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OLYMPICS BMX CYCLING

Day has to wait for his BMX crown

Californian Mike Day, expected to be BMX cycling's first Olympic champion, has to wait until Friday. The delay gives fellow U.S. rider Kyle Bennett more time to recover from his shoulder injury.

By Kevin Baxter

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BEIJING – Mike Day's coronation as BMX cycling's first Olympic champion, which seemed so certain a day earlier, was put on hold after rain canceled today's semifinals and finals at the Laoshan Cycling Complex.

With the rain falling before dawn and expected to continue until 6 a.m. Friday, the four-rider U.S. team never left the Olympic village. That proved to be a wise decision when the day's events were officially postponed at 8:45 a.m., about 15 minutes before the scheduled start.

Day, of Santa Clarita, posted the best mark in Wednesday's time trials, then won all three of his heat races in dominating fashion and seemed unbeatable heading into the semifinals. But U.S. BMX Coach Mike King didn't think waiting an extra day would bother Day, who seemed nervous after his qualifying races.

"Yeah, but sometimes that can be confused with excitement," said King, a former world champion rider in BMX and mountain biking. "I don't know if [the delay] is necessarily bad for Mike. This gives him a chance to relax."

The postponement is definitely good for U.S. champion Kyle Bennett of Conroe, Texas, who qualified for the semifinals despite a nasty spill in his final heat that left him with a dislocated shoulder.

"Kyle is going to get 24 more hours of treatment," King said. "We're looking at that as a plus."

King also said the team would probably go through a light workout and massage today but would spend the rest of the day relaxing, perhaps taking in another Olympic event.

The 390-meter state-of-the-art BMX layout was covered with plastic today and King doesn't expect the rain to be a factor unless it is still raining at 9 a.m. Friday, the scheduled start time. **The dirt layout has also been treated with Soiltac, which will make the surface grip and promote drainage, King said.**

Including Bennett's spill, which happened coming out of the asphalt-paved first turn when he tangled with Raymon van der Biezen of the Netherlands, there were half a dozen crashes today.

"The water shouldn't penetrate enough to create soft spots," King said. "That would be the only concern – whether there would be any soft spots."

Besides Day and Bennett, the U.S. will also have Donny Robinson from Napa, Calif., the world's top-ranked rider, in Friday's 16-rider competition.