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Birmingham hosts best ever indoor championships

When European Athletics President Hansjörg Wirz described the 29th European Athletics Indoor Championships as "the best ever" he was referring specifically to the organisation of the three-day event at Birmingham's National Indoor Arena. And in terms of atmosphere, organisation and presentation, they were clearly a great success.

By Matthew Brown (GBR)

But Wirz's words could also apply to the action on and around the track, for the quality of the competition and the standard of athletics was as good as at many of the previous 28 editions.

The statistics alone tell us that there were just three championship bests and no European or world records set in the three days of competition from 2 to 4 March, but the best of the 570 athletes from 45 countries who took part produced nine world-leading performances for 2007 plus another four marks to top the European rankings this year.

What's more, nine athletes who left Madrid two years ago with gold medals round their necks returned to successfully defend their titles, and six of the nine European outdoor champions from Gothenburg last summer who came to Birmingham left with an indoor gold to add to their collection.

But championship statistics only ever tell part of the story. As ever, the medal table shows Russia on top, with a total of 15 medals and a points score of 139. But the Russians left many of their big stars at home while the show's real stars came



from the host country and Sweden – a pair of nations whose athletics fortunes were epitomised by the epic struggle between Carolina Klüft and Kelly Sotherton in the pentathlon, the top event of the first day and, indeed, of the whole weekend.

That Klüft clung on to her title was fitting testimony to her supreme competitive instincts, yet Sotherton's determination to stretch her rival to the limit made for compelling sport. In the end, the two protagonists pushed each other and the rest of the field in to producing the highest quality pentathlon ever seen.

Klüft's total of 4944 was the third highest ever while Sotherton's



4927 smashed her own Commonwealth and UK records. Behind them, six women – more than ever before – gathered more than 4700 points each and there were national records for Karin Ruckstuhl of the Netherlands in third, Austra Skujyte of Lithuania in fourth, and Natalya Dobrynska of Ukraine in fifth.

Sotherton may have just missed the gold, but her efforts clearly inspired her team for the following afternoon Britain leapt to the top of the medal table.

First, Phillips Iduwu and Nathan Douglas, perhaps buoyed by the absence of Christian Olsson, put on a show of British triple jumping at its best.

Iduwu's winning 17.56m was a championship record and good enough for seventh on the European all-time list, while Douglas jumped to 17.47m and had three other efforts beyond 17 metres.

Then, Nicola Sanders stayed true to her promise in the women's 400m and simply blew away the opposition with a blistering victory in 50.02. It was nearly a full second faster than Ilona Usovich in second, the best ever run by a Briton, and slower only than three Britons have ever clocked outdoors.

The British party was rounded off the following day when Jason Gardener, the 31-year-old master of 60m sprinting, beat his young protégé Craig Pickering to win his fourth straight European indoor title, capping a remarkable recovery from early season injury and loss of form.

It wasn't all about the hosts, of course. Gardener's four-peat achievement may yet be equalled by the ever-smiling Belgian, Kim Gevaert, who took her third successive women's 60m gold in 7.12 despite "messing up" her start.

Roman Sebrle became another three-timer when he retained his heptathlon title, shaking off January's nasty javelin wound to his shoulder that might not only have put him out of the championships, but finished his career or even his life. Sebrle's total of 6196 was not only the best in the world this year but the 17th time he has exceeded 6000 in his career.

Lidia Chojecka was the star of the middle distances as she won both the 1500m and 3000m, a unique double for these championships for men or women. The Pole, who sprinted clear to win both races with ease, thus brought her tally of European indoor medals to five.

Susanna Kallur, with victory in the 60m hurdles, and Stefan Holm, who won gold in the high jump, ensured Sweden didn't miss Olsson or Kajsa Bergqvist too much.

Their three golds were matched by Italy, a nation seemingly inspired by Andrew Howe's long jumping into unexpected

European Indoor Champions 2007			
	Men	Women	
	Jason Gardner (GBR)	60 m	Kim Gevaert (BEL)
	David Gillick (IRL)	400m	Nicola Sanders (GBR)
	Ornoud Okken (NED)	800m	Okasana Zbrozhek (RUS)
	Juan Carlos Higuero (ESP)	1500m	Lidia Chojecka (POL)
	Cosimo Caliandro (ITA)	3000m	Lidia Chojecka (POL)
	Gregory Sedoc (NED)	60 m H	Susanne Kallur (SWE)
	Stefan Holm (SWE)	High Jump	Tia Hellebaut (BEL)
	Danny Ecker (GER)	Pole Vault	Svetlana Feofanova (RUS)
	Andrew Howe (ITA)	Long Jump	Naide Gomes (POR)
	Mikulas Konopka (SVK)	Shot	Assunta Legnante (ITA)
	Roman Sebrle (CZE)	Heptathlon/Pentathlon	Carlina Klufft (SWE)
	Robert Tobin, Dale Garland, Philip Taylor, Stephen Green (GBR)	4 x 400m	Yuyana Yuschanke, Iryna Khliustava, Sviatlana Usovch, Ilona Usovich (BLR)

success. Meanwhile, among Spain's tally of nine medals was a clean sweep of the men's 1500m, only the fifth ever in European indoor history. Alongside Iduwu's triple jump, were two other championships records in the women's 4x400m relay – where Belarus outran Russia to win in 3:27.83 – and in the women's high jump, where the unchallenged Tia Hellebaut enjoyed a pressure-less victory to sail magnificently over 2.05m, the fourth best indoor leap of all time.

Britain's great championships were rounded off in the final event, the men's 4x400m, where they picked up a fourth gold medal when Germany was disqualified for pushing on the last leg. For the hosts it was a fitting end, although Hellebaut best summed up the general feeling as three days of indoor action came to a close:

"The track was fast, the stadium and surroundings were fantastic, and the crowd created a great atmosphere," she said.

Next stop Torino, 2009.

Winds of change in Cannes

The winds of change were blowing strong at the 20th European Athletics Congress, held in Cannes on 14 April 2007. Delegates from the 50 Member Federations elected ten new members, including two new vice presidents, to the 17 strong council and then overwhelmingly supported plans put forward by President Hansjörg Wirz, to overhaul the sport's competition programme in the future.

