

The meeting



The scene unfolds on the evening of 6th July, over six weeks from the world championships in Osaka. However a lot of the athletes present at the Stade de France are already thinking about Japan. Bahamian Derrick Atkins, winner of the 100 m in 10 seconds flat, announces to anyone that will listen that he'll be a pretender to the world title. He keeps his promise and takes the silver medal at the end of August. In total, no less than five winners at the Meeting go on to confirm their status at Osaka by becoming world champions: the Finnish athlete Tero Pitkämäki in the javelin, the American Michelle Perry in the 100 m hurdles, the Russian Yelena Isinbayeva in the pole vault, the Ethiopian Tirunesh Dibaba in the 10,000 m, and the Croatian Blanka Vlasic in the high jump. Chinese athlete Liu Xiang, presented as one of the stars of the evening, causes a media landslide during the press conference the day before the meeting. However, he yields

on the track (13''15), beaten by Dayron Robles and Anwar Moore (both credited with 13''13) at the end of a real skirmish in the 110 m hurdles.

The performance

It came in the 1,500 m, one of the most highly awaited events of the evening. However the name of its author surprised more than a few people in the grandstand of the Stade de France. Everyone was expecting Mehdi Baala, who had etched the date of the Meeting in capital letters in his athletics diary. A few weeks from the world championships in Osaka, the French athlete was hoping to pull off a blinder. At the finish, American Alan Webb, smashed Mehdi Baala's hopes, thanks to an unstoppable run down the home straight. 3'30''54 for the American, the best performance in the world that year, and 3'31''01 for Mehdi Baala. It was a defeat that the French athlete wouldn't be able to avenge in the Worlds in 2007 after a mistake in the semi-finals incurring the wrath of the jury and condemning him to disqualification.

The match

The rivalry between Christine Arron and Muriel Hurtis has often been toned down by career choices. The former has never disguised her preference for the 100, whilst the latter feels more at home in the 200 m. In the Stade de France on Friday 6th July 2007, the two French athletes find themselves at the start of the 100 m. The result is a surprise; the youngest athlete finishes ahead of her senior. Fifth with 11''31, Muriel Hurtis just pips Christine Arron at the post, sixth with 11''34. American Torri Edwards takes victory in 11''17.

The history

Sanya Richards, the world number one in the 400 m, had never met Marie-José Pérec. The American had nevertheless idolized the French athlete for all time, secretly dreaming of one day having the opportunity to ask her a thousand questions about her career, her training and her approach to running a lap. On the initiative of the daily newspaper L'Equipe, the two young women make the most of the Meeting to lunch together. Sanya Richards is later to reveal that the encounter gave her the chance to discover that they had numerous things in common.

The quote

"I came here to win so I'm really happy. However, running in front of so many people is really awe inspiring. This would never happen in the United States!" James Carter (E-U), winner of the 400 m hurdles in 48''61

The public

58,775 spectators

The records

Two meeting records: Yelena Isinbayeva (Russia), 4.91m in the pole vault, Blanka Vlasic (Croatia) 2.02m in the high jump.

Two national records: Nelson Evora (Portugal), 17.28m in the triple jump, Moses Kipsiro (Uganda), 7'39''02 in the 3,000m.