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Norway's Warholm seals hurdles double

Russia's Lasitskene clinches superb high jump hat-trick



DOHA: Norway's Karsten Warholm competes in the Men's 400m Hurdles final at the 2019 IAAF Athletics World Championships at the Khalifa International Stadium in Doha. —AFP

DOHA: Norway's Karsten Warholm retained his 400m hurdles World Championship crown with a barnstorming victory in Doha Monday as Russia's Mariya Lasitskene completed a superb high jump hat-trick.

After an opening three days of competition marked by swathes of empty seats, Warholm delighted the biggest crowd of the championships so far with a battling victory at the Khalifa Stadium. Warholm took gold in 47.42seconds, with his rival Rai Benjamin of the United States claiming silver in 47.66sec. Qatar's Abderrahman Samba took bronze in 48.03. The 23-year-old Warholm roared, pumped his fist and slapped his chest as he was introduced to the crowd before the start of the race as part of a dazzling light display. That set the tone for a classic hurdles battle, with Warholm timing his move to perfection to take the lead heading into the home straight before holding off Benjamin.

"This was a very tough race," Warholm said. "I actually felt my heart was going to stop. I thought 'I'm going to die but it's going to be worth it.'" Although Monday's crowd

was the largest of the championships so far, most fans had left the arena well before Warholm set off on his lap of honour.

"I'm used to talking to myself so it wasn't a problem," Warholm joked. "It was something else in London (in 2017) when there was 60,000 people there. I've got to be honest about that. But at the same time, with the gold medal, I couldn't care less."

Warholm's win came just moments after high jump Lasitskene won a third consecutive world championship title to set alongside her wins in 2015 and 2017. The 26-year-old, who is one of only 30 Russian athletes allowed to compete in Doha under the authorised neutral athlete banner, took gold ahead of Ukraine's Yaroslava Mahuchikh.

Lasitskene claimed the gold after clearing a height of 2.04m to win on countback ahead of Mahuchikh. Vashiti Cunningham of the United States took bronze. The win marked another career milestone for Lasitskene, who has dominated international high-jumping in recent years. "It was like in a fairytale to get a third world title," Lasitskene said. "My whole

country expected me to be on the podium. I had to cope with this pressure." Lasitskene was barred from the 2016 Olympics after Russia was banned from the games over the country's doping scandal.

But she has since been allowed to compete as a neutral athlete, a status handed to athletes who are deemed to be above suspicion by the International Association of Athletics Federations. There was also success for another defending champion in the 5,000m, where Ethiopia's Muktar Edris retained his 2017 crown in a time of 12 minutes 58.85 seconds. His compatriot Selemon Barega, 19, took silver in 12:59.70 and Canada's Mohammed Ahmed the bronze in a time of 13:01.11. Also on the track Monday saw African runners claim victories in the women's 800m and women's 3,000m steeplechase.

Uganda's Halimah Nakaayi took advantage of the absence of defending champion Gaster Semena to win the 800m, conjuring a sprint finish to take gold in 1min 58.04sec, with the fast-finishing Raevyn Rogers of the

United States taking silver in 1:58.18.

American Ajee Wilson had to settle for bronze in 1:58.84. The 800m at this year's championships took place without South Africa's two-time Olympic champion Semena, prevented from competing in Doha after losing her legal battle against regulations which would have forced her to take medication to lower naturally elevated testosterone levels. The 3,000m steeplechase meanwhile saw redemption for Kenya's Beatrice Chepkoech, who won gold two years after a blunder cost her a medal in London.

The 28-year-old world record holder pulled clear from the field early on and led by around 40 metres at the bell before coasting home in 8min 57.84sec. Defending champion Emma Coburn of the United States took silver with a time of 9:02.35 ahead of Germany's Gesa Krause, who claimed bronze in 9:03.30.

Chepkoech had missed out on a medal two years ago when she inadvertently missed a water jump and was forced to backtrack before finishing fourth. — AFP



Mariya Lasitskene

Mo Farah's former coach Salazar hit with four-year doping ban

LOS ANGELES: Long distance running guru Alberto Salazar, the former coach of Britain's four-time Olympic gold medallist Mo Farah, has been slapped with a four-year ban after being found guilty of doping violations.

The decision to ban the 61-year-old from the sport comes after a four-year investigation by the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) and a prolonged battle behind closed doors. USADA also said Jeffrey Brown, a Texas endocrinologist who treated many of Salazar's athletes at his Nike-backed Oregon Project, has also been given a four-year suspension.

In announcing the bans, USADA praised the athletes for speaking out. "The athletes in these cases found the courage to speak out and ultimately exposed the truth," said USADA chief executive Travis Tygart.

"While acting in connection with the Nike Oregon Project, Mr Salazar and Dr Brown demonstrated that winning was more important than the health and well-being of the athletes they were sworn to protect."

USADA said in the statement that two, three-member arbitration panels had determined Salazar and Brown should be banned for "orchestrating and facilitating prohibited doping conduct." The Cuban-born Salazar operates the Nike Oregon Project — which four-time Olympic champion Farah belonged to from 2011 until 2017.

Salazar was discovered to have trafficked or attempted to traffic banned substance testosterone, given athletes a substance in excess of its permitted limit and tampered with the doping control process of athletes.

"USADA's investigation yielded a wide range of evidence referenced in the hearing, including eye-witness proof, testimonies, contemporaneous emails, and patient records," USADA said in a news release.

"Between the two cases, USADA relied on more than 2,000 exhibits, which the AAA heard along with the defendants' cases. In all, the proceedings included 30 witnesses and 5,780 pages of transcripts."

In a statement on the Oregon Project's website, Salazar denied ever doping his athletes. "I am shocked by the outcome today," Salazar said. "Throughout this six-year investigation my athletes and I have endured unjust, unethical and highly damaging treatment from USADA."

"I have always ensured the WADA code is strictly followed. The Oregon Project has never and will never permit doping. I will appeal and look forward to this unfair and protracted process reaching the conclusion I know to be true."

Farah left Salazar's camp in 2017 but denied the decision was related to Oregon Project doping accusations. The Somalia-born British star, who won back-to-back Olympic 5,000m and 10,000m titles at the 2012 and 2016 Games, has repeatedly denied any knowledge of Salazar's alleged involvement in doping.

"I am a firm believer in clean sport and I strongly believe that anyone who breaks the rules should be punished," Farah said when announcing his split with



Alberto Salazar

Salazar. "If I had ever had any reason to doubt Alberto, I would not have stood by him all this time," Farah added.

Salazar is believed to be in Doha where several Oregon Project athletes are competing in the IAAF World Championships. One of Salazar's athletes, the Ethiopian-born Dutch runner Sifan Hassan, won the women's 10,000m on Saturday and will go for more gold in either the 5,000m or 1,500m. — AFP