In the elections Spain's Jose Luis de Carlos and Norwegian Sven Arne Hansen were elected to the positions of vice president, while Portugal's Jorge Salcedo, topped the poll in the Council elections.

Former Olympic triple jump champion Jonathan Edwards, of Great Britain and former European 1,500m champion, Franco Arese, from Italy, were both elected to their first terms on the Council.

The other new members of the council are Bulgarian Dobromir Karamarinov, Antti Pihlakoski, Finland, Toralf Nilsson, Sweden, Frank Hensel, Germany, Salih Munir Yaras, Turkey, Vadim Zelichenok, Russia, and Sylvia Barlag, from the Netherlands.

Treasurer Karel Pilny, from Czech Republic retained his seat unopposed while Salcedo, Ludmila Olijar from Latvia, Slovenian Janez Alancic and Philippe Lamblin, from the host nation, all retained their seats for the next four years.

Christian Milz, Director General of European Athletics said, "European society has changed dramatically over the past number of years and athletics must adapt to these changes in order to maintain its position as the number one Olympic sport."

"We have said good bye to a number of faithful servants of European Athletics but I am confident that the right mix of experience and youth, which forms the new council, will ensure a successful future for the sport in Europe"

In the Competition Committee Italian, Anna Ricardi, Czech Republics Libor Varhanik, Serbian, Ivica Matijevic and Jean-Pierre Schoebel from Monaco took the four available seats while former Olympic Decathlon champion Erki Nool, Estonia, Jean Gracia from France, Nick Davis from Ireland and Ihor Hotsul from Ukraine took the seats on the Development Committee.



President Hansjörg Wirz, pictured with the Council and IAAF President Lamine Diack at the impressive Royal Casino Hotel in Cannes.

The Congress also gave its support for President Hansjörg Wirz's proposal, to overhaul the competition structure.

With this, the Council was given a strong mandate to continue the development and expansion of the competition structure, which, subject to approval from the various stakeholders, will mean an outdoor European Athletics Championships, taking place on even years, starting in 2012, at the earliest.

The added European Athletics Championship would take place at the same time as the US Olympic trials, and would contain all standard stadium events.

The championships would take place over five days and among the added innovations would be that qualification could be achieved by the normal qualification process, but, also, by performances and positions achieved in specific meetings.

The specific details will be finalised and publicised in the future, after negotiations conclude with the European Broadcasting Union, the biggest financial partner of European Athletics, along with further consultation with the relevant stakeholders about the format, and satisfactory financial analysis on the proposed developments.

Speaking about the rationale behind the proposal Wirz explained "In the six months from August 2006 to March 2007 we organised both the European Athletics Championships in Gothenburg and the European Athletics Indoor Championships in Birmingham"

"However, from March 2007 until July 2010 we will only organise the European Athletics Indoor Championships in Turin in March 2009 and this is not an ideal situation from all points of view" he added.

Congress also approved the introduction of a European Athletics Team Championships to replace the current European Cup, which will be expanded into a 12-team competition and will include a number of exciting innovations, to make the event more appealing to a wider audience.

The next Congress will take place in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 2009, while the Calander Conference in 2008 and 2009 will take place in Amsterdam, Netherlands and Miskolc, Hungary, respectively.

Honorary membership of European Athletics was bestowed upon retiring Council Members Erika Strasser (Austria), Giorgios Constantopolous (Greece), John Lister (Great Britain), Valentin Balakhnichev (Russia) and Irena Szewinska of Poland and the Athletics Federation of Montenegro was officially ratified as the 50th Member Federation of European Athletics and was therefore entitled to full voting powers in the elections.

European Athletics is in a very strong position

Pierce O’Callaghan, Communication Manager of European Athletics, talks to newly re-elected European Athletics President Hansjörg Wirz.

First of all, congratulations on your election for a third term as President of European Athletics. What do you see as the biggest challenges facing European Athletics under your Presidency over the next four years?

Hansjörg Wirz: “European Athletics is in a very strong position as evidenced by the success of both the European Athletics Championships in Gothenburg last summer and the European Athletics Indoor Championships in Birmingham in March. These events were superbly organised, integrated into the host cities, and had full stadia for practically the entire duration of both championships. For the next four years, the challenge is to raise the bar further! Our organisation has been seen for some time as mainly a major events organiser. However in recent years, we took a good look at ourselves and redefined the organisation as having two pillars of activity: one, dealing with high performance and top class European-wide competition and the other, dealing with health, youth obesity and the changes in activity levels in society. For the first pillar, I would like to make our competition system more exciting, more integrated and more understandable, for the general public and I am planning on doing this with the help of our large number of stakeholders. For the second pillar, I would like to see our sport better integrated with the needs of modern society and more interaction with an ever-changing and more demanding youth market.”

You achieved widespread support for your competition restructuring proposals at the Congress in Cannes. In an ideal world, how would like to see the European Athletics competition landscape look at the end of your four year term?

“Well, the first thing I would like to say is that unfortunately we don’t live in an ideal world! There are a number of changes to the competition system that

I believe would make the sport more prominent in Europe and more relevant to a larger number of people. The first improvement is, of course, an additional European Athletics Championship, taking place, at the earliest, in 2012. The second improvement I would like to see is the change in structure from the European Cup to the European Athletics Team Championship, starting at the earliest in 2009. Along with this, as things currently stand, the one day meetings, while successful in their own right and important for the economy of the sport, currently bear no relation to each other and seem to happen haphazardly throughout the summer, without any link or consequence to the next meeting. My vision, in an ideal world, would be for countries to have their own national programme, which would then lead on to a regional programme, with matches, being the first level of a series of international meetings together with neighbouring countries. From this, and when athletes have reached the required level, the next stage should be two levels of European Athletics Permit Meetings, followed by the IAAF world meetings. The final level in the structure, and of course linked to all the previous stages, is the major championships, which have the most value and recognition among the general public. In this way, the calendar could be set up in a more constructive manner, without conflicts of interest, while protecting the concerns of all the different stakeholders.”

What needs to be done to control and eradicate the doping problem in athletics?

