



Triple Jump Breakthrough - 14.92 National Record for Sestak in Ljubljana

3 June 2007 – Ljubljana, Slovenia - Marija Sestak produced a breakthrough 14.92 national record leap in the triple jump to highlight the Matic Sustersic and Patrik Svetan Memorial in Ljubljana, the third stop on the ten-meeting Slovenia Grand Prix.

Competing on her home track, the 28-year-old's third round effort crushed 2000 Olympian Anja Valant's Slovenian record of 14.69, a mark which would have celebrated its seventh anniversary tomorrow (4 June).

Opening with a 14.44 leap, Sestak improved to a near-PB 14.47 in the second round before the third round effort that landed her on the No. 2 spot on the yearly world list-- behind Yargelis Savigne's 14.99-- and squarely on the doorstep of the event's still-exclusive 15-meter club. After a fourth round 14.53, Sestak decided to call it a day. Going into today's competition, her career best was 14.53 from last year.

"I was expecting to jump maybe 14.50 or so, but not 14.92," said Sestak, whose leap electrified the near-capacity crowd in the Slovenian capital's athletics stadium. Being so close to the barrier, she said, "It's even a bigger motivation now to reach 15 metres. Maybe at the World Championships."

Her change of nationality last year from Serbia to Slovenia came too late for her to compete at last year's European Championships and this year's indoor edition in Birmingham, but Sestak, who is married to Slovenia's 400m record holder Matija Sestak, is clear to compete for her adopted nation this August in Osaka.

Brigita Langerholc achieved what she set out to do: break Jolanda Ceplak's decade-old national record in the 600m. As she stormed down the homestretch, there was little doubt that she would handily surpass Ceplak's 1:29.72 from 1997. She crossed the line in 1:25.84, well ahead of Croatians Vanja Perisic (1:26:57) and Anita Banovic (1:28.76), and easily the fastest in the world this year in the rarely contested event.

For the second straight year, European championships 100m bronze medallist Matic Osovnikar won the meeting's signature event, named to honor Slovenian sprinters

Sustersic and Svetan who were killed in an automobile accident two years ago this weekend. Osovnikar had little opposition en route to a comfortable 10.38 win.

20-year-old Hungarian Miklos Szebeny was a distant second in 10.52, but well ahead of Slovenia's current No. 2, Jan Zumer (10.63).

Nina Kolaric's decision to focus solely on the long jump this year is already paying dividends. The former multi-eventer won the horizontal jump with a personal best of 6.49 in the fifth round. She went nearly as far in the sixth, reaching 6.41, also beyond her previous career best of 6.36.

The men's shot put included a solid line-up and competition was fierce, but in the end none of the leading trio hit beyond the 20m mark. Luka Rujevic of Serbia came closest with his fourth round 19.90 effort, enough to overtake Slovenian national record holder Miro Vodovnik who reached 19.85 in round three. Hamza Alic of Bosnia was a distant third (19.33).

Pia Tajnikar won the women's 100m in 11.83, well ahead of indoor standout Nina Kovacic who faded in the final 25 meters to reach the line in 11.94, just ahead of Sabina Veit (11.96) and Maja Mihelinec (11.97).

Elsewhere, Danijela Grgic of Croatia, the reigning world junior champion at 400m, won her event in 53.25 after running down compatriot Anita Banovic (53.63) over the final 30 meters. Hungarian Krisztina Molnar took the women's pole vault with a 4.30 clearance, and Matija Kranjec won the javelin with a 71.85m toss.

The late afternoon main program was broadcast live on Slovenian national television, the first time a domestic track & field competition was telecast live since 1996. Two more meets in the series, Velenje on 28 June and the final in Celje on 13 September, will also be broadcast live.

The series continues next weekend at the National Cup competition in Celje.

Bob Ramsak (TRACK PROFILE Report).