

Bekele's 12:49.60 Replaces Geb As WR Holder

The morning of the Norwich Union indoor in Birmingham, world 10K champ Kenenisa Bekele said, "If I try hard enough I can break the record tonight."

In only his second indoor race ever, the 21-year-old Ethiopian would shoot for the 5000 standard of 12:50.38 set on the same track by mentor Haile Gebrselassie in '99.

Geb was in the meet here, but opted for the 2M, leading much of the race before being surprised by the kick of 19-year-old countryman Markos Geneti, 8:08.39-8:08.65. Bekele would contend with yet another teammate, Dejene Berhanu, as well as Kenya's Luke Kipkosgei.

Cruising past 3km in 7:47, Bekele then assumed command. After another kilometer, his 10:18 split was some 3 seconds ahead of Geb's record tempo. But at the bell (12:21), Bekele had fallen behind record pace.

Wild cheering from the crowd—especially the vociferous Ethiopian contingent—helped lift Bekele, and his 27.06 final circuit brought him home just under Geb's mark at 12:49.60.

His effort cut Bekele's career best from a 12:52.26 outdoors last year and made him history's No. 5 performer under any conditions. Although finishing well back, Berhanu (13:11.47) moved to No. 5 all-time indoors while Kipkosgei (13:19.30) claimed the No. 7 spot.

"I had to run more than half the race on my own, which was very hard," said Bekele. "I don't know where the strength came from on the last lap, but the crowd was fantastic."

Bekele picked up a \$30,000 record bonus, but insisted he won't run the World Indoors two weeks hence. Rather he wants to try to win a third straight double at the World Cross Country later in March.

the comebacking Lawrence (7.32).

"I was much happier with my start, but the turnover wasn't there today," assessed Jones. "This is a work in progress and I ran faster than in my first race [7.21]. By the time Athens comes around, I'll be ready to run fast."

Gevaert, who had rolled her car the previous weekend, was thrilled with her victory. "I'm so excited to beat Marion because to me she is such a big example. It just seems weird, almost surreal, that I was ahead. But I kept calm."

Kilo AR For Toomey

A kilometer clash in Birmingham between training partners Maria Mutola and Kelly Holmes got physical with half a lap to go.

Holmes led at the bell (2:02.15) and Mutola closed down the last backstretch. Last year's Athlete Of The Year clipped Holmes's heel and went down as the Briton survived to win in a European Record 2:32.96, moving to No. 2 all-time.

Surprising Jen

Toomey (see p. 11) followed Holmes at 2:34.19 to slice the American Record down from the 2:35.29 claimed by Regina Jacobs in '00. Toomey's clocking moved

her to No. 4 on the all-time world list.

Ukrainian 1500 runner Ivan Heshko has the year's two fastest 1500s, 3:35.15 in Karlsruhe and 3:35.40 in Birmingham. The latter beat the seasonal best 3:35.83 for '01 World Indoor champ Rui Silva of Portugal.

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Q&A With The World's Leading Triple Jumper, Christian Olsson

by Jonas Hedman

Christian Olsson was the undisputed triple jumper of '03, winning 21 of his 23 meets including world titles indoors and out and the GP Final. The 24-year-old Swede only lost twice (both indoors), with 15 straight wins. His average result during the summer was 57-4^{1/2} (17.49) and his average winning margin was a hefty 19^{1/4} inches (49cm).

Phenomenally consistent, Olsson has a technique so stable that during the summer of '03 he had 52 of his 75 jumps beyond 17m (55-9^{1/4}). Early reports for '04 are that he's even better.

It's February and it's snowy and slippery in Stockholm as a car travels from downtown to the airport. In the back seat another double world champion, Carolina Klüft, is talking on her cell phone as Olsson explains his success:

Olsson set a record by beating the 17m (55-9^{1/4}) barrier in 23 meets in '03

Q: How can you be so consistent?

A: I execute every jump pretty much the same way and that's why my technique has become stable. That gives me the opportunity to focus on small technical things during competition. My goal with every jump is to really finish it with a good landing.

Q: Could you describe your jumping technique and how you and coach [Yannick] Tregaro have developed it.