“The first thing, which I feel is very important to state, is that the sport is gaining more credibility for itself among the general public. There is an extensive anti-doping programme at work in Europe and it’s a fact that the vast majority of athletes are not involved in any doping activities. Additionally, we have recently set up a Medical and Anti Doping Commission,



who have worked hard to integrate the Anti Doping activities into our competition system and not just using it as an isolated control system. We have spent a huge amount of money on blood profiling of athletes, meaning that any noticeable changes in their blood profiles, will, in the future, result in suspension from competition until the reasons for the irregularity are clarified. The goal here, is to come to a stage where we are able to identify and recognise all irregularities on an athletes’ career path. We are also putting a lot of effort into the education side of anti doping, and, as part of our partnership with UNESCO, we are organising a number of workshops over the summer at the European Athletics Junior and U23 championships in Hengelo and Debrecen respectively.”

What are the main changes in the proposed European Athletics Team Championships which are due to commence in 2009?

“The first thing to understand is that this new format will not just be more of the same, with a different name. Of course athletics, in the main, is an individual sport, but the team element can make the sport more rewarding for the athletes and more exciting for the spectators. We have carried out a lot of research in this area and have found there is a strong link between the national flag and the athlete and this competition will play a role in increasing this. I always like to use the metaphor of my vision

Council make historic decision on Anti-Doping

for this event with that of a basketball match. In basketball, teams score points and at a certain time in the match one team is leading the other. However the lead can change any number of times before the result is finally known. For the Team Championships, points for the team will be more important and valuable than the winning time and distances. With the team scores having a combined men's and women's element, I can envisage the lead changing hands on a number of occasions before the final result is known. Of course, how we present the competition will be crucial. The Team Championships will also have more countries involved than the eight currently involved in the European Cup, so it will be more relevant and more interesting to a larger group of people and will still benefit all the Member Federations in Europe."

The European Athletics Championships in an Olympic year has a large value to European athletes. What do you see as this value?

"The European Athletics Championships every four years has huge value to everyone, of that there is no doubt. However, the feedback we have been getting back from the athletes, Member Federations, sponsors and other stakeholders is that they want more opportunities to compete at European level. We have been looking at this situation for some time and have tried to fit it into an already packed schedule, which is not easy. However, we feel that the additional championships, will not only create champions in that year, with all the benefits associated with this, but taking place at an opportune time before the Olympic Games, they will also play an important part on the journey of athletes towards the Olympics. The success of the European Championships shows just how attractive the sport is in Europe and it makes total sense to increase the number of opportunities available to athletes in Europe to compete at that level."

European Athletics has declared that athletes from European countries, sanctioned for major doping offences will be subject to new competition entry regulations for future major championships, which will include missing the European Athletics Championships, after the completion of their suspension under IAAF anti-doping rules.

At its meeting in Birmingham on 5 March, the European Athletics Council decided to impose a minimum two-year period of ineligibility from all European Championships, to begin on the day a suspended athlete is cleared to compete by the IAAF after a doping suspension. Under the regulation, which applies to any current suspension as well as to offences committed in the future, athletes will not be prevented from taking part in international invitational or national level competitions.

European Athletics President Hansjörg Wirz said, "The Council has unanimously decided that competing in our championships represents a special privilege and that we must not allow the negative notoriety of the small number of athletes who cheat to spoil the experience or distract attention from those who follow the rules."

"Our message is very clear and we will do what it takes to ensure the credibility of the sport and protect the health of athletes and young people" said Wirz.

"This is an historic decision for us," he added "and we will propose to the IAAF Congress in Osaka in August that it take a similar position with regard to future IAAF championships."



Getting to know the new Council

The 20th European Athletics Congress in Cannes in April was historic in many ways and saw 10 new members elected to the Council. Pierce O'Callaghan summarises the background of the new Council.



President:
HANSJÖRG WIRZ (SUI)

Hansjörg Wirz is a 64-year-old native of Switzerland and was first elected to the Council at the Congress in Estoril, Portugal, in 1991, before being elected Treasurer in 1995 and President in 1999. Vastly experienced in all aspects of the sport, he is a former Olympic 400m hurdler and came 4th in the European Athletics Championships in Athens in 1969. He was Meeting Director of the world famous Weltklasse in Zurich from 2000-2006 and has filled numerous roles within the Olympic movement in Switzerland. He is married to Trudie and has two children.



1st Vice President:
JOSE LUIS DE CARLOS (ESP)

Jose Luis de Carlos was first elected to the Council in 1999 and has filled many valuable roles within the European Athletics movement ever since. Widely respected as one of the most knowledgeable and experienced members of the athletics family, Jose Luis began officiating at athletics events as a 23-year-old and joined the Spanish Federation as assistant to the Technical Secretary in 1976 before rising to become General Secretary in 1989, a position he still holds today. He has been a very effective Chairman of the European Athletics Competition Committee since 1999.



Vice President
SVEIN ARNE HANSEN (NOR)

Svein Arne Hansen has been at the forefront of Norwegian Athletics for most of his life and has been Meeting Director of the world renowned Bislett Games Golden League in Oslo for over 20 years overseeing its growth into one of the top one day meetings in the world. The 61-year-old Oslo native has also made a significant contribution to the sport at IAAF level, serving on the IAAF Grand Prix Commission for 12 years as that area of the sport was transformed into a fully professional entity. He was President of Euro Meetings from 1998 until last year and his election as Vice President in Cannes marks his first term on the Council.



Council members



Treasurer:
KAREL PILNY (CZE)

When Karel Pilny was first elected President of the Czech Athletics Federation, the 1st IAAF World Championships had yet to take place in Helsinki in 1983! Karel has given an enormous contribution to both Czech and European Athletics on a voluntary level and has managed to combine all these commitments with a very successful business in Prague. He made his debut on the Council in 1995 and was elected Treasurer in 1999, a position he will hold until at least 2011. He is an active member of the Czech Olympic Committee and a member of the bidding committee for the 2016 Olympics in Prague. He is married to Jirina and has two children.



