

Benita crosses the line a happy victor in the 5km Frehofer's Run for Women. Photo by Victor Sailer



The track season in the northern hemisphere is really starting to take shape with major meets and competitions being held in Europe and America.

5km Frehofer's Run for Women, New York, June 3rd

NINE Olympians hit the start line for the 28th year of the Frehofer's Run in Albany. After a great performance at the World Cross Country Championships earlier in the year, Dutch athlete Lorna Kiplagat was dubbed pre-race favourite. But with torrential rain lashing the area, any chance of breaking the Leghzaoui-held course record was forgotten.

In typical fashion, Kiplagat charged to the front automatically. Within the first kilometer she had opened up a 10m lead, with only Australian Benita Johnson offering a challenge. A chase pack developed after the first mile, featuring Kenyans Lineth Chepkirui and Sally Barosio, and Poland's Dorota Guca.

But it was Ukrainian Natalya Berkut who managed to chase the leading two, tacking onto the lead of Kiplagat and Johnson. The three ran the majority of the race as one, until Kiplagat surprisingly began to fall behind. Johnson and Berkut took advantage of her fade to lead into the final stages.

With the finish line in sight, Johnson stepped up a gear to surge through for the win (15.27). Berkut managed to hold on for second (15.29) with Kiplagat coming in third (15.47).

Prefontaine Classic, Oregon, USA, May 28th

THE Prefontaine Classic in Oregon saw Bernard Lagat take on Bahrain's World Champion, Rashid Ramzi, in the 1500m. Earlier in May at the Adidas Track Classic, Ramzi claimed victory over Lagat by half a second, claiming the US All-comers record previously held by Seb Coe.

Lagat saw the Classic as a chance for redemption, but found himself shadowing Kenya's Daniel Komen in the final lap of the mile. He managed to find something extra and powered away in the homestretch, smiling broadly and raising his right hand as he crossed the finish line in 3:51.53. Kenyan, Alex Kipchirchir, snuck through for second in at 3:51.71, with Komen third in 3:52.84. The only possible downside to Lagat's victory was that he failed to threaten the meet record of 3:49.92, set in 2004 by the recently-retired Hicham El Guerrouj.

In the women's 1500m, two-time defending World Champion, Tomashova, made a similar final surge to win in 4:01.81 over Maryam Jamal of Bahrain (4:02.55) and Ethiopia's Galeta Burka (4:02.68). Australia's own Sarah Jamieson was fourth in 4:03.13 in a race that featured the quickest four performances of 2006.

The men's two mile saw Kenyan Benjamin Limo (8:10.59) defeat compatriot and 2005 Personating winner Eliud Kipchoge (8:12.29). Adam Goucher finished third in 8:12.73, moving into third on the all-time U.S. list. Much of the pre-race hype focused around American Allan Webb, but he faded badly during the second mile to finish well down on the finish list.

Hometown favourite, Maria Mutola of Mozambique, won a battle with Kenia Sinclair of Jamaica and American Hazel Clark to take out the women's 800m in 1:58.86 for her 14th consecutive win at 'Pre'. Sinclair was second in 1:59.00 with Clark third in 1:59.10.

Hayward Field has been a special place for 33-year-old Mutola, who lived and trained in the Eugene area for nearly a decade.

Golden Spike, Ostrava, Czech Republic, May 30th

RUNNERS have often lost races when they begin their celebrations early, and this was well-demonstrated at the Golden Spike meet in Ostrava.

The men's steeplechase saw Kenyan Paul Koech and Moroccan Abdelkader Hachlaf make an amateur mistake that cost them any chance of winning the event. Koech and Hachlaf apparently didn't notice that the final lap was signaled one lap too soon at a split of 6:10. The Kenyan went on to what he thought was victory, raising his arms as he crossed the line. Hachlaf, along with a few others, stopped as well. By the time they realised their misjudgment, Austrian Gunther Weidlinger and

Vincent Le Dauphin of France had already zoomed by on their way to a most unlikely 1-2 finish.

The Austrian crossed the real finish in 8:25.67, more than four seconds clear of the Frenchman. Hachlaf regrouped enough to still finish third in 8:33.03, while Koech was later disqualified for running around a barrier after coming to grips with his confusion.

