

## Preview – IAAF Combined Events Challenge

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### Hardee vs Clay, women's Olympic podium reunion set for Götzis –



Bryan Clay and Trey Hardee both of USA celebrate winning gold and silver in the Heptathlon (Getty Images)

Götzis, Austria – This weekend's Hypo-Meeting (29-30) in Götzis features a gathering of the best Decathlon and Heptathlon specialists in the world, a veritable "Who's Who" of the combined Events.

Indeed, the meeting at the famous Mösle Stadium, the second leg of the **2010 IAAF Combined Events Challenge**, will be the closest to a true "World Championships" in a year without Olympic or World titles at stake.

#### Clay – World record aspirations? - Decathlon

The Decathlon will feature the US clash between Olympic champion Bryan Clay and Berlin World champion Trey Hardee. Clay, who missed the 2009 World Championships after his Olympic triumph in Beijing, will have the chance to restore supremacy in his battle against Hardee who took the World title last year with his impressive PB of 8790 points. In March Clay showed that he has returned to his best form by winning the World Indoor title in the Heptathlon at the Aspire Dome in Doha beating Hardee, 6204 to 6184. Clay's goal for this year's Hypo meeting is to break the fabulous nine-year-old World record set by Czech Roman Sebrle in the Mösle Stadium in 2001 with 9026 points. Clay took the only US Decathlon win in the 35-year-history of the Götzis meeting in 2006 when he scored 8677.

Hardee finished second last year in Götzis with 8516 points after a dramatic battle with German Michael Schrader who prevailed by just six points with 8522.

The European challenge to the US superstars will be led by Mr. 9000 himself, Sebrle, who has won five times in the Mösle Stadium and will compete in his favourite meeting for the 13th time!

The other big favourite for a spot in the top-three is Andrei Krauchanka from Belarus who sensationally beat Sebrle and Clay in Götzis 2007 smashing his PB from 8013 to 8617 points thanks to seven new lifetime individual records. One year later Krauchanka won the Olympic silver medal behind Clay. After a 2009 season ruined by injury problems Krauchanka, fourth at the World Indoor Championships, is ready to fight again.

Another past winner who hopes to come back to the top is Dmitriy Karpov from Kazakhstan, the Olympic bronze medallist in Athens 2004 and twice World bronze medallist in 2003 and 2007. Karpov became the first Asian athlete to win the Austrian meeting in 2008 with 8504 points beating Russian Aleksey Sysoyev by just seven points after a dramatic fight which remained undecided until the final 1500m race.

Götzis will be the first big test for top Europeans preparing for the European Championships in Barcelona (27 July – 1 August). The names who are expected to mix in the fight for the leading spots are Russian Aleksey Drozdov, the 2010 World Indoor bronze medallist in the Heptathlon with 6141 points; 2009 European indoor silver medallist Oleksiy Kasyanov from Ukraine, who is very strong in the sprint events and in the long jump (he jumped 8.04m during the 2010 indoor season); and Pascal Behrenbruch, currently the best German specialist in the field who finished sixth on home-soil at the World Championships in Berlin with 8439 points.

A very strong Cuban team will be represented by Berlin World silver medallist and Beijing Olympic bronze medallist

Leonel Suarez; 2005 World Youth champion and Berlin eighth placer Yordanis Garcia; and Berlin ninth placer Yuniur Diaz. Suarez, who set his PB of 8640 points in Berlin last year, boasts such PBs as 77.47m in the javelin, 2.17m in the High Jump, and 4:16.70 in the 1500m. He, along with current world leader Garcia (8381), competed in the inaugural leg of the IAAF Challenge in Desenzano del Garda earlier this month where they finished second and third respectively with 8112 and 8048. Diaz, ninth in Berlin with a sensational 46.15 in the 400m, will compete for the second time in Europe after Berlin.

Jake Arnold, winner in Desenzano in 2009 and 2010, will also compete in Götzis. Jamaican Maurice Smith, World silver in Osaka 2007, will be looking for a re-match from last year's World Championships where he was forced to pull out of the competition after the 100m because of a muscle injury. Austrian Roland Schwarzl, who finished tenth at the Athens Olympic Games and set the qualifying standard for the European Championships in Barcelona thanks to his 7789 points in Desenzano, will be in the spotlight of the enthusiastic Austrian fans.

### **2008 Olympic podium reunites - Heptathlon**

The women's Heptathlon will be no less impressive. The entire podium of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the 2010 Doha World Indoor Championships will highlight the field.

Reigning World outdoor and indoor champion Jessica Ennis from Great Britain will square off against Ukraine's 2008 Olympic champion Nataliya Dobrynska in a fabulous re-match of last year's World Championships in Berlin. The line-up also features Olympic silver medallist Hyleas Fountain from the USA, Olympic bronze medallist Tatyana Chernova and 2009 World silver Jennifer Oeser from Germany.

Ennis crowned a splendid indoor season with a superb World indoor Pentathlon title in Doha where she broke Carolina Klüft's championships record with 4937 points, the fourth best score in history. The 24-year-old made her outdoor debut on 16 May in Manchester where she beat Olympic 400m champion Christine Ohuruogu in a 150m race in 16.99. She hopes to forget the bad memory of her debut in Götzis in 2008 when a foot injury forced her to drop out of the competition after the end of the first day.

Dobrynska, world indoor silver medallist in Doha behind Ennis with a new national record of 4851 points, won in Götzis last year leading a clean sweep for Ukraine, beating Hanna Melnychenko and Lyudmyla Yosypenko. Dobrynska finished fourth in Berlin but took the World Combined Challenge title. Melnychenko, sixth at the Berlin World Championships and third this year in Desenzano, and Yosypenko return to Götzis this year.

Chernova produced an impressive display in 2008 when she took the win in Götzis at the age of 20 with her PB of 6618 points after a very strong second day.

Among the strong favourites there are also Fountain and Oeser. Fountain showed good form last March when she finished fourth at the World Indoors equalling the US Pentathlon record with 4753 points, only nine points behind bronze medallist Chernova. Oeser won a popular World silver medal in Berlin last year at the end of a dramatic 800m race in which she fell but found the strength to gain a much-deserved silver with her PB of 6493 points thanks to the support of the very enthusiastic German crowd. Oeser is expected to receive strong support from the German fans who make the trip from neighbouring Germany every year.

The Heptathlon's line-up is completed by Antoinette Nana Djimou from France, European Indoor bronze medallist in Turin 2009 in the pentathlon; Jessica Zelinka from Canada, fifth at the 2008 Olympic Games who'll be making her comeback after maternity leave; Yvonne Wisse Van Langen from the Netherlands (PB 6100 points); Jessica Samuelson from Sweden (PB 6111 points); and Linda Züblin from Switzerland (PB 6018 points).

### **Diego Sampaolo for the IAAF**