

Is Juan Miguel Echevarría on the road to eternity?

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Rome, where all roads lead to and all athletic looks turned to last Thursday. Golden Gala Pietro Mennea brought together the best exponents of several events and saw the reissuing of long jump's final duel of the World Indoor Championship between South African Luvo Manyonga and Cuban Juan Miguel Echevarría.

Their spikes were blessed, because despite Manyonga's rematch and success (8.58m - annual leader), the 19-year-old long jumper from Camagüey continued to show signs of progression and talent and increased his personal mark to 8.53m in another duel of top tension.

In order to understand the magnitude of Juan Miguel Echevarría's jumps, even his irrevent debut in the legs of the IAAF Diamond League, we will try to come closer to the best marks of the most exalted jumpers with that age:

The disciple of Daniel Osorio has five jumps over the respectable mark of 8.40m so far this season and the fact that he increases his marks in every competition, ignoring the pressure generated by the importance of the meeting and the competitive experience of his rivals make us think about a tremendous heir of Iván

Pedroso. Juan Miguel has an enviable physique (1.86m and 80kg of weight) and two of his main virtues are his run-up and his explosiveness when taking off from the board, although he admits that he still has a lot to shape technically and psychologically.

Of course, among the best long jumpers in Cuba, according to the IAAF world ranking, only Iván (8.71m), Jaime Jefferson (8.53m), Ibrahim Camejo (8.46m), and Luis Felipe Meliz (8.43m), have surpassed 8.40m.

However, we were talking about the rising curve of Juan Miguel and his 8.53m at the age of 19. Among our best exponents, only Iván “The Terrible” emulates him with the same 8.53m, achieved on July 17, 1972, in Seville, Spain. Jefferson, for example, hadn't reached 8 meters, but in 1983, aged 21, he cleared 8.03m here in Havana. Camejo is another who fell close, because he surpassed 8.24m at the Pan American stadium on February 23, 2002, aged 21 too. Closing the list is Meliz, owner of 8.23m, before turning 20.

Certainly, all of them, in addition to their marks, excelled in cadet and junior categories, except that some remained in the highest level with positive results when they crashed with the elite and others vanished to some extent.

Leaving home and approaching the best long jumpers of all time and their marks at that age, we see that world record holder Mike Powell exhibited 8.06m; Bob Beamon has no marks recorded with that age, but he cleared 8.30m in the 1967-1968 season in Detroit. Carl Lewis closes the northern trident: the remarkable ‘son of the wind’ regaled himself with an 8.62m-stretch, days before his 20th birthday. By the way, the most relevant mark among all the aforementioned humdingers.

To close the list, we have the trio made up by Armenian Robert Emmiyan (8.13m); Panamanian Irving Saladino (barely 7.39m, so we could say that he was a long jumper of delayed progression); and South African Manyonga (8.19m).

Following this analysis we can see that only Carl Lewis and Iván Pedroso emulate or surpass Juan Miguel, taking into account the best jumps with the same age. Should the athlete from Agramonte, likewise Iván trained by Daniel Osorio, continues on that rising curve, what could we expect from him?

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