Despite the chaos that surrounded the steeplechase, the race was outdone by the men's 3000m. Joseph Ebuya and Tariku Bekele were neck and neck on the final lap when 18-year-old Ebuya kicked past. Raising his arms in winning joy and slowing down to a walk finish, Ebuya made the mistake of thinking the start point at the 200m mark doubled as the finish line. Bekele forged on to win the race in 7:36.44, with a devastated Ebuya left to settle for second (7:38.12).

Going into the women's steeplechase event, Commonwealth champion Dorcus Inzikuru was clear favourite and a major meet attraction. But the inaugural world title holder was relegated to a mere spectator after a hamstring strain forced her out of the race. In her absence, Russian Tatyana Petrova claimed a commanding win in 9:29.84, almost 10 seconds ahead of compatriot Svetlana Ivanova (9:39.48). Australian Victoria Mitchell ran an impressive race to take third in 9:39.61.

The women's 3000m saw Kenyan Priscah Jeplating out-duel Ethiopia's Meselech Melkamu. After trading the lead over the last lap, the Kenyan won in a world-leading time of 8:40.55, with Melkamu settling for an 8:40.99 second place.

Exxon Mobil Bislett Games, Oslo, June 2nd

OPENING night of the 2006 IAAF Golden League saw some world leading performances and the defeat of World recorder Kenenisa Bekele over 5000m.

Ethiopia's Tirunesh Dibaba tore away to record the fastest time of the season with a dominating performance in the women's 5000m. The race passed through 3000m in 8:43.18 with Dibaba doing some of the front running. By the time the bell was reached (13:33) Kenyan Edith Masai had been forcing the pace for the last two laps. But that's when the Ethiopian World 5000m and 10,000m Champion pounced. Dibaba's sudden attack (57.98 final 400m) left her older sister Ejegayehu and Masai surprised, with the former giving

the best pursuit.

Crossing the line, Tirunesh was a dominant winner in 14:30.40, a personal best; her sister was next in 14:33.53. Masai, who ran a 2.30 marathon recently, came home third in 14:33.84, to improve her own Kenyan record. In all there were personal best times for eight of the top nine finishers in a remarkably high class race.

The men's 5000m shaped for a close race, with world record holder, Ethiopian Kenenisa Bekele, taking on younger brother Tariku and Kenyans Isaac Songok and Mike Kigen.

Tariku Bekele led his older brother through 3000m (7:49.70) and 4000m (10:27.18). But the Ethiopian World and Olympic 10,000m champion who sprinted away with 400m to go, was caught on the final bend by Kenyan Isaac Songok, whose turn of speed left the 2004 and 2005 World Athlete of the Year heavy legged. Songok, 22, won in 12:55.79 – the fastest time yet this season – with Kenenisa Bekele second (12:58.22) holding off Mike Kigen of Kenya (third, 12:58.58). The next two home also dipped under 13 minutes – Edwin Soi (12:59.45) and Abreham Cherkos (12:59.53) – both running personal bests.

This was a magnificent display of finishing speed by Songok, who had trailed home a well beat-

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Mohammed Al Azzimi of Kuwait in the 800m at the Bislett Games. Getty Images.



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en second to Bekele in the World Cross Country Championships short course race in Fukuoka, Japan. It is a rare racing occurrence when the 23-year-old Ethiopia looks anything less than godlike, but it was distinctly Songok's finish of the two which was heavenly inspired on this night.

Mohammad Alazemi of Kuwait, the fastest 800m runner so far this year thanks to his surprise 1.44.80 run in the 'B' race in Doha last month, improved to 1.44.59, a personal best, in a tight finish with Latvia's Dmitrijs Milkevics (1.44.65). The effort left the Kuwaiti sprawling on the ground as he dived to take the two lap win in a national record.

The Exxon Mobil Dream Mile which closed the track program, also brought another sea-

son's best. Alex Kipchirchir of Kenya, who went through 1500m in 3.34.1, ran across the finish line in 3.50.32, pursued strongly by the habitually late-finisher Ukrainian Ivan Heshko, the World Indoor Champion, who crossed in 3.50.89.

