
Doha & Shanghai: Five Talking Points

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1. Legends fight back

Last season was a difficult one for Renaud Lavillenie and Caterine Ibarguen, both of whom surrendered the Diamond Trophy after years of dominance in the IAAF Diamond League.

For Lavillenie, it was the first time ever that he had failed to win the Diamond Trophy, while Ibargüen lost the title for the first time since 2012.

It was all the more important, then, for both of them to throw down the gauntlet and get off to a winning start in Shanghai. That they did, both leaping to victory in difficult conditions. Ibargüen's 14.80 saw her take all eight Diamond League points, while Lavillenie wrapped up a first victory in Shanghai since 2014 with 5.81m.

The Road To The Final has just begun, but these two Diamond League legends already have their sights set firmly on the ultimate prize.

2. Sprints wide open

If anyone had imagined that Elaine Thompson and Dafne Schippers would return to dominating the women's sprints this season, they will have to think again after Doha and Shanghai.

Both Schippers and Thompson are very much in the running, but after victories for Maria-Josée Ta Lou over 100m in Doha and Shaunae Miller-Uibo in the 200m in Shanghai, it is clear that the hunt for the Diamond Trophy is more open than ever this season.

With the likes of Blessing Okagbare-Ighoteguonor and Shericka Jackson also notching up podium finishes in the opening two meets, it is clear that there are now at least four or five athletes who are in with a serious chance of securing the Diamond Trophy this summer.

3. New stars emerge

The prize for the biggest upset of the first two meets must surely go to Reece Prescod, who recorded a brilliant victory in the 100m in Shanghai.

Coming in at 10.04, Prescod surged past the likes of World Champion Justin Gatlin and Diamond Trophy Holder CJ Ujah to just pip Bingtian Su on the line and pick up eight points.

For the 22-year-old, it was a dream start to the Road To The Final, and proof that he can compete with the very best. Add that to the Diamond League record for Abderrahman Samba (400m hurdles, also 22) in Doha and 20-year-old Wycliffe Kinyamal's meeting record in the 800m in Shanghai, and you have the makings of a season in which several young stars could be challenging for the Diamond Trophy.

4. Gardiner the man to beat

With victories in both Doha and Shanghai, Steven Gardiner is the man of the moment in the 400m. One of the few Diamond Disciplines to have taken place at both the opening two meets, the 400m is not short of quality, but it is Gardiner who is ruling the roost at this early stage.

Beating the likes of Diamond Trophy holder Isaac Makwala in both races, Gardiner has 16 points to his name already, and is well on course to book a place in the Final.

Should Wayde Van Niekerk return from injury in time to compete for the Diamond Trophy, he too will be among the favourites, but for the time being, Gardiner is the man that any title challenger will need to get past.

5. Records fall like rain

Gardiner was one of five athletes to notch up a meeting record in Shanghai, as he joined an increasingly long list of record-breakers in the opening two meets.

Shaunae Miller-Uibo (200m), Huihui Lyu (javelin), Brianna McNeal (100m hurdles) and Wycliffe Kinyamal (800m) all also picked up meeting records in China, while two Diamond League records fell in Doha.

Sandra Perkovic launched an incredible 71.38m to stamp her authority on the women's discus as usual, while the aforementioned Abderrahman Samba delighted the home crowd with 47.57 in the 400m hurdles.
