
CONTINENTAL CHAMPIONS WARM UP FOR OSTRAVA WITH CONVINCING WINS IN ZAGREB

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Just four days ahead of the IAAF Continental Cup Ostrava 2018, many of the athletes set to compete in the Czech city showed strong form at the Hanzekovic Memorial, part of the **IAAF World Challenge**, in Zagreb on Tuesday (4).

Home star Sandra Perkovic was naturally the meeting's biggest attraction and the Croatian was keen to impress the spectators after finishing an uncustomary third at the IAAF Diamond League final in Brussels last week.

Up against the two women who finished ahead of her in the Belgian capital – Yaime Perez and Brazil's Andressa de Morais – multiple world, Olympic and European champion Perkovic took a convincing lead in the second round with 66.10m. She improved to 67.60m in round three which remained the best mark of the day and rounded out her series with throws of 65.80m and 64.43m.

Perez finished a distant second with a best of 64.78m with De Morais finishing fourth on this occasion.

“Of course I wasn't happy with the defeat in Brussels, but I was sick there,” said

Perkovic, who will represent Europe at this weekend's Continental Cup. "I'm happy to win here and I always enjoy throwing at home."

MEETING RECORDS TUMBLE

Jamaica's Fedrick Dacres was a similarly convincing winner of the men's discus, one of five events in which a meeting record was set on Tuesday.

The Commonwealth and NACAC champion opened his series with 64.33m and was briefly overtaken towards the end of the third round by Austria's Lukas Weissshaidinger, who threw 64.50m, but Dacres responded instantly with 65.11m to regain pole position.

Dacres improved to 65.21m with his next throw but saved his best for last, sending his discus out to 68.17m with the final attempt of the competition to break Lawrence Okoye's meeting record from 2012. Like fellow discus winner Perkovic, Dacres is also Ostrava-bound later this week.

After finishing second to fellow South African Ruswahl Samaai at the African Championships earlier in the season, world long jump champion Luvo Manyonga won't be competing at the Continental Cup, so the Hanzekovic Memorial was his final competition of the year.



Luvo Manyonga in the long jump at the IAAF World Challenge meeting in Zagreb (Organisers) © Copyright

The IAAF Diamond League champion was determined to end his season on a high and he duly delivered. In the first round he sailed out to 8.46m, adding one centimetre to Irving Saladino's meeting record from 2007, and then followed it with leaps of 8.25m, 8.45m and 8.30m. No one else in the field surpassed eight metres.

Timur Morgunov, another recently crowned IAAF Diamond League champion, achieved an equally comfortably victory in the men's pole vault.

The European silver medallist had just one other athlete for company as the bar reached 5.56m, which Morgunov cleared on his first attempt. His opponent, Norway's Sondre Guttormsen, bowed out at 5.71m, while Morgunov went on to clear 5.76m on his second attempt before retiring from the competition following a failure at 5.86m.

Nijel Amos hadn't raced since winning the African 800m title one month ago in Asaba, but the middle-distance runner from Botswana showed no loss of form when winning in Zagreb. In a race where the top five men finished well inside the previous meeting record of 1:45.37, Amos was a comfortable winner in 1:44.08 from Poland's Marcin Lewandowski (1:44.43).

Both men will be in action in Ostrava, but Lewandowski will be contesting the 1500m there.

The fifth meeting record of the night came in the women's 3000m, where Kenya's world cross-country bronze medallist Lilian Rengeruk won in 8:33.37 in a close finish from steeplechase specialist Norah Jeruto (8:33.61) and Ethiopia's Gudaf Tsegay (8:33.78).

The finish in the men's 1500m was even closer as world champion Elijah Manangoi defeated two-time world indoor 3000m champion Yomif Kejelcha, 3:32.52 to 3:32.59.

NELVIS OVER MCNEAL

The closest finish of the night, though, came in the women's 100m hurdles. Olympic champion Brianna McNeal got off to a slow start and was trying to make up lost ground throughout the race. US compatriot Sharika Nelvis, however, managed to hold off McNeal's challenge and won by 0.01 in 12.65.

Much to the delight of the home crowd, Croatia's Andrea Ivancevic set a national record of 12.85 in fourth place.

Panama's 2009 world silver medallist Alonso Edward, who is due to compete in the 200m in Ostrava this weekend, won his specialist event in 20.17 with Canada's Aaron Brown finishing a close second in 20.23.

World silver medallists Marie-Josée Ta Lou and Salwa Eid Naser won their events with ease. Ta Lou stopped the clock at 11.05 to win the 100m, while Naser ran 50.54 for one lap of the track.

Jon Mulkeen for the IAAF