IAAF NEWS

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ATHLETICS FEDERATIONS

N.66
Published on www.iaaf.org -
February 23 2004

Let's look forward to some Great Athletics

After the phenomenal success of the 9th IAAF World Championships in Paris last summer, the inspirational solo Golden League Jackpot win for Maria Mutola, and the innovative spectacle of the inaugural World Athletics Final, Athletics can look forward with confidence to a great 2004.

In the months to come, the Olympic Games in Athens, and the IAAF's own top competitions, will bring athletics into the news for all the right reasons.

As I write these words, the indoor season is well and truly underway and track and field fans, all over the world, are looking forward with great anticipation to the latest edition of the IAAF World Indoor Championships in Budapest on 5-7 March. Although an Olympic year always makes special demands on athletes, I am confident that we will have many great stars at this exciting event, and that it will be organised with great efficiency by our Hungarian friends, who have been amongst the most active members of the IAAF and were one of the Association's founder members in 1912.

But the World Indoor Championships are the first major step in a journey that will take us not only to the Athens Olympic Games but other important milestones as well.

We can look forward to the World Cross Country Championships, the World Race Walking Cup, the World Junior Championships, the World Athletics Final, and the World Half Marathon Championships which will bring the season to an end in October.

I am more than pleased to welcome the return of the IAAF World Cross Country Championships to Belgium for the fourth time in the event's history. Of course, the country has a love affair with this running discipline which extends further back than the beginnings in 1973 of this the oldest of the IAAF's World Athletics Series. As long ago as 1923, Belgium first participated in, and then three years later in Brussels hosted the 'International Championships' which were the forerunner of the IAAF World Cross Country.

In this Olympic year we can look forward to new star names emerging across all the range of disciplines, and to the second IAAF World Athletics Final which will be celebrated in Monaco (and Szombathely for the Hammer Throw) just weeks after the conclusion of those competitions in Athens.

2004 will be the second year in which the IAAF World Rankings act as the qualification mechanism for the World Athletics Final and there is no doubt that the individual Event and Overall IAAF World Rankings have enhanced the profile of each athlete and the sport as a whole.

Photo - President Lamine Diack in the IAAF HQ, Monte-Carlo

The "Road to Athens" will pass through the IAAF Golden League with the first of the six meetings being Bergen in June. As usual, you must win at all meetings to gain a share of the $1 million Jackpot that was won so memorably last year by Maria Mutola.

The Golden League heads a four tier structure of one day meetings, along with the Super Grand Prix, Grand Prix and Grand Prix II providing a base to the pyramid of IAAF Permit meetings.

And let's not forget our sport's younger athletes. It seems remarkable that two years have passed since those fantastic World Junior Championships in Kingston, Jamaica where Carolina Klüft retained her title, emerging as world star in a broader sense.

On 13-18 July, the 10th edition of the championships will be celebrated in Grosseto, Italy and, as ever, we can expect six days of intense competition, from which as past editions have shown, we will be able to adjudge the future stars and trends of our sport.

Finally, we can also look forward to memorable editions of the two "World Road Championships" in the IAAF calendar, namely the World Race Walking Championships which takes place in Naumburg, Germany, on 1-2 May, and the World Half Marathon Championships, which will take place for the first time in Asia on 3 October, in the exotic city of New Delhi.

Let's all look forward to a great year and work together to ensure that competition becomes the focus of news about athletics.

Lamine Diack
IAAF President