

Sunday, 13 June 2010

Clay and Sebrle top the field in Kladno – IAAF Combined Events Challenge



Bryan Clay in Götzis, where he won for the second time (Lorenzo Sampaolo)

Kladno, Czech Republic - Olympic champion Bryan Clay and World-record holder Roman Sebrle headline the decathlon start list in the **TNT-Fortuna Combined Events** competition in Kladno, Czech Republic, next Tuesday and Wednesday (15-16).

It is the third component of the **2010 IAAF Combined Events Challenge**. Also included in the programme will be a Heptathlon and a junior decathlon contest.

Barely two weeks after Clay's brilliant first-day effort of 4450 in Götzis was scuttled on the second day by intermittent driving rain and wind as he still ended with a world-leading 8483, the American will go to the line once again for a ten-eventer. With the US Championships only ten days after the conclusion of the Kladno competition, Clay will be finding himself in three top-level decathlon meetings within the space of less than a month, a frequency unprecedented during his long career.

But such is the compact nature of this and many other athletics fixtures during the 2010 season as the upcoming European Championships in late July forces traditional meetings into a compact time window ending in mid-July for the Barcelona break.

Meeting co-director Tomáš Dvořák agreed that the scheduling was quite tight this year, but that "It was not a problem for us. Sixteen days after Götzis is enough time to recover for the athletes." Concerning the Ratingen [GER] component of the Challenge, scheduled for next Saturday and Sunday, Dvořák was of the opinion that "our meeting and Ratingen serve somewhat different purposes. The main difference for us is that there will be no German competitors in Kladno."

It should also be noted that the scoring in the IAAF Combined Events Challenge require that only the top three scores be used in an unweighted manner. An athlete's placing is immaterial. Each competitor is thus free to choose the competitions best suited for his or her season, with the late-July European Championships in Barcelona (also part of the IAAF Challenge) standing as the pinnacle for competitors from that continent.

Sebrle will be the 'local matador' in Kladno as he makes his fourth consecutive appearance here, winning the inaugural event in 2007--with a still-standing meeting record of 8697--and placing second the last two years. The reigning European champion amassed 4225 during the opening day at Götzis, but chose to abandon the second part of the competition as a precautionary measure after feeling a slight strain in his thigh while warming up.

Other notables who will compete in the decathlon include Maurice Smith of Jamaica, the Osaka 2007 silver medallist; Kazakhstan's Dmitriy Karpov, the bronze medallist in Paris 2003, Athens Olympics and Osaka; Andrei Krauchanka of Belarus, the Beijing silver winner; Berlin fourth placer Oleksiy Kasyanov of Ukraine; Claston Bernard of Jamaica, who placed 9th in Athens; and American Jake Arnold, who cast aside the bad conditions in Götzis two weeks ago for a fourth-place PB 8253.

In all, thirteen of the decathlon starters have PBs of 8000 points or better.

Ukraine's Yosypenko and Melnychenko top Heptathlon fields

A pair of Ukrainians leads the competitor roster in the Heptathlon. Lyudmila Yosypenko, the fifth-place finisher in last year's World Championships, will battle countrywoman Hanna Melnychenko, who finished just behind her in sixth at Berlin. They will be joined by Poland's Karolina Tyminska, the Beijing seventh placer; Blandine Maisonnier of France, the winner at Arles two years ago; and Russian Marina Goncharova, who placed seventh at the Doha indoor world championships Pentathlon this past winter.

Also included in the two-day program will be a junior decathlon competition, headed by 18-year-old Adam Helcelet of the Czech Republic, who will use the event as his final preparation for the World Junior Championships in Moncton next month.

Ed Gordon for the IAAF