



79.77 by Kozmus Highlights Slovenia International League Kick-Off

12 May 2007 - Slovenska Bistrica, Slovenia - Primož Kozmus came tantalizingly close to the 80-metre barrier in the hammer throw to highlight the first leg of the second Slovenia International League in the north-central city of Slovenska Bistrica.

Competing in ideal conditions under warm sunny skies, the 27-year-old Kozmus produced a solid series, topped by a final round 79.99 throw, to move up a notch into fourth place on the early season world lists.

"I'm very satisfied," said Kozmus, a finalist at both the 2003 World Championships and 2004 Olympic Games. On the mend from a 2005 back surgery last season, Kozmus, who extended the national record to 81.21 in 2003, was seventh at the European Championships last season and finished eighth in the World Athletics Final.

"Of course, our goal is be among the world's best again this season. But I guess our 'secret' goal is a medal at the World Championships in Osaka."

Opening with a 77.90 throw in a three-man competition, he followed up with 79.11, 79.42, 77.98 and 66.57 efforts before his final throw. Currently in a cycle of heavy training, Kozmus won't compete again until the Slovenian Cup final on 9 June, where, he predicted, his national record will fall. "I know I'm capable of throwing much better."

Nina Kovacic produced the top performance on the women's side with her narrow 11.80 victory over Tina Murn. Quickest from the blocks, Kovacic held off the late race surge by Murn to win by just .03 seconds.

Martina Ratej of Šentjur won the javelin with a 53.67m throw, an effort well short of her 58.49 career best from a week ago which left her just 51 centimetres shy of the qualifying standard for August's World Championships.

"I'm disappointed," said the 25-year-old Ratej. "I was expecting a lot more."

With hometown athletics hero Miran Vodovnik, the national record holder in the shot put, sidelined with injury, the local spotlight fell on

sprinter/jumper Bostjan Fridrih, who didn't disappoint. Less than an hour after winning the 100m in 10.78, he took a win in the long jump as well with a 7.55 leap.

In Vodovnik's absence, Hamza Alic of Bosnia & Hercegovina moved up a spot from last year to win the shot put with a 19.22

Elsewhere, Nina Kokot from Velenje won the women's long jump with her 6.21m opening round leap. Each jump of her consistent series -6.16, 6.13 and 6.13- was farther than the best effort of Tina Carman, who finished runner-up with a 5.83 best.

Juniors Irena Avguštin (4:53.23) and Mitja Krevs (8:39.65) were the easy winner in the women's 1500m and men's 3000m respectively.

Croatia's Anita Banovic was also a double winner, first taking the 800 in 2:09.92 before doubling back to win the 400 in 54.29.

The ten-meeting series, created by the Slovenian Athletics Federation (AZS) to provide high quality domestic competition for Slovenian athletes, will provide a total prize jackpot of 25,000 euros, to be distributed among the top-10 male and female athletes at the conclusion of the series. The awards will be performance-based, with each athlete's top three performances from the series, based upon the Hungarian scoring tables, tallied.

The series continues in Nova Gorica on 30 May. For more information about the series, visit the Slovenian federation (ASZ) website at <http://www.atletiska-zveza.si>.

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