



99 Ian Thorpe His tally of five Olympic gold medals has been matched or bettered by at least a dozen swimmers around the world, but what made the Aussie super special was his sheer domination of the most competitive events in men's swimming, the 200m and 400m freestyle. In his day, he was unbeatable, especially in the 400m. Apart from all that, the "Thorpedo" was a pretty cool nickname.



98 Annika Sorenstam For a large chunk of the late 1990s and early noughties, Tiger Woods had a serious rival in the Major stakes, but it wasn't a man. Shy Swede Sorenstam became a voracious shot-making animal on the fairways, gobbling her way through all four Majors, most of them several times, along with 72 other titles on the LPGA Tour alone. A daunting target for the current crop of players to aim at.



97 Chris Evert In the 1970s and '80s, she helped put the va-voom into tennis, and when she got married it was big news. But Evert was a steely-eyed competitor, whose relentless practice and lack of nerves gave her a baseline game almost without parallel. Martina Navratilova eventually edged their fabulous rivalry, but Evert finished with 18 grand slams and the best win-loss record in tennis history.



96 Jonah Lomu When Lomu was unveiled at the 1995 Rugby World Cup, everyone quickly realised the game had changed. Before he rolled off the All Blacks production line, players were either big or fast, but as poor old Mike Catt and the rest of the England team found out, the 196cm, 114kg Lomu was both. Illness cut his career short, but if anyone pointed the way for rugby's professional era, it was Lomu.



94 Alexander Popov Probably the greatest sprint swimmer the world has ever seen. The 200cm Russian won gold in the 50m and 100m freestyle at the 1992 Olympics, and repeated the feat at Atlanta '96. He held the world record in the 50m for eight years and the 100m for six, and his longevity was remarkable. Aged 31 – ancient for the pool – Popov won 50m and 100m gold at the 2003 World Championships.



93 Shaun White Poster boy for extreme sport, the "Flying Tomato" is the kid who made good. Trampoline practise while young made him happy upside-down, helping him become the perfect snowboarder and push the sport into new areas. He won gold and mainstream cred with ridiculous ease at the 2006 Winter Olympics, then tried pro-skiboarding and became a champion at that, too.



92 Adam Gilchrist Remember when wicketkeepers were honest, stodgy fellows required to be neat and tidy glove men and chip in a few runs? We don't either, now Gilchrist has wiped our brains. Thanks to Gilly, keepers now have to average 40-plus in Tests at a run a ball. But none have ever matched his brutal hitting. When the greatest team of all time is picked, he'll be behind the stumps. What a man.



91 Roger Bannister For one race and one achievement on May 6, 1954, Bannister went down in history. But it's wrong to uphold his popular image as an enthusiastic amateur who had a good afternoon: the Oxford scholar treated his training as a science experiment, creating methods and technology still used today. When he broke the four-minute mile – athletics' version of the sound barrier – it was deserved.



89 Shirley Strickland The West Australian farm girl may have one fewer Olympic medal in her cabinet than Merlene Ottey's eight, but three of them are gold. In all, Strickland sprinted, hurdled and relayed her way to seven medals across the 1948, '52 and '56 Games, and was the queen and world record-holder of the 80m hurdles. She still holds the record for most medals by an Australian track athlete.



88 Janet Evans The best female distance swimmer in history. All-American girl Evans harnessed her home-grown windmilling stroke and freakish endurance to create world records that stood for years. In 1987, age 15, she broke the 400m, 800m and 1500m freestyle marks, and went on to win three golds at the 1988 Seoul Olympics. Her 800m record lasted 19 years and withstood four Olympic Games.



87 Sergey Bubka How depressing it must have been to be a pole vaulter in the 1980s: back then you were Sergey Bubka, or you were nobody. More than anyone, the Ukrainian treated the sport like a private event and bank account, breaking the world record by tiny amounts, each time for big bucks, while rivals competed for second. His Olympic record is the only blot on a career that changed the sport.



86 George Best Before Best, football was popular, working-class and tough. But glamorous? Not really. Best suited the swinging '60s down to the ground: a shining part of the new, optimistic age, stemming from a level of almost unmatched footballing skill. To those who were there, the man who helped Man U become great was the fifth Beatle, not because he looked like them, but because he was a genius.



84 Dawn Fraser Claiming three straight Olympic golds and holding a world record for 15 years is incredible in any event. But in swimming's blue riband event, the 100m free, it's legend. Libby Trickett has been the world record-holder going into two Olympics, and twice missed the gold. Jodie Henry won it once, then disappeared. Fraser probably would have won four straight were it not for a controversial flag-snaffling ban.



83 Serge Blanco Give or take Campese, the "Black Pearl" is the most exciting rugby talent ever to grace the game. Born in Venezuela, Blanco is nevertheless the very epitome of all that's best of French rugby: quicksilver pace and the willingness to attack or counterattack from anywhere at any time. Smooth, eccentric, but never ruffled, Blanco made the sport look easy for 93 Tests between 1980 and '91.



82 Ian Botham Ask Aussies of a certain age about IT Botham, and they'll raise their eyes to heaven. At his worst (and most annoying), he was a fat, bullying, loudmouthed troublemaker, but he was England's talisman for more than 10 years: his buccaneering batting was essential viewing, and he briefly held the world Test wicket record. No all-rounder has come consistently close to his levels since.



81 Usain Bolt There aren't many blokes in the early phase of their careers on this list, but then, not many people in any phase of their career have won the biggest race at the Olympics so easily that they slowed down and still broke a world record. Oh, and after the 100m there was the 200m where he beat Michael Johnson's "unbeatable" world record. The Jamaican is 23. By 30, he may top this list.

FRASER, IARA, LOMU, MCKAY, POPOV, POPOV, SORENSTAM, STRICKLAND, WHITE); PHIL HILLIARD (GILCHRIST); HWT (WHITTEN); GREGG PORTEOUS (JOHNS).