

Preview – IAAF Combined Events Challenge

Tuesday, 14 June 2011

The focus on Sebrle and Chernova in Kladno PREVIEW - IAAF Combined Events Challenge



Roman Sebrle of the Czech Republic celebrates a clearance in the heptathlon high jump in Doha (Getty Images)

Kladno, Czech Republic – The **IAAF Combined Events Challenge** resumes on Wednesday (15) with the 5th edition of the **TNT-Fortuna Meeting in Kladno, Czech Republic**.

Besides local hero, World record holder Roman Sebrle, the competition over the next two days will feature reigning European champions Romain Barras (outdoors) and Andrei Krauchanka (Heptathlon, indoors), 2009 World silver medallist Leonel Suárez, and last but not least Tatyana Chernova, the bronze medallist in the Heptathlon at the Beijing Olympics.

Kladno has enjoyed being part of the small prestigious group of five top combined meetings included in IAAF Challenge since last year. But still, the highest credit for the meeting has come from its home stars, triple World champion Tomáš Dvorák and Sebrle, who won the first edition with 8697 points and effort which remains unbeaten. Sebrle had to pass on his first expected start of the season in Götzis because of a stomach muscle injury early in May but he'll be back in action here.

"I feel 100% healthy, otherwise I wouldn't compete. But I missed three weeks of training, and a couple of disciplines I only tried once," Sebrle said today. "My biggest rival will be myself, I want to finish healthy. And, if it goes well, get as many points as I'll be able to."

Sebrle has yet to qualify for this summer's World Championships in Daegu, which means he'll at least have to break the modest standard of 8000 points set by the Czech federation. But remember, there's a younger Czech decathlete, Adam Sebastian Helcelet, last year's winner of junior competition with a meeting record of 7588. This year Helcelet missed the 8000-point barrier by only a few points and is on the start list as well.

"The more Czechs treading on my heels, the better for Czech athletics," the 36-year-old Sebrle said.

Helcelet's has a PB of 7969 from the national championships in Prague on 29 May.

"If I don't score the 'A' standard (8200) here in Kladno, I'll go to another decathlon, either in Ratinger or at European Cup," said Sebrle, who ten years ago became the only man to break the event's 9000-point barrier.

Meanwhile Barras isn't expecting a great results but a solid result. "I suffered a minor groin injury in December and I'm not in the same shape like I was last year. But I hope for 8000, maybe 8200," said the Frenchman, who set his 8453 career best when taking the continental title last summer in Barcelona.

Fresh European indoor champion Andrei Krauchanka is hoping for little bit more, although he as well wasn't present in Götzis. "I trained very hard instead of competing there," said athlete who had his training camp in the Ukrainian resort town of Yalta. "I'm treating Kladno as if it will be Götzis and I hope for breaking 8400."

The only top decathlete in Kladno who competed late last month in Götzis is Suárez.

"I expect at least as good a result as there," said the current Cuban No. 1, who tallied 8440 at the Hypomeeting, finishing second to clear winner Trey Hardee. "I know this meeting is at the same level as Götzis and I hope for good competition as well."

He'll be joined by compatriots Yordanis García and Yunior Díaz who both have career bests topping 8300 points.

Also, we have to always count on Dmitriy Karpov of Kazakhstan, the man with the second highest personal best among entrants with 8725. Last year's winner Oleksiy Kasyanov won't be defending his title, and also missing is 2008 and 2009 winner Maurice Smith.

Chernova the favourite in Heptathlon

Unfortunately for home crowd, Eliška Klucinová, last year's winner who then equalled the Czech national record, won't be back to defend. The 23-year-old, who tallied 6268 here one year ago, is recovering from an operation to treat hallux valgus, or bunions. In an case, a title defence would have been difficult with Russian Tatyana Chernova, a 6600+ point performer, in the field.

"I've heard so much about Prague (Kladno is close to the Czech capital) from my friends, so I'm very happy to be finally here. I feel fine and healthy, ready for a good result," said Chernova, last year's overall IAAF Combined Events Challenge winner.

Like Suárez, Chernova, 23, finished second in Götzis with a 6539 tally, losing to Jessica Ennis of Great Britain.

Chernova's main rivals will be Ukrainian Hanna Melnychenko and Karolina Tyminska of Poland, both with personal best over 6400. The biggest hope for the Czech crowd is Katerina Cachová, the former World youth champion back in 2007. For Cachová, her competition is a part of her preparation for European U23 Championships later this summer in her home town of Ostrava, as it is for her male colleague Helcelet.

Michal Prochazka for the IAAF