

## **Report: IAAF World U20 Championships – Bydgoszcz, Poland July19-24**

Maryanne Daniel – Level III International Judge

This championship was originally to be held in Kazan, Russia but with the widespread doping violations, the Russians were stripped of this meet. Bydgoszcz (pronounced Bidgotz) came to the rescue, having hosted the World U20 Championship before in 2008. Located in Northern Poland, it is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest city .

The 30,000 seat stadium was absolutely beautiful, recently renovated 2 yrs ago. The bright blue track and state of the art facilities were very impressive, as was the fact that they pulled this all together in less than 9 months. The only down side was, even a fairly decent number of spectators looked lost in a stadium that size.

Fredric Bianchi (SUI) was our Chief Judge. He was very diligent sending out info, arranging and running efficient meetings for us: Carlos Barrios (GUA), Wang Fung (HKG), Nicola Maggio (ITA), Hans Van Der Knapp(NED) and myself.

We were very fortunate to have Janusz Krynicki,- a former long time Level III judge from Poland living 2 hrs away, who was able to provide a Red Card Posting Board, Recorder, Posting Board Operator, Red Card runners and all the paperwork.

I was concerned (having seen a disaster at the Youth Championship-9 athletes whose laps were miscounted and problems at the Jr Worlds) about lap counting with the number of athletes and time spread for multiple lapping but Janusz had made sure there was a whole crew of lap counters who did an excellent job.

The women's race was held on July 19th in the evening with 35 athletes competing. Ma from China pulled decisively away on the last lap 45:18, Stella from Italy in second 45:23 and the emergence of Ethiopia on the scene, Beletew in third 45:33. Several athletes had two Red Cards and only one had three and entered the Pit Lane 32 min after the race started, spent her two min and was able to finish 21st after having been in tenth place. No DQ's.

Our US girls did well putting themselves in the thick of the mid pack for most of the race, constantly looking like they were pushing. Anali Cisneros set a new US U20 10,000m record in 49:31 finishing 25<sup>th</sup> with Meaghan Podlaski in 50:21 in 28<sup>th</sup>.

As a nice aside- we were able to take them out to lunch the next day and hear their excitement of being on a large team, cheering for their teammates and being goodwill ambassadors of Race Walking. Later on, we took them to a park, turned out to be a kiddie park with comical moments of us all going on little kid rides, I haven't laughed that hard in a long time, you should have seen the Race Walk Chair on the magic carpet ride! In all seriousness, we could see a very strong bond between the girls...and sometimes that's the glue that helps athletes stay with it in the long run...er, walk.

The men's race was on July 23 in the morning with 45 athletes. A very exciting race down to the last straightaway. Wilkinson from GBR in 40:41 pulling away from Amores from ECU 40:43 and Korkmaz TUR 40:45. One athlete had three Red Cards, all for loss of contact, entered the Pit Lane 42 min after the start, came out and promptly received his 4<sup>th</sup> Red Card and was DQed. 3 other athletes with two cards and quite a few with a stand alone Red. 1 athlete DQ'ed

At our judges meeting we discussed some of the stand alone Reds in the men's race and concluded it might not be judges inconsistency as much as some of the young walkers jockeying for position, pushing at their limit or getting a yellow paddle that might slow them down or just fatigue slows them and they are out of danger after a reckless start.

Fredric was not that concerned about it and pleased with our collaboration. He did point out someone had written a Red card for one infraction and had the other on his Tally sheet. I personally felt like there were many bent knee calls that could have been loss of contact. We talked about the Pit Lane, some liked it, others not sure, I voiced my opinion against it, especially at this level and when you have a track race, you need 4 out of the 5 judges to give a Red Card for a DQ, that is a pretty high percent. I think we really need to start watching statistics on this, once they are in the Pit Lane, do they really change their form when let out?

I brought up how we, as IRWJ, are brought in to a meet like this to work a little over an hr in the beginning of the meet, off for 4 days, and then another hr+ near the end of the meet, felt decadently lazy as the ITO's worked their butt off everyday. I asked even though they have this meet covered by ITO's, perhaps if judges took an ITO test, not to become an ITO but to be ITO certified (?), we could be on hand to fill in when the ITO's needed to take a break or at least we could be of some help in some way. It was pointed out this is what happens at a U20 meet and that I should not forget that many of us work a meet where we might judge a 50K, 10K and 20K in one day and be on our feet from early in the morning to late at night without a break. We ended with a consensus to look into it, especially possibly scheduling the two Race Walks back to back in a week long meet.

A very unfortunate freak accident in the Hammer Throw put one of our ITO's out of commission. The hammer ricocheted off the netting pole and cleared the lower netting near the outside of the net where Mats Svensson from Sweden had just looked up, it missed his head by a fraction of an inch, crashed through a flimsy plastic table and smashed Mats foot, crushing three bones, splitting some of the skin. He was rushed off to the hospital and after the injury was stabilized a few days later was flown home. We were saddened to learn he might lose one toe.