

The meeting



Scheduled later in the season than in previous years, the Meeting is fully reaping the benefits of the Olympic effect on Friday 23rd July 2004. Three weeks from the Games in Athens, the Meeting beats the previous attendance records with over 63,000 spectators, nearly 300 journalists, an estimated international audience of 26 million television viewers and athletes from 51 countries. The great names there are overseas ones (Maurice Greene, Bernard Lagat, Allen Johnson, Felix Sanchez, Christian Olsson...), but the stadium particularly applauds the exploits of the French athletes, led by Christine Arron, Leslie Djhone and Naman Keita. Two athletes, Swede Christian Olsson (triple jump) and Bahamian Tonique Williams-Darling (400 m), construct their final success in the Golden League jackpot. At the close of the season, the Meeting is fifth in the IAAF ranking for large athletics meetings, behind Brussels,

Zurich, Rome and Lausanne.

The performance

Without a moment's hesitation the 'coup' of the evening has to go to Leslie Djhone. The French athlete, whose talent was exposed the previous year after his 5th place in the 400 m final of the world championships (44''83), earns himself a prestigious success on the Stade de France track. Appearing on the competition poster, he seems to want to honour this privilege by standing out from the other athletes at the end of his lap of the track. This is the case as, despite mixing it with a few of the speciality's aces, including Derrick Brews, Jerome Young and Alleyne Francique, his time is 44''99.

The history

Doubles are extremely rare in a Golden League Paris Saint-Denis Meeting. The competition there is often too ferocious. Furthermore, the tight, dense schedule, doesn't always allow room for all your dreams. On Friday 23rd July 2004, the Portuguese athlete Francis Obikwelu nevertheless manages to buck the trend. Without a hint of anxiety he dominates American Maurice Greene in the 100 m, making a name for himself with a time of 10''06. Clearly on a roll, he then goes on to outclass the field in the 200 m; a race in which the huge sprinter even manages to set a new Portuguese record with a time of 20''12.

Farewell

In 2004, Frankie Fredericks makes the most of the Olympic year before bowing out of competition. At nearly 37, the Namibian participated in his last Meeting at the Stade de France. He would have liked it to have been victorious, over his favourite distance in the 200 m. However, an overly laboured final sprint sees him drop down to 3rd place with a time of 20''35, behind the Portuguese athlete Francis Obikwelu (20''12) and the American J.J Johnson (20''28). World Champion of the discipline back in 1993, Frankie Fredericks has been right at the top of his game all the way to the end. Later in the season, he even allows himself to win the 200 m, a Golden League event, at the Van Damme Memorial in Brussels.

The quote

«The race went very well for me, I'm very satisfied. But I did have a little secret: I asked the organizers if I could be placed in the same lane as last year, during my victory on this same track in the world championships.»
Perdita Felicien (Canada), winner of the 100 m hurdles in 12''60.

The public

63,851 spectators

The records

Three meeting records: Virgilijus Alekna (Lithuania), 70.21 m in the discus, Tonique Williams-Darling (Bahamas), 49''15 in the 400 m, Yipsi Moreno (Cuba), 72.43 m in the hammer. Two national records: Francis Obikwelu (Portugal), 20''12 in the 200 m, Tonique Williams-Darling (Bahamas), 49''15 in the 400 m.