JANEZ ALJANCIC (SLO)

Janez Aljancic is one of the longest serving members of the Council having first been elected in 1995. A vastly experienced administrator, Janez has served in multiple roles both in his native Slovenia and at European level. An architect by trade, he spent over 20 years in the planning of sports facilities in Slovenia as well as lecturing the subject to University students. He has served as either President or Vice president of his national federation since 1992 and is a former National Steeplechase champion.



FRANCO ARESE (ITA)

Franco is another debutant on this Council having only taken over the Presidency of the Italian Federation in 2004, receiving over 95% of the vote in that election. A former European Champion over 1,500m in 1971, he is a double Olympian and has won 12 Italian championships and set 18 Italian records. Such was his range of ability over the distances, that in 1971, he held the Italian records from 800m up to and including 10,000m, all at the same time. A very successful business man Franco founded the world famous Asics Italia in 1982 and has held the post of President ever since.



Director General:
CHRISITAN MILZ (SUI)

Christian Milz was appointed Director General of European Athletics in 2005 and is employed to lead, manage and co-ordinate the operational activities of European Athletics at the headquarters in Lausanne. A former footballer and skiing instructor, Christian is vastly experienced in the sports world having been International Vice President of the famous International Management Group in Switzerland (IMG), overseeing the organisation of numerous World Championship events in skiing, equestrian, rowing and golf. Still active, he competes in mass participation running events and is married with two children, with a third expected on the same weekend as the SPAR European Cup in Munich.



JONATHAN EDWARDS (GBR)

Jonathan Edwards needs very little introduction to anyone who has an interest in sport over the past 15 years. The consummate major championship performer, Jonathan made his breakthrough at the 1993 World Championships by taking Triple Jump bronze, before going on to gain numerous world records, world titles and finally Olympic gold in Sydney 2000. He successfully made the transition from the sport to business and is currently a member of the Board London 2012, a commentator with BBC and a consultant with Sports Communications firm VERO in London. He lives in Newcastle with his wife Allison and young sons Samuel and Nathan.



FRANK HENSEL (GER)

Frank, is the current General Secretary of the German Athletics Federation and a former German international in the decathlon and bobsleigh. With a background in coaching, Frank was a former coach for the Berlin Athletics Association as well as a one year stint as coach of the Iranian national team. Very experienced at all levels of the sport, Frank has been a member of the teaching staff of IAAF since 1988, German Hurdles coach from 1986-91 and a Sport Director of the German federation from 1994-99 as well as being part of the successful bidding team which won Berlin the IAAF World Athletics Championships in 2009. He currently holds the position of Deputy Chairman of the LOC of the IAAF World Athletics final in Stuttgart.

Council members



SYLIVA BARLAG (NED)

Sylvia, a former top class multi-talented sports woman is an Olympic combined events athlete and a former Dutch International basketball player. Gaining election at her first attempt for the Council in Cannes, Sylvia is a very experienced business professional, who lived in Switzerland, France and Germany for many years before returning to her native Holland. Currently an international Director of Quality and Business Improvement in the radar business, Sylvia is still an active cross country runner and golfer.



PHILIPPE LAMBLIN (FRA)

Philippe, one of the senior members of the Council, was first elected in 1995 in his home city of Paris. A Human Resources Director by profession, Philippe has been a tireless worker for both French and European Athletics and has been Meeting Director of an IAAF Meeting in Liévin since 1988 and a European Athletics Permit Meeting in Lille. He was President of the French federation from 1997-2001 and President of the LOC for the World Championships in Paris 2003. He received the ultimate accolade earlier this year, when French President Jacques Chirac, decorated him with the l'Ordre de la Légion d'Honneur, the highest award in French society, for services to sport.



TORALF NILSSON (SWE)

Toralf has a huge passion for the sport and has played a leading role within athletics in his native Sweden ever since he founded and coached an athletics club at the tender age of 13! Very experienced within a number of positions in the sport, Toralf has served as a Marketing Manager, Coach, Sports Director and Project Manager before he really made a name for himself as General Secretary of the best ever European Athletics Championships in Gothenburg last year. A former national level athlete, after seven years on the west coast of Sweden, he will return to Stockholm, in August, with his wife Anna, ironically, where the IAAF was founded in 1912. In spite of this, however, Toralf is the first Swede to be elected as a member of the Council.



DOBROMIR KARAMARINOV (BUL)

The first Bulgarian to sit on the Council since 1975, Dobromir was elected at his first attempt in Cannes. Like President Wirz, he is a former 400m Hurdler and has won numerous Bulgarian and Balkan titles. When his athletics career finished, he quickly transferred the skills he learnt on the track to coaching, to become National Coach in Bulgaria from 1991-94, before taking over the post of General Secretary of the federation for 10 years. Currently the President of the Bulgarian federation, Dobromir is a vastly experienced and much valued new member of the Council.



**ANTTI PIHLAKOSKI (FIN)**

Antti, another debutant on the Council this year and brings a wealth of experience from the pinnacle of what has been regularly described as the biggest athletics nation in the world. After a successful career in business, he began working with the Finnish federation as a Marketing Manager in 1990, before being promoted to General Secretary 2 years later. During his ten years in this position, he oversaw the successful organisation of the European Athletics Championships in Helsinki in 1994 and the successful bid for the IAAF World Championships in 2005, before taking on the role of CEO of the LOC, a role he carried out with great energy and enthusiasm. In spite of some inclement weather, the championships were a big success and he has since been made President of the federation in Finland.

**JORGE SALCEDO (POR)**

To describe Jorge, as having athletics running through his veins would probably be a gross understatement! First elected to the Council in 1991, Jorge is the longest serving member of the Council along with President Hansjörg Wirz. Currently serving as chairman of the IAAF Technical Committee, Jorge is widely regarded as one of the most knowledgeable technical officials in the world as can be seen from his appointment to over 100 European Athletics and IAAF Meetings as Technical Delegate. He has been General Secretary of the Portuguese Federation since 1996 and has been awarded the highest honours by both the Portuguese Government and IAAF for services to the sport.

