, he just kept running until the photographers headed him off, and he kissed the ground and made his Bolt-gesture, arms outstretched. His time was 9.63, beating his Olympic but not world record. Blake was 0.12 of a second behind, a long 0.12 of a second. Gatlin was third. Everyone in the field had beaten 10 seconds, except poor Powell, staring into space at the finish, having gone in the groin.

It was almost midnight before the medallists appeared in the airless basement where the media conferences take place. Had you not seen the race, you would have known the result as they walked in. Bolt swaggered like a triumphalist gang leader. If Blake was ever a threat, he wasn't now: he was *consigliere*, mini-me. Gatlin sat there like a captive, chivalrous when asked to speak, but curling his lip in contempt when Bolt and Blake gigglingly started to explain their private jokes and gestures.

Justin: it's a new world where the champ (we want to believe) is not the man with the best chemist, but the one with the most talent and the best shtick, the Muhammad Ali of the 21st century. "You want to be a legend?" someone asked. "This is what I want to do," said Bolt. "That is my goal right now. Then I will make a new goal."

I don't suppose anyone except me thought for a moment about Timi Garstang. **FT**



GITTY





**Velodrome, Stratford (left)**

August 1 • British cyclists Dani King, Laura Trott and Joanna Rowsell compete against the US team in the women's 3,000m team pursuit qualifying heat. The British team broke its own world record in this heat, the semi-final and the final

**Royal Artillery Barracks, Woolwich (right)**

August 2 • Peter Wilson of Team GB embraces his coach, Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Hasher al-Maktoum, after winning gold in the men's double trap shooting. Wilson led the event from start to finish. Al-Maktoum won the same event in Athens in 2004



**Flag Team Staging Area (left)**

August 1 • Flags hung up ready for a medal ceremony during the swimming finals at the Aquatics Centre. The flag bearers for the ceremonies are drawn from the British Armed Forces

**The Serpentine, Hyde Park (right)**

August 4 • The women's triathlon had one of the closest finishes of any event at the Games. After swimming 1,500m, cycling 43km and running 10km, Nicola Spirig of Switzerland and Lisa Norden of Sweden recorded exactly the same time and had to be separated by a photograph. Spirig took the gold, Norden the silver and Erin Densham of Australia the bronze







**Eton Dorney, Bucks** (left)

August 1 • Rowers in the men's quadruple sculls make their way to the start line for the semi-final. The British four, in the yellow boat, came third in the race, taking them through to the final two days later, where they finished fifth

**Westfield, Stratford City** (top)

August 2 • Crowds watch on a big screen at one of the corporate hospitality venues at Westfield on the edge of the Olympic Park. The shopping centre is the de facto gateway to the Park with more than 70 per cent of spectators passing through en route to the various venues

**Olympic Stadium, Stratford** (above)

August 5 • Oscar Pistorius runs in the men's 400m semi-final. The South African finished last, but his presence was always likely to be more significant than his achievements on the track, as he became the first double amputee to compete in the Olympics

Next week

Simon Roberts picks his favourite Olympic photographs.

To see all of Simon's images from the Games, go to [ft.com/simonroberts2](http://ft.com/simonroberts2)



# THE UNFORGETTABLE GAMES

In the final instalment of his exclusive images from the Olympics, Simon Roberts chooses some of his favourites







### The horses!

(previous page)  
August 8, Greenwich Park  
Canada's Ian Millar, 65, takes part in the individual equestrian jumping event. He finished ninth-equal on his horse Star Power

### Daley's dives (left)

August 11, Aquatics Centre, Stratford  
Tom Daley of Team GB competes in the men's 10m platform diving. He went on to win a bronze medal. David Boudia of the USA won gold and China's Bo Qiu silver

### Effort and exhaustion (below left)

August 11, The Mall, central London  
At the end of the men's 50km race walk, Chilsung Park (Republic of Korea) is helped by London 2012 staff. Park finished 13th, one place ahead of Ivan Trotski (Belarus), seen to the left of the picture. The race was won by Russia's Sergey Kirdyapkin in 3:35:59



### Mo Farah's moment (above right)

August 11, Olympic Stadium, Stratford  
Mo Farah celebrates with the crowd after winning the men's 5,000m final. He also took gold in the men's 10,000m

