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De Araujo and Simpson take Desenzano victories – IAAF Combined Events Challenge



Margaret Simpson on the way to her third Multistars victory (Lorenzo Sampaolo)

Desenzano del Garda, Italy - Luiz Alberto De Araujo from Brazil and Ghanaian Margaret Simpson cruised to comfortable victories in the Decathlon and Heptathlon, respectively, on Sunday (8) at the 24th edition of the **Multistars**, the opening competition of the 2011 12-meet **IAAF Combined Events Challenge** series.

De Araujo dominated the Decathlon from start to finish scoring 7858 points, improving his personal best by 42 points. Despite some weak points in the Discus Throw and the Pole Vault overnight leader De Araujo produced a consistent performance on the second day in which he set a PB in the 110m Hurdles with 14.34 and defended his leading position by clocking 4:32.78 in the 1500m.

Simpson made a successful comeback to world class level by taking her third win in the Multistars with 6270 points. Simpson sealed the win after her strongest Javelin event in which she threw 53.81m. Marina Goncharova, last year's winner in Desenzano and seventh at the World Indoor Championships in Doha 2010, came very close to 6000 points with 5995. Francesca Doveri from Italy produced the best performance in her career by scoring 5988 points to finish third.

Decathlon –

Overnight leader De Araujo picked up where he left off at the start of day two by setting a new PB in the 110m Hurdles with 14.34 (931 points) and led after six events with 5022, increasing his gap over Tunisia's Hamdi Dhoubi to 226 points. Italian William Frullani moved up from fourth to third place with 4775 points thanks to his 14.49 in the hurdles.

The Discus Throw produced only one major change. New Zealand's Brent Newdick, fifth after hurdles, threw the discus to 44.21m and moved into third overall with 5507 points. De Araujo continued to lead with 5679 points but his gap on Dhoubi was reduced to 158 points after the Tunisian threw the implement to 42.98m to De Araujo's 39.62m. The discus throw win went to Austrian Roland Schwarzl with 45.82m.

De Araujo cleared 4.55m in the Pole Vault, while Dhouibi managed to clear 4.95m reducing his gap but the Brazilian defended his leading position by 112 points (6454 to 6342). Schwarzl, eighth after the discus, won the Pole Vault (his strongest event) with 5.15m and moved up to third with 6335 points.

Newdick, fourth after a 4.65m in the Pole Vault, moved into second after the Javelin Throw thanks to his 62.12m. With only the 1500m remaining, the New Zealander was just 51 points behind De Araujo.

The Brazilian finished the 1500m with a PB of 4:32.78, four and a half second ahead of Newdick and sealed the win with 7858 points holding off Newdick by 78. Dhouibi took third place with 7731 points.

"It was a good performance apart from some bad results in the discus and the pole vault," said De Araujo, who hails from Sao Caetano near Sao Paulo. "I am pleased with my PB in the 1500m. My next competition will be the South American Championships in Buenos Aires in June where I hope to score 8000 points I need to qualify for the World Championships in Daegu and the Panamerican Championships."

"I am pretty pleased with my performance," said Newdick. "It was a good base for my next competition in Gotzis where I aim at finishing in the top ten and scoring 8000 points."

Heptathlon –

The start of the second day was greeted by strong winds in the Long Jump. Italian Francesca Doveri was aided by a tail wind of +2.6 m/s to leap to 6.37m (965 points), which she backed up with two more solid jumps (6.25m and 6.31m). These results propelled the Italian to the overall lead with 4500 points with a 25-point margin over Simpson who produced a best leap of 6.08m. The winner of the long jump was Great Britain's Dominique Blaize who jumped 6.51m aided by a strong tail wind of +3.6 and moved into third overall with 4463 points.

Simpson regained the lead as predicted after reaching 53.81m in the Javelin, her strongest discipline. Although that was not enough to take the individual win in this event, as Greece's Sofia Ifadidou set the event record with 54.04m, Simpson moved back to the front with 5409 points ahead of Dutchwoman Nadine Broersen who threw 51.56m. Doveri lost positions despite a new javelin PB of 33.95m and dropped to fourth with 5055, three points behind Russian Marina Goncharova.

Simpson crossed the finish line of the final 800m in 2:17.27 after two grueling days of competition to tally 6270 points, which improved her seasonal best of 6134 set in Mauritius in April. Simpson is based and trains at the IAAF Technical Centre in Mauritius. Simpson is returning to form after giving birth to her second child in 2008 and undergoing surgery.

"I am proud because I have managed to improve from my previous seasonal best set during my first competition in Mauritius," Simpson said. "My javelin was very good. I did well in the hurdles and in the long jump. I have the qualifying mark for the World Championships in Daegu, so I can prepare for that without pressure. I will compete in Gotzis and Kladno before returning to Mauritius to prepare for Daegu."

Goncharova took the win in the 800m in 2:11.68 which moved her into second. "I don't feel in good form and my performance was not very good but I enjoyed this competition and the nice weather", said Goncharova.

Doveri had mixed feelings about her third place.

"I am happy with third place and my PB but it's frustrating to miss the qualifying mark for the World Championships in Daegu by just 12 points," said the Tuscan, who is coached by Riccardo Calcini in Florence. "I did not perform well in the javelin throw, my weakest event. I will try again at the European Cup First League for Combined Events in Bressanone (2-3 July), which will be my next heptathlon. Before that I will take part in some individual competitions."

Diego Sampaolo for the IAAF