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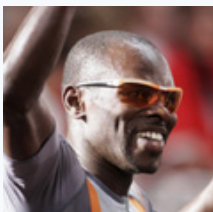
Another WR near miss for Defar, six World leaders in Stuttgart

Sunday 5 February 2006

Stuttgart, Germany - As expected, the Women's 3000m provided one of the highlights of Saturday evening's (04 February) Sparkassen Cup in Stuttgart. For the second time in two weekends, Meseret Defar found out just how difficult the world record is in that event, as her time of 8:30.72, still a world-leading clocking for the year, again missed the 8:29.15 standard of her Ethiopian countrywoman, Berhane Adere, who was also in the race.

Defar's 3000m dominance continues

With a personal best of 8:30.05 from last season, Defar did manage to consolidate her position as the most highly successful exponent of the event, as she now has three of the top four performances of all time. It's that missing fourth one that is the most galling aspect of this statistic.

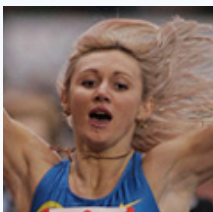


Wilfred Bungei after his win at the 2006 Sparkassen Cup (Bongarts)

Sonja Roman of Slovenia and Hungary's Livia Tóth set the pace through the first six of the fifteen laps. That left Defar alone on the track with Adere on her shoulder after 1200 metres. Within another 100 metres, Adere was in the past tense, as the Athens 5000 gold medallist sprinted ahead to tackle the remaining distance alone.

Passing 2000 metres in 5:34.74 (compared with the 5:41.7 in Adere's record run), Defar saw her seven-second record advantage slip to five and then to three on the next two rounds of the Hanns-Martin-Schleyer Halle. It was a testimony to the strong punch which Adere had applied to her performance on this same track four years ago.

Falling even with the old record pace with 400 metres remaining, Defar's final laps of 35.3 and 33.5 paled significantly in comparison with the 33.7 and 32.9 with which Adere sealed her record.



Tetyana Petlyuk winning the 800m at the 2006 Sparkassen Cup (Bongarts)

Adere had the best vantage point of Defar's victory, albeit at a significant distance, as she finished second in 8:49.02, ahead of the European-leading 8:50.63 of France's Bouchra Ghezielle, an indoor PB.

Middle distance World leaders from Bungei, Komen and Turova

In all, the 20th edition of the Sparkassen Cup - enjoying the longest continuous indoor meeting sponsorship in Europe - saw six world-leading marks established.

Wilfried Bungei took aim on Yuriy Borzakovskiy's world-leading mark in the Men's 800m, blasting past his Kenyan countryman Joseph



Meseret Defar winning the 3000m at the 2006 Sparkassen Cup (Bongarts)

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Mutua with 450 metres remaining and successfully scoring the year's top performance with a 1:45.60 clocking. Morocco's Amine Laalou slipped past Mutua just before the finish to take second, 1:47.46 to 1:47.50.

It didn't take much of a performance for Daniel Kipchirchir Komen to dip under the previous world-leading mark in the Men's 1500m.

By more than five seconds, his winning 3:34.20 moved the Kenyan to the top of the year list. Komen sprinted away with 200 left, but Suleiman Simotwo, also of Kenya, closed the gap somewhat in the final 100 as he finished second with 3:35.24, an indoor personal best. Mounir Yemmouni of France moved up from mid-pack near the end, and although far back of the front-running pair in 3:38.88, he still registered a European best for the season.

In a race that saw numerous lead changes, Alesya Turova took the final advantage with 200 metres left in the Women's 1500m and breezed to a world-leading 4:08.05 time. After being passed by the tall Belarus runner, France's Hind Dehiba held fast and finished with a 4:08.53, a season best which was also under the previous world-leading mark. Coming from a position far back in the remaining pack during the final circuit was Iryna Lishchynska of Ukraine, as she took third with 4:09.25.

Wignall, Golding-Clarke lead Jamaican Hurdles sweep

The Men's 60m Hurdles was an exciting come-from-behind win by Maurice Wignall in a world-leading 7.54. Ron Bramlett of the US appeared to have an early lead, but the Jamaican, running near the outside, began to accelerate halfway through the race. Even over the final hurdle the race was still in doubt, but Wignall's superior run-in brought him the victory, as Bramlett finished second in a season-best 7.56.

Lacena Golding-Clarke used the same tactic to win the women's race, letting her Jamaican compatriot Vonette Dixon set the early pace and then charging hard over the final two hurdles for a 7.91 win. Michelle Perry of the US, the world champion from last summer, also ran well at the end from her position in the outside lane, pulling past Germany's Kirsten Bolm right before the finish as both were timed in 7.98.

Only a breath behind, Danielle Carruthers placed fourth in 7.99, as ageless Michelle Freemann moved past a fading Dixon for fifth, 8.02 to 8.03. Delloreen Ennis-London, second in the Helsinki World Championships last summer, missed qualifying for the final tonight by 0.01 with a 8.06 heat performance.

