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# 7500 Fans celebrate world-class athletics at the ISTAF INDOOR

*Olympic champions Yemisi Ogunleye and Malaika Mihambo win in successful premieres / Torben Blech celebrates pole vault victory with 7550 spectators in Düsseldorf*

**DÜSSELDORF** - Celebrated stars, spectacular premières, lightning-fast sprints: The ISTAF INDOOR on Sunday afternoon in Düsseldorf brought world-class performances - and 7550 fans to cheer. The highlights were provided by Olympic long jump champion Malaika Mihambo (6.87 m) at the premiere from the take-off zone, Olympic champion Yemisi Ogunleye (19.78 m) in the shot put, which was held in the PSD BANK DOME for the first time, and height hunter Torben Blech (5.80 m) as the celebrated pole vault winner. World-class hurdles sprinter and serial winner Jakub Szymanski (7.51 sec), the German hurdles youngsters Rosina Schneider (7.96 sec) and Marlene Meier (7.97 sec, Poland), who were under eight seconds for the first time, and the 60 metre winners Henrik Larsson (6.54 sec, Sweden) and Bianca Williams (7.21 sec, Great Britain) were brilliant on the running track.

A heartfelt thank you to the audience and a hug with mascot Berlino: Olympic shot put champion **Yemisi Oguleye** (MTG Mannheim) was the crowning glory of the ISTAF INDOOR Düsseldorf on Sunday afternoon in the PSD BANK DOME. The Olympic champion was beaming after her victory with a world-class distance of 19.78 metres. "The crowd was great, it was really fun. I'm super grateful to my coaches for making the technique so stable," said the Olympic champion after her first appearance at the ISTAF INDOOR. This was the first time the discipline was held in the PSD BANK DOME. After the sprints, the facility was set up inside in a matter of minutes. **Fanny Roos** (Sweden; 18.82 m) and the Portuguese **Jessica Include** (18.61 m) followed at a respectful distance. The athletes will meet again on Friday, when they take to the ring at the ISTAF INDOOR Berlin.

Almost exclusively valid attempts and the exact distances jumped: The première of the long jump from the take-off zone at the ISTAF INDOOR on Sunday in Düsseldorf was well received by athletes and fans alike. The long jumpers were able to initiate their jump from the 40-centimetre-wide take-off zone. The distance was then measured from take-off to landing and not from a fixed point on the take-off board as is usually the case.

## Malaika Mihambo flies to victory at the premiere of the take-off zone

The longest jumps once again went to **Malaika Mihambo** (LG Kurpfalz). The Olympic champion from Tokyo flew up to 6.87 metres in the fourth round. This was her fourth victory at the ISTAF INDOOR in Düsseldorf. "The momentum is much better than jumping off the board with only half a

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foot," said Malaika Mihambo after the special long jump premiere and sent a thank you to the spectators in the PSD BANK DOME. "As always, the fans were on fire!" Her coach Uli Knapp was also satisfied with the premiere: "It was extremely exciting for the spectators because there were far fewer invalid jumps. That makes the competition more entertaining. I'm open to change, just like Malaika."

The world-class meeting was watched by 7550 fans on Sunday, more than ever before at the ISTAF INDOOR Düsseldorf. Only two meetings worldwide attract more spectators. One of them is the ISTAF INDOOR in Berlin, which is scheduled for February 14th. Second place went to **Pauline Hondema** (Netherlands) with 6.68 metres, one centimetre ahead of **Plamena Mitkova** (Bulgaria).

### Torben Blech triumphs and celebrates with the fans

There was no holding back for **Torben Blech** after his clean jump over 5.80 metres. The pole vaulter from Leverkusen ran across the track, clenched his fists and shouted his joy. Not only did he secure victory, he also improved his own German best for the year. "I had goosebumps during a lot of the jumps, the atmosphere was so good. Now the ISTAF INDOOR in Berlin can come," said the Leverkusen native happily. The victory was all the more surprising as the high-flyer was still in bed with chills at the beginning of the week.

Torben Blech kept the world-class competition at bay with his 5.80 metres. Two-time world champion **Sam Kendricks** (USA) took second place with 5.70 metres. Third place went to **Ersu Sasma** (Turkey) with the same height, while local hero **Bo Kanda Lita Baehre** (Düsseldorf Athletics) secured fourth place with 5.65 metres.

### German hurdles youngsters getting faster and faster

Two German youngsters stormed to the finish line in the 60 metres hurdles to the frenetic cheers of the fans - and to new best times. **Rosina Schneider** (TV Sulz) and **Marlene Meier** (TSV Bayer 04 Leverkusen) stayed under the eight-second mark for the first time with 7.96 and 7.97 seconds. After the race, the two were in each other's arms and celebrated their best times. "It was a great battle, that's exactly how I love it. It was only a matter of time before the sound barrier fell. The fantastic fans played a big part in that," said the 20-year-old winner jubilantly. After second place and a new best time, Marlene Meier was already looking ahead to the ISTAF INDOOR in Berlin: "I'm really looking forward to it, I always run fast in Berlin," said the 22-year-old.

