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# Gymnastics-Biles greatness set for ultimate test in Tokyo

By Steve Keating

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TORONTO (Reuters) - Since the 2016 Rio Olympics, the gymnastics headlines have been difficult to read as the sport convulsed over stories of horrifying abuse of athletes and cover ups.

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With Biles being one of the main attractions at the Tokyo Games, gymnastics officials will hope the 24-year-old American's exploits can put a shine on a tarnished sport while the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Japan organisers need someone to light up the pandemic-battered extravaganza.

That is a lot of responsibility to put on a 4-foot, 8-inch (142 cm) athlete, no matter how broad and powerful her shoulders.

But this may be the truest test of Biles' greatness -- her ability to not just win medals but to do so in such a way that it allows people to forget, even for a brief period, the turmoil and troubles that have engulfed both the sport and the Games.

By simple accounting Biles is already one of the all-time greats.

Her 25 world championship medals, 19 of which are gold, are more than any other male or female gymnast.

She performs gravity-defying skills that no other gymnast can come close to executing - and all pulled off with jaw-dropping power and grace.

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Even Biles appears to have come to terms with her status as the GOAT (Greatest OF All Time) as she competed at the U.S. Gymnastic Championships with a sequined goat stencilled onto her leotard.

She has been accorded the ultimate honour of having an element named after her -- not just one but four (one on vault, one on balance beam and two on floor exercise).

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need to pull out her show stoppers like the Puchenko double pike vault which she is the only woman to land in competition -- to secure a record seventh all-around title.

Having won every all-around competition she has contested since 2013, Biles could be the surest thing there is to a gold medal lock in Tokyo.

“This is a person who has already left her mark on history,” Russia’s Nikita Nagornyy, the men’s world all-around champion told Reuters. “The whole world is talking about her.

“We can just admire her performances and be proud of that.”

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Biles' Olympic resume includes five medals, four gold, from the 2016 Rio Games and every prediction is she could improve on that haul in Tokyo.

She is the overwhelming favourite to defend her all-around title and lead the U.S. to team gold.

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## Union's Larisa Latynina on 18.

She needs three to move past Shannon Miller as the most decorated U.S. gymnast while four would give her a combined 34 world and Olympic medals that would surpass the record of 33 held by Russia's Vitaly Scherbo.

The Olympic stage is set for Biles but whether she will use it for more than winning medals is uncertain.

The American has spoken out about sexual abuse and supported the Black Lives Matter movement. And when the world's media get their opportunity in Tokyo, questions about the trauma inflicted on hundreds of young gymnasts, including Biles, by former-Team USA doctor Larry Nassar will be inevitable.

"I don't know how any athlete prepares themselves to talk about something so heavy, however, it is the situation we are in now," Laurie Hernandez, Biles' team mate in Rio told Reuters.

"It is quite the job to multi-task and to have to deal with these things and it makes things harder, however, it is who we are and we what we are trained to do."

Reporting by Steve Keating in Toronto, Editing by Pritha Sarkar