

EHEVARRIA'S MOMENTUM CONTINUES: 8.66M IN OSTRAVA

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14/06/2018



Battling unseasonably chilly conditions, Juan Miguel Echevarria followed up on his breakthrough performance in Stockholm with a commanding performance at the 57th edition of the Golden Spike, an **IAAF World Challenge Meeting**, in Ostrava, Czech Republic on Wednesday (13).

The 19-year-old emerged as one of the meeting's primary attractions after his wind-assisted 8.83m leap in the Swedish capital, and he lived up admirably to the expectations heaped upon him over the ensuing three days.

He immediately dispensed with the 8.35m meeting record set by Cuban great Ivan Pedroso almost 20 years ago to the day, opening the competition with an 8.40m (-1.0m/s) leap. He improved to 8.54m (0.3m/s) in the second round and to 8.66m (1.0m/s) in the third, a leap landing him equal 10th among jumpers all time.

He passed on his fourth jump, hit 8.54m again in round five before ending the night, and the meeting, with a dazzlingly long foul. The crowd cheered, and he bowed, a post-meet ritual we may be getting used to.

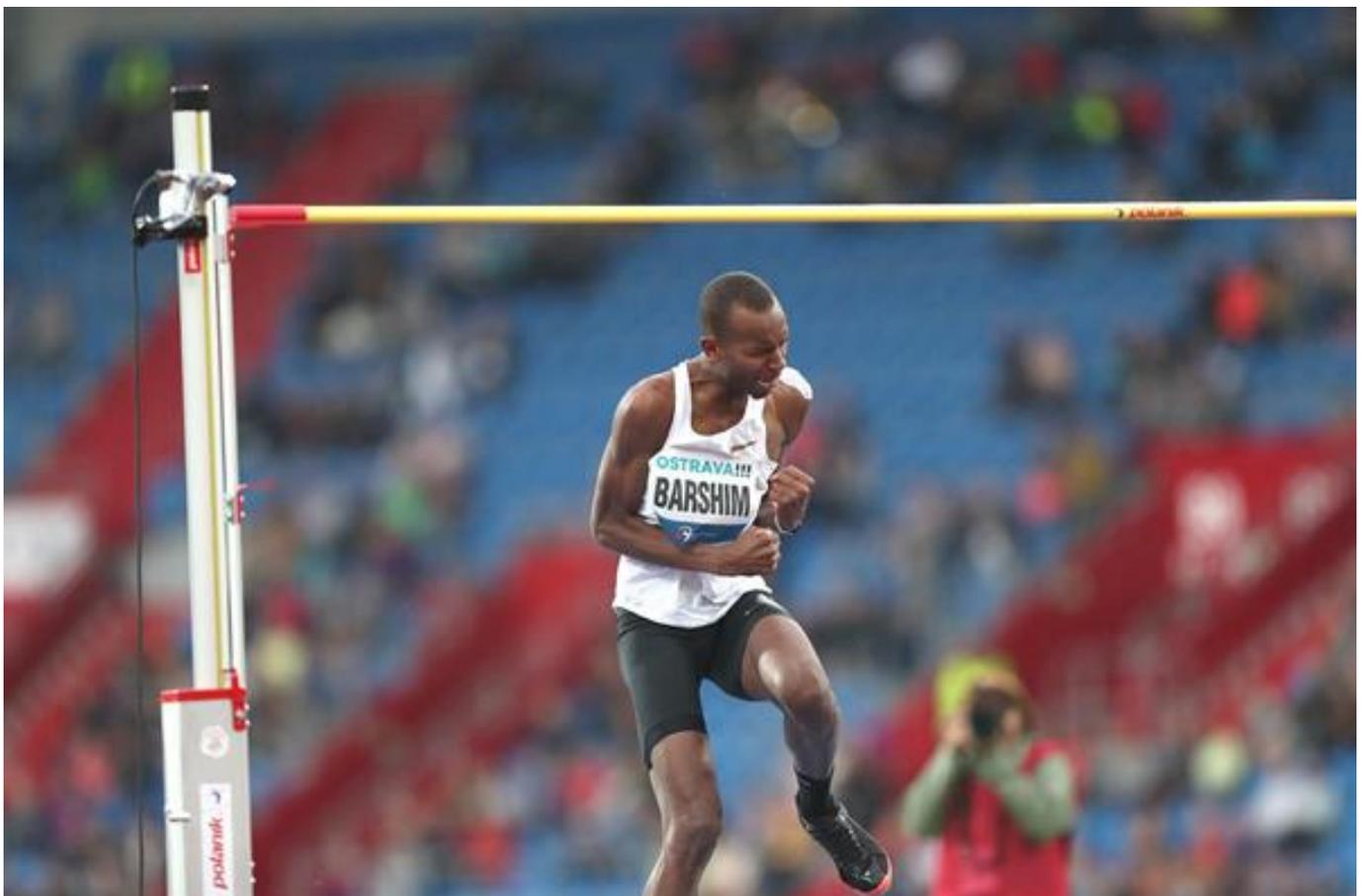
“All my attempts were very consistent and seeing all the people cheering for us made me really happy, their support and interest in the long jump is great,” said the young Cuban, whose previous lifetime wind-legal best was 8.53m set late last month in Rome. What's next?

“Being the world leader is strange to me because I'm still so young. I think I have a lot more ahead of me. People are already asking about breaking the world record. I can't say if that can happen this year or in the coming ones, but I believe it is possible though.”

