

**European Cup Combined Events Superleague
Wieslaw Maniak Stadium
Szczecin, Poland**

Saturday, 27 June 2009

Kasyanov and Melnychenko the overnight leaders in Szczecin



Overnight leader Hanna Melnychenko in Szczecin (Marek Biczyk)

Szczecin, Poland - After the first day of European Cup Combined Events Superleague in the Wieslaw Maniak Stadium in Szczecin (Saturday, June 27th), Hanna Melnychenko of Ukraine and her teammate Oleksiy Kasyanov emerged as the clear leaders.

Both, however still have a battle on their hands as they are followed in the standings by athletes capable of big scores on day two. Melnychenko with 3756 points has a 50-point lead over Kamila Chudzik of Poland and 119 points over another Pole Karolina Tyminska. Kasyanov, with 4360 points is 112 points ahead of Aleksandr Pogorelov and 119 points ahead of Olympic silver medalist Andrei Krauchanka.

The **European Cup Combined Events Superleague** is part of the **IAAF World Combined Events Challenge**.

Heptathlon – Can Melnychenko hang on?

In the Heptathlon, the day started with Phyllis Agbo of Britain winning the 100m Hurdles just 0.02 ahead of Melnychenko. The Briton's lead was short-lived: the Ukrainian athlete was one of only two athletes to clear 1.84m in the High Jump and after two events led by 126 points. At this point, Kamila Chudzik was third, 132 points behind the leader, but a season's best of 1.75m in the second event signalled that the Pole was in top condition.

This was confirmed in the next event. Chudzik exploded in the Shot Put with an outdoor PB of 14.84m, the second furthest throw of the day. With Melnychenko reaching only 13.12m, the Ukrainian's lead was cut to just 17 points. In the final event of the day, Chudzik ran a good 24.77 despite being drawn in lane one and running into headwind.

Melnychenko beat that in a later heat, stopping the clock in 24.40, but the lead of 50 points she carries into day two may not be sufficient. The Pole is currently 16 points ahead of the score she reached when setting her PB of 6494 points last year. If she can get near the 6.43m long jump and 55m-plus javelin throw she achieved then, the Ukrainian may struggle to keep up.

Melnychenko herself is marginally down on the score from this year's Gotzis meet, in which she scored 6445 points.

Olympic seventh placer Karolina Tyminska typically started the day slowly and was only 11th after two events, but came through with 13.91m in the shot put and ended the day with a clear win in the 200m in 23.86. Coming back from an injury earlier this year, Tyminska may not yet be ready to challenge the top two, but she nonetheless looks capable of a world-class score.

The top three are followed in the order by the surprising French athlete Yasmina Omrani, who, with 3564 points after day one, looks on track to threaten the 6000 point barrier for the first time in her career.

In the team standings, a tight battle continued throughout the first day among four evenly matched teams. In the end, the Poles emerged as the leaders, but with only 15 points ahead of the Ukrainians, 51 over France and 61 over Russia, the matter of the win is still very much open.

As expected, Kasyanov the first day Decathlon leader

In the men's event, Olympic seventh placer Kasyanov set the pace from the start. His 10.63 in the 100m gave him a considerable lead, which he widened further by long jumping 7.59m. Aleksandr Pogorelov was not near the top in the first event, but was then the only one to jump further than Kasyanov with 7.65m, and moved into second place after two events, 98 points behind the Ukrainian.

The big Russian gained many points by winning the Shot Put with 15.94m and closed down to within 30 points of Kasyanov. His 2.04m in the high jump, compared to 1.98m for the Ukrainian, reversed the order of the top two for the first time, giving Pogorelov a lead of 25 points. Kasyanov, however, proved his speed once again with 48.34 in the 400m, whereas Pogorelov was nearly three seconds slower. The order was thus reversed again, with the Ukrainian athlete entering day two with a considerable lead.

It is, however, a lead that may be difficult to maintain. Kasyanov's forte is the sprints, which means he is expected to struggle somewhat. While he was the fastest in the field today, his score from day one is still 101 points down on when he achieved 8286 in Gotzis earlier this year. Pogorelov is only 57 points down on his score from last year's Gotzis meet, when he finished on 8381 points.

Neither is the battle for the win expected to be limited to these two. Andrei Krauchanka struggled somewhat at the start of his first Decathlon of the year, but after winning the High Jump with 2.10m and a 400m run in 48.82, he is third, only marginally down on Pogorelov. While he is well down on the best scores of his career, the second day still leaves him with a chance to challenge the lead.

Aleksey Drozdov of Russia is in fourth place after day one with 4175 points. Other men capable of significant moves forward on day two include Romain Barras, seventh after Saturday's events, and Belorussian number two Aleksandr Parkhomenka, 14th so far.

In the team event, Russia took the lead after the Long Jump and ran away from their competition. Their lead reached over 400 points at one point, but it was reduced to 275 points over Belarus at the end of the day. With the top Belorussians known for big day-two scores, the Russians may still have a battle on their hands. Ukraine is currently in third place, 379 points behind the leaders.

Pawel Jackowski for the IAAF

**European Cup Combined Events Superleague
Wieslaw Maniak Stadium
Szczecin, Poland**

Monday, 29 June 2009

Krauchanka and Melnychenko win European Cup Combined Events Super League titles



Andrei Krauchanka competing in Szczecin, Poland (Marek Biczuk)

Szczecin, Poland - Olympic silver medalist Andrei Krauchanka and Ukrainian Hanna Melnychenko were the individual winners at this year's edition of the European Cup Combined Events Super League in Szczecin (27 / 28 June).

