

Handoffs key to Olympic gold

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If you blinked, you'd miss it ? but for the four men and four women of the USA Olympic 4x100-meter relay teams, a 40-second race is the result of hours of concentration. Perfecting the timing and technique of baton handoffs is often more challenging than being in top physical form, says Tulane University assistant track and field coach Hasani Roseby.



The baton handoff, crucial for the 4X100-meter relay, is on the minds of runners and fans in 2012 Olympic races today and tomorrow (Aug. 10 and 11). (Photo from Masterfile)

The Americans are perennial favorites, but both squads were disqualified at the 2008 Beijing Olympics for dropping the baton. The 2012 medals are up for grabs today and tomorrow (Aug. 10 and 11).

Former Green Wave track and field star [Gloria Asumnu](#) is competing on the Nigerian team in the 4x100 women's finals.

[Roseby](#) is a sprint specialist who competed professionally for Nike. She says that while high school and college sprint squads often spend hours perfecting handoffs,

professional sprinters lack familiarity with both their relay teammates and the baton ?“the stick” ? itself.

“Once you turn pro, you don't even know who's on the relay team 'til the day before,” she says.

Roseby competed at Penn Relays one year as part of the USA vs. The World 4x100-meter relay exhibition. She was on the USA 'B' team, but they were leading the race going into the anchor leg when the last runner flubbed the handoff. The squad finished third.

Carmelita Jeter, London Olympic silver medalist in the 100 meters, was on that relay with Roseby. She was also on the U.S. squad that was disqualified at the 2008 Olympics. Today (Aug. 10) she will have her shot at redemption.

With squads that boast three qualifiers to the London 100-meter final, the American men and women should challenge defending champion Jamaica, but their handoffs must be flawless, Roseby said.

The women's 4x100-meter final is scheduled for today (Aug. 10) and the men's 4x100-meter final is on Saturday (Aug. 11).

Johanna Gretschel received a bachelor's degree with an English major from Tulane in 2012 and she is in the master's degree program. She has competed for the Green Wave in track and field.