**LUDMILA OLIJAR (LAT)**

A former International sprint hurdler who has the rare distinction of representing Latvia, Russia and the Soviet Union, Ludmilla, was the first Latvian to be elected to the Council and is now on her second term. Vastly experienced in a number of roles within the sport, Ludmila was Meeting Director of a European Athletics Permit Meeting in Riga 1996-2002 and more prominently is coach to her son Stanislav, who struck gold in the 110m Hurdles at the European Athletics Championships in Gothenburg last year. She has been a board member of the Latvian Federation since 2005.

**VADIM ZELICHENOK (RUS)**

Vadim, is another debutant on the Council and brings a wealth of experience from what is arguably accepted as the strongest and most successful athletics nation in the world. A former General Secretary of the All Russia Athletics Federation, Vadim spent seven years as National Junior Coach before being promoted to the senior post. In 1998, he was appointed Director of the IAAF Regional Development Centre in Moscow and has been awarded Merited Coach in the USSR and Russia.

**SALIH MÛNİR YARAS (TUR)**

Munir created a piece of history in Cannes when he became the first Turk to be elected to the Council. A former Turkish champion race walker, Munir has played a leading role in bringing major athletics events to Turkey and has successfully organised events of the calibre of the European Cup 10,000m, the European Cup Winter Throwing, the European Champion Clubs Cup, and the European Cup First and Second League in his native Istanbul. An event organiser by profession, Munir is a member of the IAAF Cross Country and Road Committee and is a current Vice President of the Turkish Federation.

SPAR International extends European Athletics sponsorship until 2011

European Athletics and SPAR International are pleased to announce that the world's largest voluntary food retail chain has extended its commitment to athletics for a further four year period, until the end of 2011.



SPAR International has been the principal sponsor of European Athletics since 1996.

The new contract will commence on January 1 2008 and run until the end of 2011, incorporating the following European Athletics events:

- European Athletics Championships 2010.
- European Athletics Indoor Championships 2009 and 2011.
- SPAR European Cup annually.
- SPAR European Cross Country Championships annually.
- European Athletics Indoor Cup 2008 and 2010.

Hansjörg Wirz, President of European Athletics, said, "We are delighted that SPAR will continue as our main partner. We have enjoyed a very co-operative and mutually beneficial relationship for more than 11 years and the company's continued support will help us realise our ambitious plans to restructure our competition programme and increase participation in the sport."

Dr. Gordon Campbell, SPAR International Managing Director, speaking at the 52nd SPAR International Congress in Amsterdam in May, said:

"The European Athletics Championship events deliver a very cost effective, high level of brand exposure. It associates the SPAR brand with energetic, healthy and high achieving young people. It enables SPAR to build on the sponsorship with support for national and local athletics events. We look forward especially to the next championships in Barcelona in 2010 and all of the events in the European Athletics programme."

This sponsorship also included last year's European Athletics Championships in Gothenburg, which was seen on television by nearly a billion people throughout the world, as well as the same event in Budapest (1998) and Munich (2002).

In addition, SPAR is the title sponsor of two annual events: the SPAR European Cup and the SPAR European Cross Country Championships.

Christian Milz, Director General of European Athletics welcomed the news saying:

"This announcement by SPAR to renew with us is a real boost at the start of the next four years of activities from 2008-2011. We have ambitious plans for the future regarding the two pillars of European Athletics, both on the major events side and the education, youth, development

and mass participation side. We also believe we add significant value to our partners and I look forward to helping SPAR achieve their goals, through athletics, for the next four years."

Dr. Campbell added "European Athletics events play a major role in building the SPAR brand worldwide. The spectacular success of last summer's European Athletics Championships in Gothenburg was a key factor in our decision to continue through to 2011."



European Athletics signs Swedish merchandising company

An agreement has been reached with Swedish merchandising company, NeH Svenska AB, to become the official distributor and licensee of European Athletics.

Commenting on the new arrangement, Peter Holm, Managing Director and owner of NeH, said "We are delighted with this agreement and look forward to working with such an innovative and leading sports organisation like European Athletics, representing one of the major and most traditional sports in Europe. The brand-focused approach of European Athletics will be key in the success of this joint project."



Director General Christian Milz pictured with Peter Holm, Managing Director of NeH.

Under the terms of the agreement, merchandise and souvenir products for European Athletics and 17 European Athletics events until the end of 2011, including the European Athletics Championships 2010 in Barcelona and the European Athletics Indoor Championships 2009 (Turin) and 2011 (venue still to be confirmed) will be produced and marketed by NeH Svenska AB.

The agreement includes internet, retail and event sales and marks the start of the first-ever merchandising agreement within European Athletics.

Christian Milz, Director General of European Athletics said "NeH has already been a partner for the European Athletics Championships in Gothenburg last year and based on this highly successful experience, we have decided to create the first merchandising and licence agreement in the history of our organisation. It fits well with our new strategy of expanding the scope of our sports beyond the gates of the stadium and widens the service we can offer to our fans, sponsors, partners and member federations."

In addition to this, the agreement will be aligned with the values of the organisation and a delighted Christian Milz added that "this gives us another opportunity to communicate the positive values of our sport to the millions of active athletes and fans in Europe by integrating our key messages into the collection."

European Athlete of the Month



In January 2007, European Athletics launched an initiative to honour the European Athlete of the Month, for both men and women. At the end of each month, a panel of experts produce a shortlist of the outstanding athletes and performances achieved by European Athletes during that month which is e-mailed to the European Athletics media and thousands of fans who have already signed up to receive news from European

Athletics. Voting takes place on a website poll, which is situated in the Fan Zone of the European Athletics website. The public, the media and a group of experts all then vote, with each category counting as 33.3% of the final scores.

The response from the Athletics public in Europe has been staggering, with over 70,000 votes already registered for the monthly awards.

Previous winners

May 07	Halil Akkas	TUR	Tatyana Lysenko	RUS
Apr 07	Viktor Roethlin	SUI	Elvan Abeylegesse	TUR
Mar 07	Jason Gardener	GBR	Naide Gomes	POR
Feb 07	David Gillick	IRL	Yelena Isinbayeva	RUS
Jan 07	Ivan Ukhov	RUS	Susanna Kallur	SWE



World Pole Vault record holder Yelena Isinbayeva won the February Athlete of the Month award.

Taking on the challenge of the “Tyranny of the screen”

A lot of water had gone under the bridge since December last, including, most importantly, the fantastic European Athletics Indoor Championships in Birmingham in March.