World champion Luvo Manyonga was second at 8.31m and his South African compatriot Ruswahl Samaai third with 8.15m.

## **BARSHIM INVITES PRESSURE, AND PREVAILS**

Meanwhile, as a chill descended rapidly on Mestsky Stadium, the host venue of the IAAF Continental Cup Ostrava 2018 in September, the high jump rivalry between Qatari Mutaz Barshim and Danil Lysenko offered another dramatic chapter.



*Mutaz Barshim after his 2.38m clearance in Ostrava (Pavel Lebeda/organisers) ©*

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Lysenko, competing as an authorised neutral athlete, took command after a first attempt clearance at 2.34m, a meeting record and season's best for the 21-year-old world indoor champion. Barshim missed, passed to 2.36m, and missed again. Lysenko went clear on his second try, forcing Barshim up against a wall as the bar was raised to 2.38m with just one jump left.

After a miss by Lysenko, Barshim prepped by first quietening the raucous crowd behind him, then leading them in a slow, steady clap. As the tempo increased and fuelled by the make-or-break pressure, Barshim confidently bounded across the apron, lifted powerfully and sailed clear, punching at the darkening skies through the misty rain for added effect as he bounced off the landing pit.

"I needed time to wake up," said Barshim, the world leader at 2.40m. "I was down to one jump, and it was either win or lose. My coach said to jump 2.36m but I felt that I needed more pressure so went for 2.38m. And that woke me up."

### **3000M WORLD LEAD FOR BAREGA**

The highlight on the track came in the Zatopek memorial 3000m where 18-year-old Ethiopian Selemon Barega won his third race of the season in as many appearances.

In style and fashion similar to his world-leading 5000m run in Stockholm last Sunday, Barega again out-sprinted Birhanu Balew of Bahrain en route to a 7:37.53 personal best. Balew was a couple steps behind in 7:38.25 with Ethiopian Haile Tilahun third in 7:38.55. The first six across the line all clocked lifetime bests.

Elsewhere on the middle distance programme, Norah Jeruto took a clear victory in a largely solo effort in the women's 3000m steeplechase in 9:11.33, clipping more than six seconds from the meeting record set by Milcah Chemos five years ago. Ugandan Peruth Chemutai was second in 9:16.89, an improvement of more than six seconds for the rising 18-year-old talent.



*Selemon Barega en route to a 3000m world lead in Ostrava ( Pavel Lebeda/organisers) © Copyright*

Likewise in the 1500m where Gudaf Tsegay, running alone over the final lap, won convincingly in 4:02.45 to collect her second straight victory over the distance this season and for the second consecutive year in Ostrava. Sarah McDonald of Great Britain was second in 4:04.41 and Czech Simona Vrzalova third in 4:04.80, lifetime bests for both.

The focus in the women's 800m was on world 1500m record-holder Genzebe Dibaba but the Ethiopian was never really in the chase. Instead, victory went to Moroccan Rababe Arafai, who broke from the field with 220 metres remaining to finish unchallenged in 1:59.20. Noelie Yarigo of Benin was second in 2:00.85 with Dibaba a distant fourth in 2:01.51.



*Rababe Arafí after her 800m win in Ostrava (Pavel Lebeda/organisers) © Copyright*

## **WALSH TAKES ANOTHER SHOT PUT SHOWDOWN**

Back on the infield, another meeting record came courtesy of world champion Tom Walsh in the men's shot put which witnessed yet another thrower join the 22-metre club. That was Poland's European silver medallist Michal Haratyk, who hit a national record of 22.08m in round three. His lead, however, didn't last long as Walsh responded with a 22.16m effort in the same round to secure the win.

Ryan Crouser struggled, reaching 21.43m in his only measured throw of the night, good enough for fourth and breaking his streak of 22-metre competitions.

Jakub Vadlejch made the best of the uncooperative conditions to win the javelin with an 88.36m best from the second round. Olympic champion Thomas Rohler performed admirably as well, finishing second with an 87.28m effort from round four.

## **SPRINT WINS FOR HAROUN, GATLIN, BROWN AND SCHIPPERS**

The best sprint performance came in the men's 400m where Abdalelah Haroun beat the cold and a solid field in 44.63, nearly a second clear of 2012 Olympic silver medallist Luguelin Santos, who clocked 45.43.

World champion Justin Gatlin dominated the 100m, taking a decisive win in 10.03, a season's best for the 36-year-old. Akani Simbine of South Africa was a distant second in 10.13, 0.02 ahead of Mike Rodgers of the US.

Over the half lap, Canadian Aaron Brown ended world champion Ramil Guliyev's brief win streak, winning in 20.05 ahead of Jereem Richards and Guliyev who each clocked 20.09.

The evening-capping 200m was a skirmish nearly to end between world champion Dafne Schippers and Murielle Ahoure. The latter held a slight lead midway through the final straight before the Dutchwoman pulled away for the win, 22.52 to 22.60.

Elsewhere, Pascal Martinot-Lagarde of France won the 110m hurdles in 13.45, just ahead of Brazil's Gabriel Constantino, who clocked 13.48.

Pole Pawel Wojciechowski secured his first win of the outdoor season after a second-attempt clearance at 5.65m. After world champion Sam Kendricks bowed out at the same height, Wojciechowski went on to clear 5.75m before topping out at 5.86m.

The meeting ended with a farewell tribute to 2003 world champion Kim Collins, who at 42 will retire at the end of the season. Earlier in the event, the popular sprinter won a special section of the 100m contested by sprinters above the age of 30, clocking 10.41.

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