

Thursday, 26 May 2011

## **World champions Hardee and Ennis top the bill in Götzis** **PREVIEW - IAAF Combined Events Challenge**

Götzis, Austria - The 37th edition of the **Hypo-Meeting** in Götzis in the Austrian region of Vorarlberg this weekend (28 / 29 May) will witness the traditional gathering of the best decathlon and heptathlon specialists in the world.

The Austrian leg of the **IAAF Combined Events Challenge** will feature reigning IAAF World champions Trey Hardee from the USA and Britain's Jessica Ennis.

### **Men's Decathlon**

Despite the withdrawal last week due to injury problems of reigning Olympic champion Bryan Clay (winner in Götzis last year and in 2006) and five-time Hypo Meeting champion Roman Sebrle (who famously broke the World record with 9026 points in this meet in 2001), the men's Decathlon still boasts a very strong field which lives up to the tradition of this meeting.

The field features 18 men with a PB of over 8000 points. Trey Hardee missed the win in the legendary Mösle Stadium by just six points after an exciting battle with German Michael Schrader in 2009 just three months before taking the World title in Berlin with 8790 points.

The US star, also a World Indoor silver medallist in the Heptathlon in Doha 2010 behind Bryan Clay, will be looking for his first Götzis title against a very strong Cuban challenge led by Leonel Suarez, World silver medallist in Berlin 2009, Olympic bronze medallist in Beijing 2008 and third in Götzis last year, Yordanis Garcia, eighth in Berlin 2009 and world seasonal leader with his recent 8397 points score set in Havana, and Yuniur Garcia, ninth in Berlin 2009 and second in this year's Havana meeting with 8053 points.

The USA will be also represented by Jake Arnold, who finished fourth in Götzis last year.

A strong Dutch squad will compete in the Mösle Stadium with credible ambitions to fight for the podium. The major hopes of the "Oranje team" will be carried by Eelco Sintnicolaas, who won the European silver medal in Barcelona. Sintnicolaas boasts a very solid 5.45m Pole Vault record and may attack the meeting record in this discipline which was set by former Olympic champion Erki Nool who cleared 5.55 in 2000. Sintnicolaas is particularly strong in the last three events and has the potential to fight for top positions until the end as he shown in Barcelona last year where he engaged a close battle with Frenchman Romain Barras missing the gold medal by just 17 points. Barras, second in Götzis in 2010, will miss this year's meeting after injury problems delayed his preparation.

Oleksiy Kasyanov from the Ukraine, European Indoor silver medallist in 2009, is often seen as one of the best first-day competitors (he led overnight last year in Götzis). This year he has focussed his preparation on improving his weakest events like the Pole Vault and the Javelin Throw and this may boost his chances to fight for the podium until the 1500 metres.

Other top names to watch closely will be 2009 European Indoor champion Mikk Pahapill (PB 8298 points) and Andres Raja (PB 8119 points) from Estonia, 2010 Commonwealth champion Jamie Adyeetey Nelson from Canada (PB 8239 points), Tomas Van der Plaetzen from Belgium, European Junior champion in Novi Sad 2009, South African Willem Cortzen (PB 8146 points and over 8000 points for the first time in his career in

Gotzis 2009), 2010 Commonwealth Games silver medallist Brent Newdick from New Zealand (PB 8091 points) and Darius Draudvila from Lithuania (sixth at the European Championships in Barcelona).

The German squad will be led by Pascal Berenbruch, sixth at the Berlin World Championships, Jan Felix Knobel, the 2008 World Junior champion, Norman Müller (PB 8295 points), and Rico Freimuth, the son of 1985 and 1988 Götzis winner Uwe Freimuth.

### **Women's Heptathlon**

In the women's Heptathlon Jessica Ennis will make her much-awaited start to the 2011 season after missing the European Indoor championships in Paris Bercy due to injury problems. Ennis won the Hypo meeting last year with 6689 points and then won the European outdoor gold medal in Barcelona with 6823 points adding it to the World outdoor title she achieved in Berlin 2009 and the World Indoor title from Doha 2010.

Last week Ennis got off to a flying start with a solid 12.88sec in the 100 metres Hurdles in Manchester against strong hurdles specialists.

In Götzis, Ennis will face tough opposition led by Nataliya Dobrynska of Ukraine who is the Beijing Olympic champion, and the 2010 World Indoor and Barcelona European Championships second-placer. Dobrynska, who won the Hypo-Meeting in 2009, will take part in this meeting for the seventh time in her career. Dobrynska set her PB of 6778 points last summer in Barcelona finishing runner-up behind Ennis, who missed Denise Lewis' British record by just eight points.

Russian Tatyana Chernova is another former Hypo-Meeting winner who will return to the Mösle Stadium. Chernova took the honours in 2008 just a few months before taking the Olympic bronze medal in Beijing. Chernova also finished third at the World Indoor Championships in Doha 2010 and fourth at the Barcelona European Championships and was crowned as the IAAF World Combined Events challenge winner.

The entire podium from last year's European Championships in Barcelona will be in Götzis. Besides Ennis and Dobrynska, there will be also Jennifer Oeser from Germany, who finished second in the 2009 Berlin World Championships and third in Barcelona with her PB of 6683 points.

Antoinette Nana Djimou from France won the European Indoor title last March in front of her home fans in Paris Bercy, will be another strong contender for the podium. The French heptathlete, who is coached by former decathlon star Sebastien Levicq, will be looking to improve her PB of 6323 points in her fifth participation in the Austrian meeting. She will renew her battle from Paris Bercy against Lithuanian 2004 Olympic silver medallist Austra Skujte, who made a strong comeback to combined events this winter by taking the European Indoor silver in Paris.

Not to write off will be Ghana's Margaret Simpson, who enjoyed a strong come-back with a solid win in Desenzano del Garda with 6270 points, Canadian Jessica Zelinka, fourth at the Beijing Olympic Games in Beijing 2008 and Lilli Schwarzkopf from Germany (European bronze medallist in Gothenburg 2006 and eighth in Beijing), who will return to Heptathlon competitions after focusing on her studies in 2010.

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