A: I am a speed jumper, like Jonathan Edwards, which means I try to bring as much speed as possible to the board and then keep it through all three steps. Compare that to a power jumper who generates speed in every step. We took Edwards' jumping technique from '95 as a model and then modified it to fit me.

I try to float over the board and jump pretty high on the first jump, then a more flat second jump and finally a regular long jump into the pit. My longest third jump is 6.55 [21-6] which can be compared with Edwards' 7.01 [23-0] when he jumped 18.29 [the WR 60-^{1/4}]. But I had a better second jump and that's the hard one.

Q: You have an unusual double arm movement just before the board. How come?

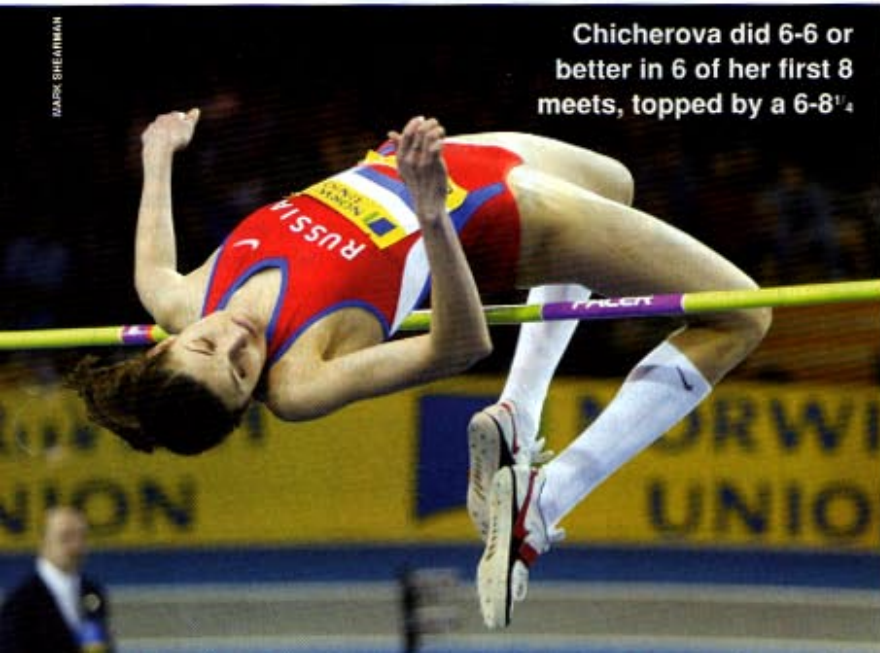
A: That's from the high jump and all multi-step training. I do exactly the same thing during the last two steps in the high jump. First we thought it was a negative thing because there is a small margin to maintaining balance, but I have adjusted it and now I do this arm movement so quickly that I don't think it affects my technique.

Q: Do you think you have the capacity to jump over 18m

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'02 European Indoor champion, got a rocket start. The 25-year-old Belgian, was never headed and won in an NR 7.13. Jones got close to finish 0.03 back, with fellow American Angela Daigle (7.27) 3rd ahead of Block (7.31) and

Chicherova did 6-6 or better in 6 of her first 8 meets, topped by a 6-8^{1/4}



Christian Olsson

[59-2³/₄] during the indoor season?

A: Yes, I think so; that's the feeling I have. Maybe not as far as 18.29 but 18.05-18.10 [59-2³/₄/59-4³/₄] is definitely realistic. My training has gone very well so far.

Q: What is it in your jumping that you need to improve in order to reach the World Record?

A: I have improved my strength this year—I have more muscle power. Last year I was jumping on the maximum of my physical strength but this year I am stronger and I think that will help me jump further. I am also faster on the runway and in general.

Q: How do you approach an Olympic season in which you are such an overwhelming favorite? Do you train as hard as you normally would or proceed more cautiously to ensure you stay healthy because in this case it looks like the gold medal is yours for the taking.

A: I gave all I had in all the 2003 competitions and I think that's the reason why I could keep such a high level. I will do the same thing this year and I think you have to do that in order to develop yourself. I am training harder than last year and I think I can reach an even higher level this summer. I don't think that will lead to a higher risk of injury.

Q: You haven't really left the high jump and last summer you jumped 2.28 [7-5³/₄]. If you win the gold in Athens, will you then also focus on high jumping in future championships?