Reebok Grand Prix, New York City, USA, June 3rd

BAHRAIN'S Rashid Ramzi ran away with the men's mile winning in 3.53.55. Following a brisk early pace the field quickly strung out and left only Commonwealth Games medalists Nick Willis (New Zealand) and Australia's Mark Fountain in contact with the World Champion.

When Fountain tumbled in front of Willis at

the beginning of the final lap ending his own race, Ramie's victory was essentially sealed. Willis would carry on to finished second a full two seconds down, with American Anthony Famiglietti taking third.

Kenya's Abraham Chebii stuck to a pack of six runners in the men's 5000m and pulled away in the last 200m to win in 13.04.56, setting a new US all-comers record for the distance. Chebii, who already owns the 10000m all-comers record from 2002, took just over a second off Moroccan Said Aouita's 13.05.59 from the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

The leaders passed through the first 1000m in 2.34.11 before relaxing. However, the tempo still remained upbeat and the bell was still reached with 12.10.1 on the clock. Chebii then delivered a 54 second final lap for the victory.

INTERNATIONAL RESULTS

Prefontaine Classic

Men's Mile

1. Bernard Lagat	3.51.51
2. Alex Kipchirchir	3.51.71
3. Rashid Ramzi	3.52.39
4. Daniel Komen	3.52.84
5. Elkanah Angwenyi	3.53.95
6. Chris Lukezic	3.54.46
7. Cornelius Chirchir	3.56.36
8. Mo Farah	3.58.36
9. Jon Rankin	3.58.76
10. Rob Myers	4.00.36

Men's 2-mile

1. Ben Limo	8.10.59
2. Eliud Kipchoge	8.12.29
3. Adam Goucher	8.12.73
4. Daniel Lincoln	8.13.70
5. Abreham Feleke	8.16.07
6. Matt Tegenkamp	8.16.50
7. Abraham Chebii	8.18.06
8. Boaz Cheboiywo	8.19.44
9. Jonathon Riley	8.24.28
10. Patrick Langat	8.26.96

Women's 800m

1. Maria Mutola	1.58.86
2. Kenia Sinclair	1.59.00
3. Hazel Clark	1.59.10
4. Liu Oing	2.00.33
5. Alice Schmidt	2.00.81
6. Diane Cummins	2.01.65
7. Marian Burnett	2.01.94
8. Neisha Bernard-Thomas	2.02.25
9. Francis Santin	2.02.98

Women's 1500m

1. Tatyana Tomashova	4.01.81
2. Maryam Jamal	4.02.55
3. Geleta Burka	4.02.68
4. Sarah Jamieson	4.03.13
5. Hind Dehiba	4.04.36
6. Treniere Clement	4.04.40
7. Mestawet Tadesse	4.04.61
8. Christin Wurth-Thomas	4.05.00
9. Kara Goucher	4.07.50
10. Tiffany McWilliams	4.07.52

Golden Spike, Ostrava

Men's 3000m Steeplechase

1. Gunther Weidlinger	8.25.67
2. Vincent le Dauphin	8.29.43
3. Abdelkader Hachlaf	8.33.03
4. Michael Kipyego	8.36.43
5. Julius Nyamu	8.39.49
6. Krijn van Koolwijk	8.40.41
7. Jukka Keskisalo	8.41.08
8. Collins Ngeno	8.41.16
9. Jermaine Mays	8.43.74
10. Richard Matelong	8.49.13

Men's 3000m

1. Tariku Bekele	7.36.44
2. Joseph Ebuya	7.38.12
3. Hicham Bellani	7.38.70
4. Khalid El Amri	7.40.91
5. Yusuf Biwott	7.41.71
6. Boniface Songok	7.42.98
7. Peter Kamais	7.44.26
8. Shadrack Korir	7.47.24
9. Edwin Soi	7.48.78
10. Mark Bett	7.48.83

