



Gareth Southgate

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Ultimatum key to Tomlinson's place in final

LIKE all West End stars Chris Tomlinson's actress fiancée likes to make the occasional diva-like demand.

And her latest request has certainly had the desired effect.

The British record holder admits he has too often failed to achieve on the big stage - missing out on the final at last year's World Championships in Osaka, despite initial confidence of a medal.

But after booking his place in the long jump final at the World Indoor Championship yesterday, Tomlinson claimed his stop-start career was finally back on track.

"I had to make the final - I didn't have a choice," he claimed. "My fiancée has told me I needn't bother coming home unless I get a medal and that's a pretty big incentive for me!"

Tomlinson and Lucia Rovardi - who plays the lead female role in the West End musical Buddy Holly - are due to get married later this year.

But while her career has soared, Tomlinson's has faltered.

Too often the athlete, who shot to prominence when he broke Lyn Davies' 34-year-old British record and finished fifth at the Athens Olympics, has only had excuses to show for trips to major championships.

By Stephen Bond

"I had a few sleepless nights after what happened in Osaka - I just totally bombed out and it was not acceptable," said Tomlinson.

"I needed to get back on that runway and see how I reacted when the pressure was on. This performance was what I needed to give me that confidence and I'm putting everything that happened last year behind me now."

Tomlinson's qualifying jump of 7.95m ensured he progressed comfortably to today's final.

And he should have a decent shout of keeping his other half in check.

Only Saudi Arabian Mohamed Salman Al Khuwailidi and South African Godfrey Khotso Mokoe-na have jumped further than Tomlinson's season's best leap of 8.18m in 2008.

"I realised it was important to go out there and put in a good jump

straight away and I did that - job done," added Tomlinson.

"I feel good and I am looking forward to the final. I will relax for a few hours and appreciate what I have done and build on that in the final.

"The season has been going very well and I have already broken the British record and I'm in the kind of shape where I can jump 7.50m or 8.50m - let's hope it is the later."

But the news was not so cheery for Morpeth Harrier Nick McCormick, who failed to progress beyond the 3000m heats.

McCormick, who last year had his Lottery funding axed, finished ninth in heat two in a time of 8.00.01mins, just one place and 0.13 seconds off qualification for tomorrow's final.

More annoying for McCormick was fellow Brit Mo Farah cruising into the final after finishing third in heat one, despite running a significantly slower time of 8.04.65 minutes.

"I've missed out by one place and it's disappointing," said McCormick.

"But I'm determined not to get too down about it as there are a lot of positives from the winter.

"It's not as if it's the outdoor season and although it's a World Championship, it's not the Olympics or the outdoor World Championships, so you have to put things into perspective.

"I'm not going to get too down about it. I'll have a cry later and move on.

"I'm going to have an easy week as I've had a couple of stressful weeks moving to Loughborough.

"I don't like to blame stress but maybe it has been a little too much."

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A silver lining for Chambers

SELF-CONFESSED drugs cheat Dwain Chambers claimed World Indoor Championship silver in Valencia last night after producing a lifetime's best performance in the 60m, writes STEPHEN BOND.

Chambers set a personal best time of 6.54secs, just beating former world 100m champion Kim Collins on the line for the second podium spot.

But it was Nigerian Fasuba who was in imperious form, storming to victory in a time of 6.51secs, equalling his season's best.

"I'm celebrating - I can't please everyone," said Chambers. "I felt under a lot of pressure. I can't complain about a PB but the better man won on the day.

"This was my Olympics and I got my medal. If I can't compete again I'll have to pursue a career elsewhere."

Kelly Sotherton was left frustrated yet again in the pentathlon after failing to win her first global title at the World Indoor Championships.

Sotherton, tipped to win gold in the absence of injured Olympic champion Carolina Klufft, came within a whisker of pipping surprise winner Tia Hellebaut to gold after a grueling day.

Needing to beat Belgian Hellebaut by seven seconds in the final event of the day, the 800m, Sotherton came up just short despite producing a lifetime's best 2.09.95 in the 800m.

Sotherton, who finished just 15 points behind the Belgian with a score of 4,852, was second home in the 800m behind Poland's Karolina Tymniska and despite Hellebaut stumbling over the line, the Briton finished a second.

SECOND BEST: Dwain Chambers ran a personal best time but had to settle for the runners-up spot



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