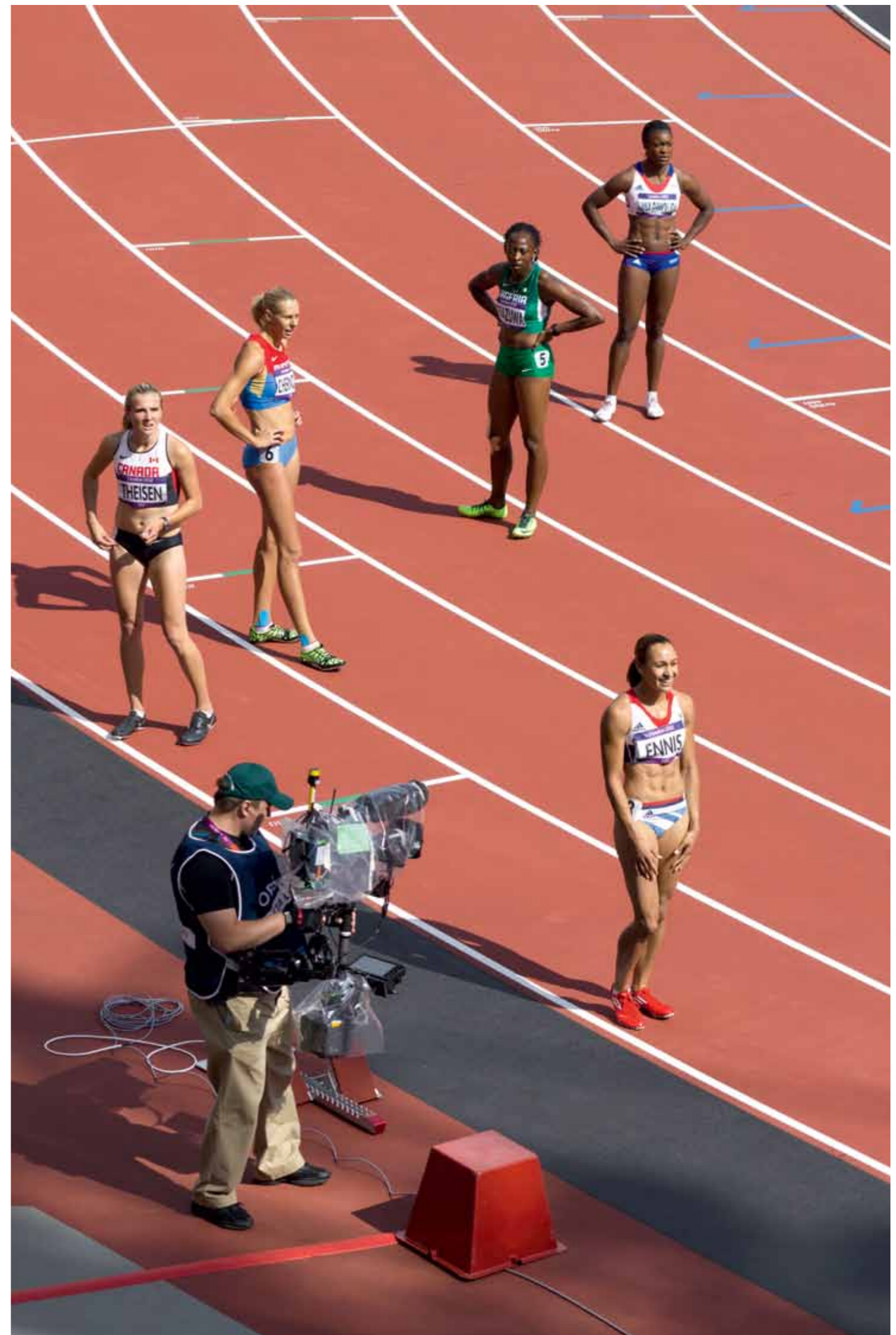
### Cycling into history (right)

August 10, BMX Track, Olympic Park, Stratford  
The women's BMX semi-finals. Colombia's Mariana Pajon went on to win gold, while the silver and bronze medals were taken by Sarah Walker of New Zealand and Laura Smulders of the Netherlands. BMX has been an Olympic sport since 2008





**Pride of Team GB** (right)  
August 3, Olympic Stadium, Stratford  
Jessica Ennis, poster girl for the London Olympics, set a personal best in the heptathlon 100m hurdles on the opening day of athletics, taking her to pole position in the competition. Ennis went on to win gold



Simon Roberts is releasing a limited-edition print from his series of Olympic photographs. For more information, go to [www.simoncroberts.com](http://www.simoncroberts.com). For a slideshow of more of Simon's favourite images from the Games, plus his three previous instalments, go to [www.ft.com/simonrobertsolympics](http://www.ft.com/simonrobertsolympics)