Women's 3000m Steeplechase

1. Tatyana Petrova	9.29.84
2. Svetlana Ivanova	9.38.48
3. Victoria Mitchell	9.39.61
4. Salome Chepchumba	9.40.63
5. Gladys Kipkemboi	9.48.05
6. Ida Nilsson	9.48.42
7. Cristina Casandra	9.48.88
8. Yamina Bouchaouante	9.50.80
9. Irini Kokkinariou	9.55.82
10. Barbora Kuncova	10.20.66

Women's 3000m

1. Priscila Jepleting	8.40.55
2. Meselech Melkamu	8.40.99
3. Pauline Korikwiani	8.42.38
4. Mariem Alaoui Selsouli	8.49.15
5. Bouchra Chaabi	8.49.90
6. Justyna Lesman	8.56.56
7. Krisztina Papp	8.57.47
8. Helen Clitheroe	8.58.64
9. Yimer Wude Ayalew	9.02.35
10. Nouria Merah-Benida	9.25.61

Exxon Mobil Bislett Games

Women's 5000m

1. Tirunesh Dibaba	14.30.40
2. Eiegayehu Dibaba	14.33.52
3. Edith Masai	14.33.84
4. Priscah Jepleting Ngetich	14.35.30
5. Meselech Melkamu	14.37.44
6. Gelete Burika Bati	14.40.92
7. Pauline Korikwiani	14.45.98
8. Ines Chenonge	14.47.48
9. Irene Kipchumba	14.49.32
10. Susanne Wigene	14.52.68

Men's 800m

1. Mohammad Al-Azemi	1.44.59
2. Dmitrijs Milkevics	1.44.65
3. Alfred Kirwa Yego	1.45.48
4. Majed Sultan	1.45.72
5. Rene Herms	1.46.74
6. Abdulrahman Suleiman	1.46.87
7. Cosmas Rono Kipkorir	1.48.94
8. Svahlo Adre Daehlin	1.49.21
9. James McIlroy	1.50.06

Men's Mile

1. Alex Kipchirchir	3.50.32
2. Ivan Heshko	3.50.89
3. Daniel Komen	3.52.41
4. Suleiman Kipses Simotwo	3.52.77
5. Mohamed Moustouai	3.53.03
6. Nick McCormick	3.55.60
7. Belal Mansoor Ali	3.56.18
8. Robert Rono	4.01.78
9. Augustine Choge	4.02.25
10. Neil Speaight	4.07.03

Men's 5000m

1. Isaac Songok	12.55.79
2. Kenenisa Bekele	12.58.22
3. Mike Kipruto Kigen	12.58.58
4. Edwin Cheruiyot Soi	12.59.45
5. Abreham Feleke	12.59.53
6. Tariku Bekele	13.00.19
7. Mohamed Ali Aboosh	13.01.44
8. Joseph Ebuya	13.02.97
9. Boniface Kiproop	13.06.00
10. Boniface Songok	13.08.02

Reebok Grand Prix

Men's Mile

1. Rashid Ramzi	3.53.55
2. Nick Willis	3.55.56
3. Anthony Famiglietti	3.55.71
4. Kevin Sullivan	3.55.89
5. Nate Brannen	3.56.27
6. Steve Slattery	3.56.47
7. Rob Myers	3.57.47
8. Jason Lunn	3.58.18
9. Said Ahmed	3.58.42
10. Gu Ming	3.59.75

Men's 5000m

1. Abraham Chebii	13.04.56
2. Micah Kogo	13.06.18
3. Ben Limo	13.07.14
4. Jonas Cheruiyot	13.08.58
5. Alistair Cragg	13.08.97
6. Abebe Dinkessa	13.13.40
7. Boaz Cheboiywo	13.19.67
8. Ryan Kirkpatrick	13.31.68
9. Chris Thompson	13.31.83
10. Andrew Carlson	13.38.06

Women's 1500m

1. Sarah Jamieson	4.04.57
2. Carrie Tollefson	4.06.40
3. Blake Russell	4.06.71
4. Tiffany McWilliams	4.07.06
5. Lui Oing	4.07.34
6. Mestawot Tadesse	4.07.55
7. Hayley Tullett	4.08.87
8. Meskerem Legesse	4.09.53
9. Lindsey Gallo	4.12.08
10. Jenelle Deatherage	4.18.56