The championships had everything that is good about our sport, tight contests, drama, excitement, a full stadium and a great atmosphere. Great Britain, Italy and the Netherlands emerged on top of the medal table and will now be looking to build on that over the outdoor season.

The summer ahead will be full of action, starting with the European Cup weekend in the middle of June and the European Athletics U23 and Junior Championships in Debrecen and Hengelo respectively, in July. The season's highlight for many, will be the IAAF World Championships in Athletics in Osaka and, like you, I will be cheering for European athletes in every event.

Off the track, things have never been busier. In April, we had a very successful Congress in Cannes where crucial decisions were made about the future of the sport in Europe. There were a number of changes on the Council, which are covered elsewhere in this newsletter. Indeed, change is quite rightly the prevailing word in the association at the moment.

The new Council, meeting in Frankfurt in early June, adopted a new strategy that redefined the activities of the association into two pillars. The first pillar focuses on the organisation of major events and high performance athletics and the second one, focuses on the changes in society, mass participation and well being, youth and lack of activity among the general public.

Of course, the association has always tended to be focussed on the first pillar and here the challenge is to improve the competition system and the presentation of our events, in order to make them more relevant and interesting and more appealing to the younger audiences.

We are excited at the possibility of what the European Athletics Team Championships

Since I last wrote a piece for Update in December, as part of our new communication strategy, we have decided to publish two bigger 16 page issues in June and December each year to coincide with the SPAR European Cup and SPAR European Cross Country Championships so I hope you will enjoy this new edition.

will bring, when it replaces what is now the European Cup. With more teams, exciting new innovations in event presentation and combined men and women's team scoring, I think it will very soon find itself a central place in the season for all the top European athletes.

The additional European Athletics Championships, which will take place two years after Barcelona 2010, at the earliest, will also prove immensely attractive to European athletes, the member federations and judging from the television viewing figures from Gothenburg last year, the sports public in Europe.

Our sponsors welcome our ambitious plans to change the landscape of the competition structure and it was a great boost to the sport when SPAR signed an agreement to renew with us for another four-year period. This partnership has been in existence since 1996 and will mean 15 years of mutual success when this term ends in four years time.

We have also changed the way we approach the LOC's of our events with regard to their marketing rights. In the past, European Athletics has held the rights for the numerous categories of sponsorship. Now, we are proposing a much closer collaboration with a share of income between LOC and European Athletics. This proposal offers access for each LOC to all sponsorship categories and extended rights and gives the opportunity to secure important financial means for the organisation of the event.

Finally, we are nearing the conclusion of negotiations with a number of other partners and I look forward to bringing you news of successful negotiations in the near future.

The message from the sponsors is clear to us. If we can adopt to the competition restructure endorsed by Congress, our sport has huge potential to be attractive, exciting, youthful, energetic and a very successful way for business to communicate and connect with their customers.

The second pillar of course is a lot more challenging and is currently on the agenda of most governments in Europe. In many European countries, we are finding what various experts refer to as the “tyranny of the screen”. Our once active youth are now tending to spend over 20 hours a week in front of a screen, which is leading to severe problems with obesity and an inactive, sedentary life.

Whether it is instant messaging, video games, the PC and TV, these 20 hours, were once devoted to sport and physical activity. The



dilemma our sport is now facing, is that it is very popular and yet the participation in general is in decline.

Of course it is a massive challenge, but it is one that is there for all of us, from the local athletics club to national federations and the IAAF, to face up to and adapt our strategies towards.

The IAAF Congress elections in August will be very important to see as many European candidates as possible make it onto the council and various committees, to ensure our messages are heard at the highest level. Although Europe has 50 Member Federations, this is only 25% of the IAAF membership and it will be crucial to vote as a unified block to ensure maximum European representation at the highest level.

Finally, I would like to wish the best of success to all our stakeholders for the summer and I look forward to meeting you at a European Athletics event soon!

Grants and seminars for 2007, changes for 2008

Announcing details of European Athletics' development activities for 2007, President Hansjörg Wirz underlined one of the main messages he delivered to the European Athletics Congress in April, saying that activities to attract more participants in the sport would be given increased emphasis from 2008.

By **Bill Glad, European Athletics Member Services Manager**

"For 2007 we will make grants as normal through the European Athletics Support Programme and have our strongest programme of educational measures ever," said Wirz, "but during the year the Development Committee and Council will be looking closely at all development activities to see how we might restructure them to best support our new strategy."

Over 170,000 CHF in grants from the 2007 European Athletics Support Programme has been approved by the Development Committee for 15 projects. The projects to be supported include training camps in Croatia, Slovenia and Liechtenstein; athlete service programmes in Ireland and San Marino; activities to attract young athletes in Denmark and Serbia; and coach education measures in Moldova and Malta.

The topics for the four European Athletics seminars currently being planned are "New Leaders of Member Federations", "One-day Meeting Management", "Strategic Communications" and "European Union Funding Programmes".

According to Wirz, the activities in 2007 will help the Member Federations strengthen their own programmes as well as the knowledge and skills of key personnel.

"However, our long-term aim is to move European Athletics beyond being primarily an event organiser," he explained, "we want to develop a second pillar of activity that builds on our values and our network of federations and clubs to actively engage more people, especially young people, in the sport."

"Athletics has a lot to offer society in areas such as a healthy lifestyle and the fight against obesity on the one hand and education and character-building on the other. Helping our federations and new partners to deliver programmes in these and other areas will build the European Athletics brand by raising our profile and increasing the sport's participant base."

Wirz said that the ideas for 2008 and beyond will be elaborated further when he attends the newly appointed European Athletics Development Committee's first meeting, which will take place in the autumn.

Education Programme 2007

Member Federation leaders should get out their calendars, open their diaries or click on their Outlook programs and take note. European Athletics is planning to stage the following four seminars for key personnel in the second half of 2007:

New Leaders of Member Federations:

Lausanne, Switzerland – 4 October

Organisation and Presentation of One-day Meetings

Venue to be announced – 27-28 October

EU Funding Programmes

Venue and date to be announced

Strategic Communications for Member Federations

Nymburk, Czech Republic - 1-2 December

Notification and invitations will be sent to the federations as the seminars are confirmed. Further information will be posted in the Development section of www.european-athletics.org.

