



ATHLETICS



Raelene Boyle

**'On the list of important things to win, the world indoor title certainly isn't one of them'**

# Tamsyn can't win

By AMY DALE and SCOTT GULLAN

TAMSYN Lewis turned in the greatest performance of her career yesterday, rocketing into Beijing Olympic medal contention by winning the 800m world indoor title.

Yet just hours after her stunning victory in Spain an old wound resurfaced, with Australian track legend Raelene Boyle dismissing her win as "nothing to get excited about".

Lewis, 29, has spent much of her career fighting for credibility. She has been harshly criticised by experts and fellow athletes alike, particularly after she posed for raunchy spreads in *Ralph* and *FHM* magazines and appeared on *Dancing With The Stars*.

There was also the well-publicised "bitch" controversy where Lewis light-heartedly responded to Jana Rawlinson's claim of a lack of competition with the retort: "I'll give you some competition, bitch." The drama ran for weeks.

Lewis was understandably ecstatic with yesterday's win — her first major title — and the result was described as a "seismic shock" on the IAAF website.

The world indoor titles rank next to the world cross-country titles and World Cup on the tier below the world

championships, but still many levels above the Commonwealth Games.

Although her time was well outside the world record, she beat a top-class line-up, including the ageing Mozambique superstar Maria Mutola.

"All the way around, I kept saying to myself 'Oh my God, oh my God' because I knew I had an opportunity," Lewis said.

"I crossed the line and just couldn't believe it. I was shell-shocked. I was stunned and so emotional and right now I still can't believe it.

"I'm not getting ahead of myself but to win this is a massive lift for my prospects for Beijing."

However, Boyle — while offering some encouragement — poured cold water on the victory.

"She's run that time [2:02.52 mins] in 800m indoors... she's won the race but it's not an amazing time," Boyle said.

"It's a pretty slow race which has played into her hands. I think the big thing for Tamsyn is that she has beaten some pretty significant names.

"On the list of important things to win, the indoors title certainly isn't one of them. It is still an impressive run, so good on her for that, I'll give

her the credit where it's due.

"But I don't think we are seeing a new Tamsyn.

"She is now an ageing athlete who is looking towards the end of her career."

Mutola was attempting to win an eighth world indoor title but Lewis proved a better tactician than the African 800m star, who finished with the bronze medal.

Lewis's parents, Carolyn and Greg, listened to the race on the internet at their Melbourne home. They have no doubt their daughter is now a big chance in Beijing and called on her critics to stop making damaging remarks. "We are just so proud and happy for her. Now she knows she can beat these girls on the big stage," Mrs Lewis said.

Mrs Lewis revealed her daughter almost reached breaking point after Craig Mottram's coach Nic Bideau referred to her as a "C-grade celebrity who runs".

"Tamsyn said to me 'Mum, I'm not sure this is all worth it any more'. It was a very cutting remark to make about an athlete especially one who works as hard as Tamsyn," she said.