The **European Cup Combined Events Superleague** is part of the **IAAF World Combined Events Challenge**.

Both scored come-from-behind victories, prevailing over their rivals only in the final races of the second day. Krauchanka, with 8336 points, finished 23 points ahead of the Russian Aleksandr Pogorelov in the Decathlon, while Melnychenko with 6380 points beat the Pole Kamila Chudzik by just two points in the Heptathlon.

In the team event, Russian men scored their first ever win, clearly beating Belarus, and the Polish women also lifted the European Cup for the first time after a close finish against Russia.

Decathlon

The day started with a lead of 112 points by Ukraine's Oleksiy Kasyanov, with Pogorelov and Krauchanka just 7 points apart in second and third. The Ukrainian maintained a big lead through the next two events with performances of 14.46 sec in the high hurdles and 49.95 in the discus throw, but that was as far as he could take it.

In the Pole Vault, Kasyanov was only able to clear 4.50m. Pogorelov, with a 5 metre clearance, made up the whole deficit and more, moving into a 41-point lead after eight events. Olympic runner-up Krauchanka, who had been well over 200 points behind after seven events, vaulted highest of all at 5.10 and moved to within 100 points of the new leader.

In the Javelin Throw, Pogorelov had another strong performance, reaching 63.37m. Krauchanka, however, wasn't too far behind at 61.56. The gap between them now grew to 126 points but with the Belarus athlete well known for his 1500m prowess, it could have been predicted that

Krauchanka's challenge was not yet over. Kasyanov predictably faded back in this event, as a best throw of just over 50 metres left him over 100 points off second place after nine events.

With Krauchanka needing to make up over 20 seconds in the final race, he was forced to run the 1500m hard all the way. This he did, staying near the front from the start, as Pogorelov was left behind near the back of the back. At the bell, the gap between the two grew to nearly 100 metres, and with a strong finish the Belarussian stretched it yet further, crossing the line in 4:32.60, over 24 seconds ahead of the Russian.

In his first Decathlon competition of the year, Krauchanka totalled a good 8336 points, 23 more than Pogorelov, also making his season debut. Kasyanov, who finished the 1500 metres ahead of Krauchanka, finished a creditable third with 8245, ahead of the Frenchman Romain Barras, who ran the fastest time of top individual contenders at 4:20.90 to finish on 8209 points. Back in fifth place, Vasiliy Kharlamov of Russia added nearly 400 points to his PB with a score of 8113, finishing just ahead of teammate Aleksey Drozdov's 8081.

In the men's team event, Russia started the second day with a lead, but with defending champions Belarus seemingly still in contention. This challenge, however, faded as the day progressed. Two events from the finish and with nearly 700 points ahead of Belarus, the Russian team could have started to celebrate their win. Even with a strong 1500 metre race, the Belarussians were not able to get near, finishing in runner-up position, 430 points adrift. The Ukrainian team, after a close battle for second in earlier events, fell back towards the end and barely defended their third place from an attack by the French team.

Heptathlon

The second day turned into a two-woman battle. Hanna Melnychenko started the day 50 points ahead of Kamila Chudzik, and she increased her lead further in the Long Jump. After a foul in the first round, she jumped 6.38m on her next attempt despite taking off some distance from the board. With Chudzik reaching 6.24, the gap between them grew to 95 points.

Right: Hannah Melnychenko (*Marek Biczynk*)



Chudzik's best event, though, was yet to come. Her javelin throwing skills did not let down as she won the sixth event with 52.13m, nearly 8 metres ahead of her Ukrainian rival. This put her into the lead by 57 points before the final event of the competition. With Melnychenko needing to make up some four seconds in the 800 metres, it was still anybody's guess who the winner would be.

For the first 500 metres of the final event, the 800m, it looked like Chudzik was controlling the situation, running just ahead of the Ukrainian. Then however, when Melnychenko attacked, she was unable to respond. The gap continued growing until the finish, but when the two rivals reached the finish, it was impossible to tell whether it was large enough for a reversal in the order of the first two. After anxious moments of waiting, the official results confirmed it was - just barely, with Melnychenko first with 6380 points, to 6378 for Chudzik, the second highest score of the Pole's career.

Karolina Tyminska, coming back from an injury, came through strongly in the final event as usual, winning the last heat by over five second with 2:08.16. This allowed her to climb to the lowest step on the podium with a score of 6191. Marina Goncharova was the only other athlete to break the 6000 point barrier, in fourth place with 6119.

In contrast to the men's team competition, the women's team event was a closely fought battle until the very end. The Polish team led at halfway, but with just over 60 points separating the top four teams, it was difficult to predict the winners. The Ukrainians took the lead after the long jump, but, as expected, fell well behind after the javelin throw. The Poles finished the penultimate event 147 points in the lead over Russia in the overall competition, but with the Russians expected to come through strongly in the final event, things could still have gone either way.

The Russians did gain ground in the 800 metre race, but it was not enough in the end. With Tyminska giving Poland extra points at the top end, the losses suffered by the other two Polish runners were not large enough for their rivals to come through. The host team held on for the win 58 points behind of Russia, with Ukraine third, and France, affected on the second day by an injury to their top athlete Antoinette Nana Djimou, finishing fourth.

Pawel Jackowski for the IAAF