European Cup 10000m Ferrara

Wins for Abeylegesse and Pollmaecher

Favourite Elvan Abeylegesse from Turkey and rank outsider André Pollmächer from Germany took the honours at the European Cup 10,000 metres in Ferrara held in warm and windy conditions on April 7.

Strong Spanish squads clinched team wins ahead of host nation Italy in both the men and women's team competitions.

Abeylegesse bounced back from her disappointment at the World Cross Country Championships in Mombasa where she finished a distant 28th in hot and humid conditions.

The Turkish star, who held the 5000 metres world record until June 2006 with 14:24.68, has become the first woman in this event to notch up a second consecutive win with a commanding victory in 31:25.15.

Spain lifted the women's team trophy with a final time of 1:39:02 with Rosa Morato, the first first individual Spaniard home in fifth place, ahead of Italy (1:39.40).

The men's race produced a big surprise with André Pollmächer producing an impressive victory in 28:17.17 over Austrian 3000 metres steeplechase champion Günther Weidlinger, after a dramatic sprint in the final 200 metres. Spain took the third place on the podium defending its strong reputation in this event thanks to Carlos Castillejo.

The Spaniards won their sixth men's team title beating Italy (1:26.55 to 1:27.44) with Portugal clinching third place.

Results

Men:

1	Andreas Pollmächer (GER)	28:17.17
2	Gunther Weidlinger (AUT)	28:19.11
3	Carlos Castilljo (Spain)	28:32.70

Team results:

1	Spain	1:26.65
2	Italy	1:27:44
3	Portugal	1:27.48

Women:

1	Elvan Abeylegesse (TUR)	31:25.15
2	Tetyana Holovchenko (UKR)	31:59.98
3	Nathalie De Vos (BEL)	32:07.62

Team results:

1	Spain	1:39.02
2	Italy	1:39.40

European Cup Winter Throwing Yalta / UKR

Russia and Germany take team titles

A record number of 203 athletes from 26 countries competed in the seventh edition of the European Cup Winter Throwing which took place in Yalta, Ukraine on March 17-18.

Team results
 (4 competitors per 4 events, calculated based on IAAF scoring tables).

Senior Teams
Men: 1. RUS 4287, 2. BLR 4256, 3. UKR 4081
Women: 1. GER 4406, 2. ITA 4132, 3. BLR 4032, 4. RUS 4000

U23 teams
Men: 1. RUS 3984, 2. UKR 3979, 3. GER 3759
Women: 1. RUS 3806, 2. GER 3758, 3. BLR 3756

A total of four world leading performances, by Germans Franka Dietzsch (66.14m in the Discus) and Stefi Nerius (63.14m in the Javelin) Estonian Gerd Kanter (65.43 in the men's Discus) and Slovenian Primož Kozmus (77.90m in the Hammer) made for a great weekend of throwing.

Gerd Kanter, the World and European silver medallist, won a heated duel in the Discus with Poland's Piotr Malachowski while in the men's Shot Put there was joy for the home crowd, as 2004 Olympic champion Yuriy Bilonog, took gold in 19.95m.

In the women's Hammer, an event billed as one of the highlights of the weekend, French record holder Manuela Montebrun had a shock win over European champion and World record holder Tatyana Lysenko (RUS). Montebrun, throwing 72.65m, took the title by over 60cm from the Russian, who suffered a rare defeat.



Stefi Nerius (GER)

The Team honours went to the Russian men and German women to end a spectacular weekend of throwing on the Black Sea in Ukraine.

7th European Cup Race Walking Royal Leamington Spa / GBR

Diniz smashes French record in Leamington Spa

A new French 20km Walk record for Yohan Diniz was the highlight of the 7th European Cup Race Walking held in ideal conditions in Royal Leamington Spa Great Britain on May 20.

In cool but bright conditions, Diniz dominated the top class field, beating Italian Olympic champion Ivano Brugnetti into second place.

In the women's 20km, Belarussian, Rita Turava, added the European Cup title to the title she won in Gothenburg last summer with an equally decisive victory.

Eschewing her regular tactic of dominating from the start, Turava played a waiting game, staying with the pack until the final few kilometres, eventually winning by a 21 second margin in 1:27:52.

The 50km showed that supreme speed endurance, and lessons learned from experience, will outmatch plain endurance as Russia's Vladimir Kanaykin claimed a last gasp win in the Men's 50km.



Yohan Diniz (FRA)

Having held back his natural inclination to push the pace, staying in the second group early on, Kanaykin produced a decisive turn of speed in the late stages of the race, timing it right to take the lead over eventual silver medallist Trond Nymark (NOR) in the 46th kilometre.

Individual results:

20km Men

1	Yohann Diniz FRA	1:18:58
2	Ivano Brugnetti ITA	1:19:36
3	Igor Yerokhin RUS	1:20:09

50km Men

1	Vladimir Kanaykin RUS	3:40:57
2	Trond Nymark NOR	3:41:31
3	Oleg Kistkin RUS	3:41:51

20km Women

1	Ryta Turava BLR	1:27:52
2	Olga Kaniskina RUS	1:28:13
3	Alena Ginko BLR	1:28:29

Team results:

Men 20km		Men 50km	
1	BLR 29	1	RUS 8
2	ITA 32	2	ESP) 23
3	ESP 39	3	FRA 43

Women 20km		Junior men 10km	
1	BLR 16	1	RUS 4
2	RUS 18	2	ESP 6
3	ESP 25	3	FRA 25

Junior women 10km

1	RUS 3
2	ROM 9
3	UKR 20

Russia's women to keep on running in Munich

Phil Minshull looks at one of the most remarkable winning streaks in international sport, the Russian women's dominance of the SPAR European Cup.



Russia's women's team will be bidding for their 11th consecutive SPAR European Cup title when the event returns to the German city of Munich on June 23-24 after a decade of being contested around the rest of Europe.

Having extended their back-to-back victories into double figures last year, there are few pundits who expect the streak to end in the same arena where it started back in 1997.