Women's 5000m

1. Meseret Defar	14.24.53 (WR)
2. Workitu Ayanu	14.50.51
3. Sara Slattery	15.24.01
4. Xing Huina	15.39.84
5. Sharon Thompson	15.41.35
6. Marie Davenport	15.44.33
7. Kristen Nicolini	15.51.88
8. Jin Yuan	16.20.35
9. Vicky Gill	16.26.37

5km Freihofer's Run for Women

1. Benita Johnson	15.27
2. Natalya Berkut	15.29
3. Lornah Kiplagat	15.47
4. Lineth Chepkurui	15.50
5. Amy Rudolph	15.50
6. Dorota Cruca	15.52
7. Jemima Jelagat	16.03
8. Maria Khristina Mazilu	16.06
9. Eunice Chepkirui	16.09
10. Nicole Aish	16.12

Norwich Union British Grand Prix

Men's 3000m

1. Eliud Kipchoge	7.33.54
2. Isaac Songok	7.33.62
3. Mike Kigen	7.35.87
4. Joseph Ebuya	7.36.78
5. Boniface Songok	7.37.44
6. Boniface Kiproop	7.40.58
7. Mohammed Farah	7.45.25
8. Bernard Chepkok	7.53.88
9. Brahim Beloua	8.01.61

Women's 800m

1. Janeth Jepkosgei	1.57.22
2. Rebecca Lyne	1.58.20
3. Seltana Ait Hammou	1.59.59
4. Amina Ait Hammou	1.59.93
5. Jennifer Meadows	2.00.16
6. Marilyn Okoro	2.00.57
7. Jemma Simpson	2.01.39
8. Neisha Bernard-Thomas	2.02.53
9. Sasha Spencer	2.03.99

Women's 3000m

1. Tirunesh Dibaba	8.42.04
2. Berhane Adere	8.44.82
3. Ejegayehu Dibaba	8.46.02
4. Mestawet Tufa	8.47.41
5. Joanne Pavey	8.49.54
6. Bezunesh Bekele Sertu	8.52.08
7. Nataliva Tobias	8.59.98
8. Helen Clitheroe	9.00.97
9. Vivian Cheruiyot	9.02.15
10. Kate Reed	9.03.42

In the women's 1500m, Australia's Sarah Jamieson picked up another international victory winning in 4.04.57.

However, the highlight of the night was the world record set by Ethiopia's Meseret Defar in the women's 5000m. Defar was aided by pace makers through the first 3000m, covering 2000m in 5.47.7 and 3000m in 8.42.8, before being left to finish the race off on her own. Defar maintained a steady pace of 70 second laps until she began picking up her turnover with two remaining.

At the bell, most observers thought that the record attempt was lost, but Defar closed the race out with a 61 second lap to shaved 0.15 seconds from Turkey's Elvan Abeylegesse's World 5000m record, finishing with 14.24.53

Norwich Union British Grand Prix, Gateshead, June 11th

RECORDS fell at will when the IAAF World Athletics Tour moved to the Gateshead Stadium in Norwich.

Asafa Powell ran a world record-

equaling time in the 100m, but was upstaged by five new world records that were set at the meet.

Former 5000m World Champion Eliud Kipchoge broke Brendan Foster's 3000m stadium record, winning the event in 7.33.54. Foster's record stood for 32 years and was created on the day the stadium was officially opened back in 1974. With a fast final 200m, Kipchoge overhauled fellow Kenyan Isaac Songok to break the record by 1.5 seconds.

Records were also broken in the women's 800m with Commonwealth Champion Janeth Jepkosgei erasing Mary Slaney's name from the record list. The Kenyan kicked away from the field over the final 200m to finish in 1.57.22. Her strong result dragged Britain's Rebecca Lyne through for a massive personal best to finish in second place in 1.58.20.

The women's 3000m saw Tirunesh Dibaba pick up another European win, blasting away from the field over the final lap of the to win in 8.42.04 from Berhane Adere and her sister Ejegayehou, to make it an Ethiopian 1-2-3.

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