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### Beijing Swimming Stars Struggling To Find Sponsorships

While most Olympians struggle "even in boom times" for financial backing between Games, sponsorships for members of the U.S. Swimming team in Beijing have "evaporated along with everything else in the economy," according to Eric Adelson of NEWSWEEK. Swimming is a full-time job for most Olympians due to endorsement deals, but given the current economy, "even if money comes back into the sport in 2010, it might be too late for some London 2012 hopefuls."

Jason Lezak "does not have a single sponsorship," and Nike, his only corporate backer, "got out of the swimming business before the Beijing Games." That move meant Lezak lost a "six-figure annual paycheck that funded most of Lezak's career." And while Lezak "figured another company would swoop in," he is still waiting. Aaron Piersol, "another Nike swimmer, is also

trying to race without a sponsor," and Brendan Hansen is "taking a year off." Premier Management Group's Evan Morgenstein, who reps Lezak, said, "The worst-case scenario is here. Athletes are starting to say they can't do it." Myrtha Pools CEO Kevin McGrath, who would have "sponsored at least one Olympian but for the recession," said, "If you want to trim, this is at the top of the list." Adelson notes Lezak had hoped his Gold Medal-winning performance in the anchor leg of the 4x100m freestyle relay in Beijing "would make him immune to cutbacks." Lezak earns \$10,000-20,000 for motivational speeches, but "after four bookings in January, he had only one in February." Morgenstein is "putting Lezak up for infomercials, hair-restoration ads, anything he can, but he always gets the same answer." Lezak in a few weeks "expects to have a deal with Mutual of Omaha," but the deal will be "small, not enough on its own."

Meanwhile, USA Swimming has created a "'speed-dating' event this year to help its athletes connect with representatives from corporate America and, with any luck, find themselves a steady paycheck" ([NEWSWEEK, 3/23 issue](#)).



Lezak Doesn't Have Single Sponsorship For London '12 Games