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Vollmer off to slow start on first day

Staff and Wire Reports

Olympic gold-medal winner Dana Vollmer of Granbury senior finished seventh in the women's 100-meter butterfly Friday with a time of 1 minute, .09 seconds at the World Championship Trials in Indianapolis.

It was the first of three events she is scheduled to compete in at the six-day event.

The top two finishers in the non-freestyle events will make the U.S. team for the world championships in July in Montreal. The top six in each freestyle event qualify.

Vollmer recently completed her first year of high school competition in February by setting three state records and winning two individual gold medals.

Michael Phelps, the 19-year-old Olympic gold medalist, withdrew from one of his signature events -- the 400 individual medley -- then showed he could dominate events he rarely swims.

Phelps led the entire way in the 400 freestyle, winning in 3:47.79. It was the first time he has competed in that race since the 2003 summer nationals, and he made it look easy with a victory margin of nearly 1.6 seconds.

Phelps already holds three world records, and became the only swimmer to win eight medals in an Olympics that had not been boycotted when he did it at Athens.

His only blemish on Day 1 was pulling out of a race in which he was seeded No. 1. He was scheduled to compete in seven events in Indianapolis.

Coach Bob Bowman said he didn't want to push his star pupil into two long-distance events on the same day because of a back injury. Bowman said the schedule at the world championships in July likely would have precluded Phelps from competing in the 400 IM at Montreal.

So Phelps opted for the tougher challenge. Unseeded in the 400 free, Phelps coasted in his preliminary heat with a time of 3:55.70. It was barely good enough to qualify sixth, well behind training partner Peter Vanderkaay's top time of 3:53.06.

Olympian Katie Hoff cruised to victory in the 200 IM by setting a U.S. record of 2:11.24.

The biggest surprise was Natalie Coughlin's failure to qualify in the 100 butterfly after winning five medals in the Athens Olympics.

Rachel Komisarz of Louisville rallied in the final 50 meters to win the race in 58.56. Coughlin, who led at the turn, was third in 59.15.