

Phelps hoping to build on legacy by teaching the world to swim like champions

By [SPORTSMAIL REPORTER](#)

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Michael Phelps is not done with high-achieving even if his career as an Olympic athlete is over. The American's indefatigability brought him 18 Olympic gold medals, two silver and two bronze, an unprecedented total, and after he scratches a travelling itch he will set himself new objectives. Phelps is the man who wants to teach the world to swim, who wants to lop a heap of shots from his golf handicap, who wants nothing more than to see the sport he has dominated in the past decade continue to grow and grow.



Last one? Michael Phelps says teaching children how to swim is very important to him



Farewell: Michael Phelps retired on a high after winning the 4x100m medley relay

He is also not a man who accepts second best, as the rivals who have come and gone, lining their pockets with silver and bronze, can attest.

Just now though, Baltimore-based Phelps wants to enjoy life outside professional sport, the 27-year-old having been cocooned since his mid-teens, visiting the world's greatest cities but more likely to be taking in the sights from a coach window than on foot. He could look but rarely touch. Now all that changes.

'I want to travel a bunch. That's something I've always wanted to do,' Phelps said. 'I've been able to see so many amazing places in the world but I've really never got to experience them.

'I've seen the pool and hotels, every year over the last 12 years of being in the national team. I'd like to experience some things, whether it's travelling through Europe or going back to Australia and being able to go around Australia, or South Africa - something (South African swimmer) Chad (Le Clos) and I were talking about.

'There's a lot of things I want to do for myself just to be able to relax, and even though I am retiring and the competitive side of my career is over, there's a lot of things I want to do around the sport.



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Dream team: Brendan Hansen, Matthew Grevers, Michael Phelps and Nathan Adrian

'I would like to take it to a higher level than it is right now, and continue to grow the sport more and more.'

He also has a charitable foundation, aimed at encouraging positive lifestyles for American youngsters.

'I'm going to be able to put more time and effort into that,' Phelps said, 'and also my summer schools.

Being able to teach children how to swim and live healthily is something that's very important to me.'

Phelps won four golds in London, after eight in Beijing and six in Athens. It is also often forgotten he raced in Sydney as a 15-year-old too, but that further underlines how swimming has been his life since childhood.

As well as two relay successes in London, including Saturday's 4x100metres medley, he claimed individual gold in 100m butterfly and 200m individual medley.

Phelps could easily swim on and remain competitive on a world level between now and the Rio de Janeiro Games in 2016.



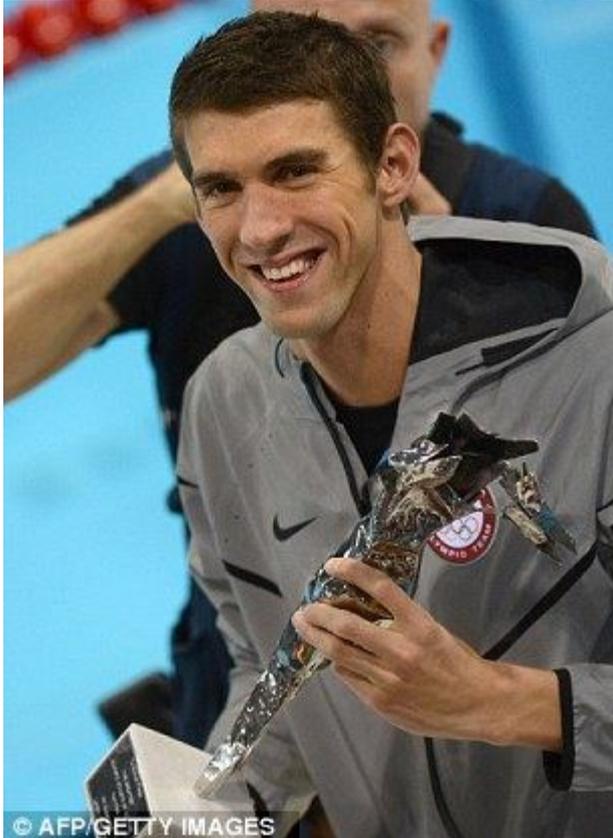
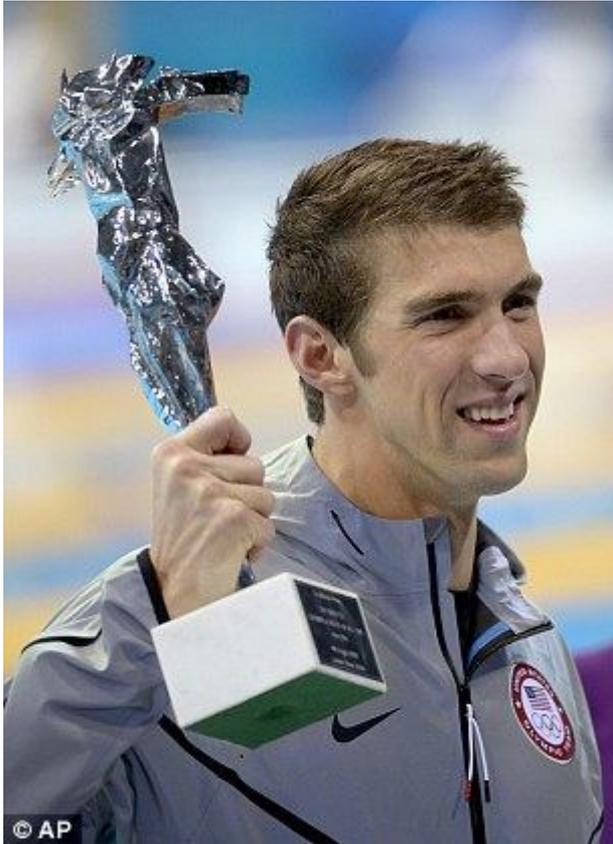
Hugs: Michael Phelps with his coach Bob Bowman after receiving a special award

'Sure, if I wanted to I could still go,' he said. 'But I'm ready to be done. I'm ready to retire and move on to other things.

'Whatever route I go down I'm going to have goals. I'm still a very competitive person, so if I go out and practice more at golf I'm going to drop x amounts of strokes.

'I'm going to have things I'll be able to go for and try to achieve. That's the mentality I have and the competitiveness I have, and I think it'll always be with me.'

As a boy, Phelps was diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and had a school teacher who thought he would amount to little in life. It was a prediction that was wildly off target, with Phelps emerging as a national hero, sporting nobility.



The Greatest: Phelps was awarded a trophy for being the best Olympian of all time
As he prepared to mount the podium in the Aquatics Centre last night, waiting for the Star-Spangled Banner to strike up, Phelps turned to team-mate Brendan Hansen who is joining him in retirement. 'And it was strange,' Phelps said. 'Brendan was like, 'I'm going to belt the words out', and I said, "It's going to sound like gibberish if I do it".
'As soon as I stuffed up on the podium I could feel the tears start coming.

'I said to Nathan (Adrian, who swam the anchor leg), "Oh no, there they come, it's going to be pretty brutal".

'They just started coming. I tried to fight it but I just decided to let it go, and whatever happened, happened. I was just taking in these last moments of my swimming career.

'To be able to sit here and say I've done everything I wanted to do in my swimming career is something that's pretty special.

'That's the only thing I wanted to say when I retired. I wouldn't change anything. I didn't miss anything.

'I've had the opportunity to do something nobody else has ever done before, so I'm very happy with that.'

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/olympics/article-2184043/London-2012-Olympics-Swimming-Michael-Phelps-wants-build-legacy.html#ixzz22l4MU9TY>