At the time of writing entries have not been confirmed but Russia's women notched up a staggering 11 gold medals at last summer's European Athletics Championships, exactly half of those on offer, and a good number of the Gothenburg individual champions are likely to be in Munich.

Hammer world record holder and reigning European champion Tatyana Lysenko set a Cup record of 76.50m in Malaga last year, one of 11 Russian victories over the two days in southern Spain, and this year's event has been in her agenda ever since.

"There is a very good spirit among the Russian women. We want to keep on winning the Cup for as long as possible. For me, I'd like to compete in Munich in the European Cup as women's hammer history has been made there," said Lysenko.

"The last time the event took place in Munich was in 1997 and my fellow Russian Olga Kuzenkova produced two world records. They were the first official throws over 70 metres so it was very significant. I wasn't even a teenager then so I can't recall where I was at the time but I've since heard a lot about those throws. She herself has mentioned them to me".

Last year, Russia won by a massive 43.5 points, a total only once surpassed, ahead of surprise package Poland. This time around though it may be hosts Germany who are the Russian women's nearest rivals.

The German women have risen to the challenge on the three occasions they have staged the SPAR European Cup since the west and eastern parts of the country were fused together again.

Helped by memorable victories by legends Heike Drechsler and Ilke Wyludda in the long jump and discus respectively, Germany won in Frankfurt in 1991. They then finished second behind Russia in 1997 and 2001, with Bremen being the venue on the latter occasion.

If recent history is a guide, the men's contest in Munich is sure to be a much closer affair than the women's competition. France won by just two points from Russia last year.

"It will be a major task to defend our trophy but pride won it here and if we can get a team together like this again then I am sure we will have a chance," said France's Marc Raquil after winning the 400m and then anchoring France to victory in the 4x400m relay to clinch his country's second Cup win.

Once again, France's main opponents look set to be Russia, whose men in 2006 achieved their best performance since the days when they competed as part of the Soviet Union, and hosts Germany.

However, former champions Great Britain and Poland may also be able to put together strong enough teams to have a chance of challenging for the Cup.

The emphasis of the SPAR European Cup is on teams but there are also the Athlete of the SPAR European Cup awards, which recognise individual contributions beyond the call of duty.

"The award was introduced in 2005 to demonstrate how much each performance – whether first, fourth or seventh – can be a significant element in a team's success," says European Athletics President Hansjörg Wirz.

Last year's winners were the Ukraine's Ivan Heshko and Poland's Barbara Madejczyk.

Heshko won his specialist 1500m and then just narrowly lost out in the 800m to score 17 points, which proved crucial in ensuring that the Ukraine men maintained their place in the SPAR European Cup, while Madejczyk broke her own national javelin record by over a metre with a throw of 64.08 to make a vital contribution to her team's finishing second and qualifying for the IAAF World Cup for the first time.

Phil Minshull

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IMPRESSUM

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Gardener looking for summer success



By Phil Minshull

Jason Gardener won his fourth successive 60m gold medal at the European Athletics Indoor Championships in March, bringing the crowd at the National Indoor Arena in Birmingham to its feet in praise of a spectacular home success. The venue in England's Midlands has been a talisman for Gardener, who also won the 2003 world indoor 60m title there, and he has now set his sights on similar solo success outdoors.

Gardener memorably won an Olympic gold medal in 2004 as the lead-off man for Britain's 4x100m team and he has two relay medals from World Championships in his collection but not since he took the 100m silver medal at the 1994 World Junior Championships has he stood on a podium after an individual event at a global championships.

This summer though, all that could change.

"My priority is to make the World Championships team as an individual, make it through to the final in Osaka and certainly go for a podium finish," said Gardener earlier this month.

"I said I wanted to be very competitive at the European indoors and I wanted to run very fast, and if I did that I would continue to the summer," added Gardener, who admitted he would have contemplated retirement if he had not done well in Birmingham.

"I've had a pretty good career but I don't want to just make up the numbers, I've still got high expectations. I want to be the best and I set myself targets. If I don't hit them then I will certainly be looking to do other things."

"The 100m is an event where I have struggled in the past. I have managed to come in the top 10 and make finals but I don't want to just make up a team," reflected Gardener, who is one of only five European sprinters to break the 10 seconds barrier in the blue riband event.

Gardener, known in British athletics circles as the Bath Bullet, a nickname

British sprinter Jason Gardener was deservedly voted European Athlete of the Month in March but he wants to shrug off the mantle of being best known as an indoor performer.



Britain's Jason Gardener after winning his fourth European Indoor 60m title in Birmingham.

derived from his home town in the west of England, currently stands fourth on the European 100m all-time list with his personal best of 9.98 set in 1999.

His coach, Malcolm Arnold, who formerly guided the career of hurdling legend and European 110m hurdles record holder Colin Jackson, also believes Gardener still has untapped potential outdoors and has urged him to continue until at least the Olympic Games next year in Beijing.

One of the first steps on the long road to Japan and China for Gardener is expected to be the SPAR European Cup in Munich on June 22-23. Although he has competed in the event on four occasions in the past, it is expected he will only contest the 4x100m relay in Munich.

If he isn't following in the footsteps of former European record holder Linford Christie, who won the SPAR European Cup 100m on an unprecedented eight consecutive occasions between 1987 and

1997, then the honour of representing Britain in the 100m could go to his young training partner Craig Pickering, the reigning European Athletics junior 100m champion.

Gardener believes working alongside Pickering - who joined Arnold's group in September 2005 in a bid to hold his own in the senior ranks after victory in Kaunas - has been a revitalising experience. "Craig has provided me an 'extra ingredient' in training."

It is also possible that when Gardener finally does decide to hang up his spikes then a partnership with Pickering will continue in one form or another, despite the fact that he has the pleasant distraction of two young children at home.

"I've come through the system and have been very fortunate to achieve some wonderful experiences. It is only right I'm able to help these talented athletes. Coaching is certainly something I will consider."

"It would be wonderful to work with talented athletes like Craig and maybe to be an understudy to Malcolm Arnold, just to extract the information which has made him a highly successful coach," commented Gardener, with another glance into a slightly hazy crystal ball.