



Lewis looks to China after remarkable world title win

I can't believe it

Jim Wilson and
Scott Gullan

A SOFT drink and an early morning run was how new world champion Tamsyn Lewis celebrated the biggest moment of her career.

Rather than hit the town after her victory in the 800m at the world indoor championships in Valencia, Spain, yesterday, the 29-year-old instead turned her focus to the Olympic Games.

Lewis attended a dinner to mark the end of the world championships but stuck to soft drink, maintaining her no-alcohol regimen in the lead-up to Beijing.

"I was on cloud nine and I still can't believe what happened in the final, but I just wanted to soak it up and then get back to the job of preparing for Beijing," Lewis said.

"Having a sleep and then a good hitout in the morning was all I wanted to do because the main event still awaits in five months."

Lewis became just the fourth Australian to win gold at a world indoor championship. Her shock victory was met with admiration in the Australian athletics community, many members of which had been critical of her in recent years.

Hurdler Jana Rawlinson, who had a falling-out with Lewis two years ago, said last night: "It is a fantastic achievement and a great result for Tamsyn and Australian athletics. And a big boost for our team heading into Beijing."

Triple Olympic medallist Raelene Boyle, an outspoken critic of Lewis, applauded the gold medal but said the Olympics would be the real test.

"You have to give credit where credit is due and well done to Tamsyn

on her efforts in Spain," Boyle said.

"(But) the Olympics is the ultimate challenge and, while I take nothing away from Tamsyn's performance at the indoors, the Games are a whole new ball game."

Leading coach Nic Bideau said Lewis had made the changes necessary to resurrect her career.

"She made mistakes," Bideau said. "But she took on that criticism, changed a few things, changed her tactics, persisted and when she got her chance she took it."

Lewis upstaged some of the 800m's biggest names in Valencia, including Mozambique superstar Maria Mutola.

Mutola was chasing an eighth world indoor title but Lewis relegated her to the bronze medal. Ukraine's Tetiana Petlyuk was second but the night belonged to Lewis.

"All the way around, all I kept saying to myself was, 'Oh my God. Oh my God' because I knew I had an opportunity," Lewis said. "I crossed the line and just couldn't believe it, I was shell-shocked. I was stunned and so emotional and right now I still can't believe it."

While the time of 2min 2.57sec was well outside the world record, it was a major boost for Lewis before Beijing.

"I'm not getting ahead of myself but to win this is a massive lift for my prospects for Beijing," she said.

"I have always known I've got the ability and the fact I'm injury-free and loving my racing are added bonuses."

Brother and coach Justin paid tribute to his sister last night.

"She's had her critics and doubters, but this is a result that should silence a few of those people," he said.