**Jakub Szymanski** continued his magnificent winning streak in the men's race. With a time of 7.51 seconds, the Pole completed the hat trick at the ISTAF INDOOR Düsseldorf and thus remained unbeaten in the seventh race of the indoor season. The 22-year-old was determined to compete in Düsseldorf and put up with extreme travelling hardships to do so. The Pole had competed at his home event in Lodz on Saturday evening, where he had improved the national record to 7.39 seconds. After a short night, he boarded the plane on Sunday morning to triumph again in

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Düsseldorf. "I just love this track, that's why I really wanted to compete here and I'm already looking forward to next year's ISTAF INDOOR in Düsseldorf and Berlin," said the fast serial winner.

There were also top performances behind them. **Enrique Llopis** (Spain) finished second with a time of 7.56 seconds, narrowly keeping **Manuel Mordi** (Hamburger SV) at bay. Mordi was delighted with his new best time of 7.56 seconds, catapulting him to ninth place in the all-time German best list. "The second half of the race is really good. But I can do even better if I get out of the block better," said Manuel Mordi. Local hero **Gregory Minoue** (TV Kalkum-Wittlaer) came fourth in 7.66 seconds, improving on his best time of just two days ago by five hundredths of a second.

### Henrik Larsson fastest sprinter, Chidiera Onuoha with double best time

**Henrik Larsson** was jumping up and down his 60 metre victory. The Swede missed his own national record by just one hundredth of a second with a time of 6.54 seconds in the PSD BANK DOME. "I didn't feel so good today. But the atmosphere here in the PSD BANK DOME gives you so much energy, you just have to run fast," said the triumphant athlete.

In the slipstream of the Swede, **Chidiera Onuoha** (ASV Köln) crowned a perfect day. The 21-year-old stormed to a new best of 6.60 seconds in the preliminary heat and then even improved to 6.57 seconds in the final after a perfect start. "Last year I was there as a spectator and really wanted to take part. Now I want even more," said the Cologne native jubilantly after his sprint coup.

### Thriller of hundredths in the women's 60 metre final

The women's race was decided by centimetres. In the end, **Bianca Williams** narrowly came out on top. The Brit clocked 7.21 seconds (preliminary run: 7.20 sec) ahead of her compatriot **Amy Hunt** (7.22 sec). **Geraldine Frey** (Switzerland) and Belgium's **Rani Rosius** followed within a hundredth of a second. **Sophia Junk** (LG Rhein-Wied) finished fifth in 7.25 seconds. "The track was great, I'd love to come back. The ISTAF INDOOR is simply great," enthused the 60 metre winner.

Sprint star **Gina Lückenkemper** (SCC Berlin) decided not to compete in the final after setting her best time of the year (7.22 sec). The Olympic bronze medallist in the 4x100-metre relay had a cramp in her thigh in the last few metres of the preliminary heat and did not want to take any risks. "The race in front was really good. It's difficult for me to miss out on the final as a precautionary measure, as an even faster time would have been possible there. But I definitely want to run at the ISTAF INDOOR in Berlin on Friday," said Germany's fastest sprinter since 1991, looking confidently to the tasks ahead.

In the first decision of the day, **Felix Streng** (Sprintteam Wetzlar) catapulted out of the blocks as fast as an arrow and pulled away from his competitors in the 60 metre para-sprint. At 7.07 seconds, the Paralympic champion was faster than ever. He missed Maxcel Amo Manu's (France) meeting record by just three hundredths. "It was great fun, the atmosphere in Düsseldorf was simply incredible," said a jubilant Felix Streng after his triumph in the PSD BANK Dome and announced:

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"I'm ready for Berlin!" On Friday, he will once again face **Olivier Hendriks** (Netherlands; 7.42 sec) and **Fabio Bottazzini** (Italy; 7.53 sec), who sprinted to the podium behind Felix Streng in Düsseldorf, at the ISTAF INDOOR in the Uber Arena.

Meeting boss **Martin Seeber** drew a positive conclusion after the ISTAF INDOOR Düsseldorf in front of a record crowd: "It was a fantastic atmosphere again. Our anniversary at the fifth meeting here in the PSD BANK DOME was a success. We are very happy about that, as well as the many German victories and the great premiere in the shot put ring."

"The ISTAF INDOOR inspires year after year not only with the top performances of the participants, but also with its uniqueness. Both the atmosphere of the event and the clearly organised schedule, which means spectators don't miss anything, make it so popular. We are also delighted that Düsseldorf athletes are now continuously taking part in the competitions at the ISTAF INDOOR," said **Burkhard Hintzsche**, City Director of the state capital of Düsseldorf.

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