A: That's just speculation. Since we already have two good high jumpers in Sweden—and a third guy coming—it's not even sure I would qualify. I also feel that I have so much more to give in the triple jump and I want to continue to focus on that event.

I will never leave the triple jump but I might give the high jump

more attention in the future. If that happens there will be a good opportunity in 2006 when the European Championships will be held in my hometown.

It would be great to get two opportunities to stand on the runway in a championship on my home turf!

Q: How much high jump do you practice?

A: Almost none. I know the high jump technique very well so that's no problem but since I don't train for the event regularly I am not stable in my technique. I don't have that special

feeling. I start the high jump training 1¹/₂-2 weeks before the meet. During 2004 I will not compete in the high jump because I don't want to risk anything before the Olympics.

Q: You represent the same club as former high jump World Record holder Patrik Sjöberg and in September you beat his club record in the long jump. Do you think you have the capacity to better his club record in the high jump too if you would focus on that event?

A: No, 2.42 [7-11¹/₄] is still the European Record and I have lost too much time in order to be able to jump that high. If I focus on the high jump I will look at 2.30-2.35 [7-6³/₄/7-8¹/₂] and then train as hard as possible.

Q: What was the largest difference to switch from the very experienced coach Viljo Nousiainen to your training buddy Yannick Tregaro?

A: Since Yannick is only two years older than me, I guess it was the fact that we were at the same point in our lives, we had the same problems. Yannick didn't change a lot in my training; he has specified training programs and the same training philosophy as Viljo. Yannick also has the same pedagogic talent as Viljo.

Q: You have been living in Monaco since November 2002 but you have your coach in Göteborg. How is that working?

A: It was a new thing for me to move to Monaco. I had to take care of myself and push myself during my training sessions. I live with my girlfriend and she's helping me with training things I can't do alone; for example, throwing the medicine ball back.

I see Yannick during the training camps: Cyprus last spring with the national teams in track & field and swimming, 3¹/₂ weeks in South Africa in December/January and in the coming spring we will be in Italy. It's not an optimal solution to have your coach in another country but it's working and I don't think it has been worse not having Yannick close to me every day.

Q: Could you describe a typical day in Monaco in November?

A: I put in a maximum of 10 training ses-

MARK SHEARMAN



When officials put the tape to Olsson's jumps these days, more often than not he's somewhere past 56.

sions a week and when I have two the same day I get up around 9:00 a.m. I am at the arena at around 11:00 and then practice for 1¹/₂-2 hours and then have lunch at home. At 5:00 I am back again for another two hours. Then we have dinner, at home or at a restaurant. Between the training sessions I focus on resting.

Q: Which triple jumpers do you hang around with during the competitions?

A: Walter Davis, Kenta Bell and Leevan Sands from the Bahamas.

Q: Have you ever competed in the U.S.?

A: No, only in Canada. I have talked about it with my American friends but I need at least three meets if it's going to be worth the trip. Besides that, there are so many good meets in Europe.

Q: What are your interests besides track & field?

A: I am crazy about cars [drives a Volvo S60], I read magazines and so on. I also kill brain cells with TV games, especially sport games like NHL and tennis. My favorite is the Tiger Woods golf game. I also like to listen to hip-hop and rap. My girlfriend is also one of my biggest interests!

"I also kill brain cells with TV games"

Olsson Facts

•Personal: born Göteborg, Sweden, 1/25/80, 6-3³/₄/161 (1.92/73)

•PRs: TJ—58-4³/₄ (17.80) '02, 58-9³/₄ w (17.92) '03; HJ—7-6³/₄ (2.28) '03; LJ—25-3¹/₂ (7.71) '02, 25-8³/₄ w (7.84) '03

•Numbers: PR makes him No. 2 ever indoors, No. 12 in/out; holds records for most 17.00/55-9³/₄ meets in a year (23 in '03) and most 17.25/56-7³/₄ meets in a year (16 in '02 and '03)

•Club: Örgryte IS; original coach Viljo Nousiainen, now Yannick Tregaro

•Major Meets: WC—1)'03, 2)'01; WIC—1)'03; OG—dnq)'00; EJr—2/1HJ)'99

•World Rankings: No. 1 in '03, No. 2s in '01 & '02