

2005

The meeting

Scheduled for 1st July, the Meeting has never been positioned so early in the season. Furthermore, it has doubtless never been shrouded in such an Olympic perfume. A week from the IOC's selection of the host city for the 2012 summer Games, the Meeting is in the full throes of the Parisian candidacy. Its "Paris 2012" entertainment is incredibly effective and yet it doesn't stop the Olympic board from favoring London over the French capital. Nonetheless, the Meeting does rack up a fair number of fine records. On a worldwide scale, the event attracts the greatest ever number of spectators at an athletics meeting, with 70,253 devotees in the grandstands. On a national scale, Ladji Doucouré reigned in the 110 m hurdles (13''02) and Bouchra Ghézielle in the 3,000 m (8'35''41).



The performance

It came in the middle-distance running and paid tribute to the amazing talent of one of the evening's stars, Ethiopian Kenenisa Bekele. Alighting in Paris with the clear intention of manhandling his own world record in the 5,000 m (12'37''35 in 2004), he seemed to be in a good position to pull off his bet. However, the final sprint for home smashed his illusions to pieces. Finally taking victory in 12'40''18, Bekele received a standing ovation from the public. His time, set in stone as the meeting record, still ranks fourth of all time over the distance.

The history

A French tale synonymous with an exploit engraved for eternity in the history of national athletics. Keen to provide Ladji Doucouré with opposition worthy of his talent, the organizers composed a 110 m hurdles race on a par with the level at an Olympic final. At the start, Americans Allen Johnson, Dominique Arnold and Terrence Trammell, Latvian Stanislavs Olijars, and above all the Chinese athlete Liu Xiang, gold medalist in the Athens Games. At the finish, victory goes to Ladji Doucouré with the stunning time of 13''02 and a new French record. A few weeks later, the French athlete goes on to confirm his prowess and becomes the world champion in Helsinki.

The quote

"I didn't come here to party; I really wanted to jump well. I wasn't in good shape though. This was just a little visit, a final symbolic trip to the Stade de France. I simply wanted to bid a quiet farewell; I didn't want to make everyone cry... In the end, my fellow pole-vaulters threw me into the water jump of the steeplechase." Jean Galfione, 12th in the pole vaulting competition, with zero for his last competition in the Stade de France.

The public

70,253 spectators, a world record attendance for an athletics meeting.

The records

A meeting record: Kenenisa Bekele (Ethiopia), 12'40''18 in the 5,000 m

Seven national records: Tyler Christopher (Canada), 44''69 in the 400 m, Nicholas Willis (New Zealand), 3'32''38 in the 1,500 m, Boniface Kiprop (Uganda), 12'59''19 in the 5,000 m, Moukhled Al Outaibi (Saudi Arabia), 13'08''64 in the 5,000 m, Ladji Doucouré (France), 13''02 in the 110 m hurdles, Anna Jesien (Poland), 53''96 in the 400 m hurdles, Bouchra Ghézielle (France), 8'35''41 in the 3,000 m.