Davian Clarke complemented his wife's hurdles win with a 46.52 victory in the Men's 400m. Eric Milazar of Mauritius won the other section in 46.67.

William Yiampany, moving up from his usual 800-metre distance to the Men's 1000m for the second weekend in a row, scored a win with a 2:21.17 performance. Bilal Mansour Ali of Bahrain (the former John Yego of Kenya) held an early lead behind the pacesetter, but Yiampany moved in front during the second lap and was never seriously challenged.

Ali's fast close brought him deceptively close to Yiampany with 2:21.45 as Youssef Baba of Morocco was right behind with 2:21.80 in third.

Comfortable win for Kipchoge

Eliud Kipchoge easily won the Men's 3000m in 7:36.71, never really attacking his own world-leading mark of the season from last weekend. Shadrack Korir and Paul Bitok completed a Kenyan sweep of the podium spots with their respective 7:37.49 and 7:39.76 times. Bob Tahri of France also finished strongly with a fourth-place 7:42.48 for the top European performance of the year.

Kotova threatens seven metre mark

Tatyana Kotova of Russia, the Helsinki silver medallist, was without peer in the Women's Long Jump, stretching her own world-leading mark out to 6.91 with reigning Commonwealth champion Elva Goulbourne of Jamaica a distant second at 6.55.

Tetyana Petlyuk of Ukraine ran past Russia's Natalya Tsyganova with 150 left in the Women's 800 metres to win with a 2:01.55 clocking. Also passing Tsyganova going into the final curve was Athens silver medallist Hasna Benhassi of Algeria, who finished second in 2:02.06 as the Russian coasted home in third with 2:02.88.

After jumping 5.70 on his first attempt in the Men's Pole Vault, a late-competition calf cramp forced Denys Yurchenko to prematurely become a spectator after two misses at 5.76. Holding the lead on misses over Tim Lobinger, who had passed 5.76, the Ukrainian then watched the German take three unsuccessful attempts at a would-be world-leading 5.82 before celebrating his win.

Of special note was the 5.70 of Germany's Fabian Schulze in third place. The 21-year-old ended the evening with three excellent attempts at a would-be PB 5.76. Former world champion Giuseppe Gibilisco of Italy finished in a tie for sixth with Lars Börgeling at

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5.60, while reigning World and European indoor champion Igor Pavlov of Russia struggled with a no-height at 5.40.

Gaisah's early season dominance continues

After his marvelous 8.36 in the Men's Long Jump in Stockholm Thursday night, no one expected Ignisious Gaisah to match that mark. But the Ghanaian jumper was still far ahead of the rest with his 8.23 winning jump, as he took only three attempts. World triple jump champion Walter Davis ended the evening with a leap of 8.10 to snag second place from fellow American Miguel Pate, who had a best of 8.06.

Tobias Unger from nearby Kirchheim brought the crowd of 8000 to its feet by holding off Christopher Williams to win the faster section of the Men's 200 metres. The Athens and Helsinki finalist looked in danger of losing out to the Jamaican coming off the final curve, but a strong finish brought him to a 20.99, a creditable time on the four-lane track, ahead of Williams' 21.15.

Fierce battles in the sprints

Marcus Brunson appeared to exit the blocks fastest in the Men's 60 metres, but he had Joshua Norman bearing down on him for every bit of the race. The American pair held their relative positions into the finish, as Brunson's 6.56 nudged Norman's 6.57. European record holder Ronald Pognon of France was third in 6.64, ahead of Nigeria's Olusoji Fasuba and Kostyantyn Vasyukov of Ukraine, both timed in 6.66.

The Women's 60m appeared to be an intense battle between Jeanette Kwakye and Zhanna Block. Kwakye of Great Britain had a slight lead at the halfway mark, but the former world champion from Ukraine pulled ahead just before the tape to win in 7.26. Running almost unnoticed in the outside lane was Stephanie Durst of the US, who slipped in for second in 7.27 ahead of Kwakye's 7.29.



The Women's 400m list this season is so dominated by Russian runners that, in the absence of competitors from that country, the danger of disappointment is high unless one's expectations are adjusted. That caveat notwithstanding, Christine Amertil of the Bahamas blazed to a splendid 51.43 performance, easily the top non-Russian performance of the season.

The former World indoor silver medallist reached the 200 mark well ahead of Claudia Hoffmann, but the German tried to challenge the more experienced runner over the final backstretch. It was to no avail, as Amertil increased her lead continually over the last 100 metres, winning more than a second ahead of Hoffmann's 52.52.

Ilona Usovich of Belarus won the first section in 52.71.

Full results may be found at <http://www.sparkassen-cup.de/aktuell/results/timetable.html>

Ed Gordon for the IAAF

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