



MUNICH: Sweden's Armand Duplantis competes in the men's Pole Vault qualification during the European Athletics Championships at the Olympic Stadium in Munich, southern Germany on August 18, 2022. —AFP

Duplantis and Warholm make Athletics Championships bow

Wightman cruises into 800 meters semis

MUNICH: Armand 'Mondo' Duplantis and Karsten Warholm lent some stardust to the fourth day of action at the European Athletics Championships in Munich on Thursday. Olympic pole vault champion Duplantis, fresh from breaking his own world record in Eugene as he clinched world gold with 6.21 metres last month, qualified with ease for Saturday's final.

Although he rattled the bar down on his first attempt at 5.65m, the US-born Swede made no mistake on his second effort to guarantee his spot in his bid to retain the continental title. The championship record of 6.05m - set by the Soviet and Ukrainian great Sergey Bubka - looks in danger if Duplantis puts his mind to it and the weather stays fair. Likewise, there were no dramas for a second defending champion in Warholm, who set off at a ripping pace in his 400m hurdles semi-final at the Olympic Stadium.

He streaked ahead of the field and while he stuttered slightly going into the final hurdle, the Norwegian clocked a winning 48.34sec, rising a clenched fist as he went through the line. Warholm ran one of the greatest Olympic track performances of all time when he smashed the 29-year-old world record to win the 400m hurdles at last year's Tokyo Games in a time of 45.94sec. But the 26-year-old suffered a hamstring injury in June and although he made the world final in Oregon, he could only finish seventh.

Warholm's closet rivals for gold in Friday's final, scheduled for 2000 GMT, will likely be

France's Wilfried Happio, who won his semi in 48.89sec, and Cuban-born Turk Yasmani Copello, European champion in 2016 and silver medalist behind Warholm in Berlin in 2018. "I am happy with being able to again be in that European final," said Copello. "Tomorrow, I will be leaving it all on the track - finals aren't there to lose, but rather to win."

Bol back on track

Dutch runner Femke Bol, fresh from winning European gold in the 400m flat on Wednesday, was back on the track in hot, sunny conditions in her favored 400m hurdles. The world silver medalist and Olympic bronze medalist in the hurdles dominated her semi-final in 53.73sec to qualify for Friday's final, scheduled for 1945 GMT, and maintain her bid for an audacious double.

Britain's Jake Wightman, surprise victor of the 1500m at the world championships over Norwegian star Jakob Ingebrigtsen, clocked the fastest qualifying time of 1:45.94 in heats for the 800m. Semi-finals for the two-lap race are set for Friday, with the final on Sunday at 1740 GMT. "I was a bit nervous about this early morning race," said Wightman. "I didn't know what I'd need to do to make it to the next round so I ran faster, wanted to win the heat. "I pushed hard in the last 100m. I am looking forward to the semis."

Reigning champion Nafi Thiam of Belgium was in pole position with just the 800m to race in the heptathlon. The Belgian, a two-time Olympic and world champion, registered 13.34sec in the 100m hurdles, 1.98m in the high jump, 14.95m in the



Norway's Karsten Warholm

shot put and 24.64sec in the 200m on the first day of action on Wednesday. Thursday saw her go out to a disappointing 6.08m in the long jump before she rebounded with 48.89m in the javelin for a total of 5,776 points. Poland's Annik Sulek sits second in 5,604pts. — AFP

Benfica overpower Dynamo Kyiv 2-0 in Champions League

PARIS: Benfica took a big stride towards qualifying for the Champions League group stage Wednesday by defeating Dynamo Kyiv 2-0 in Poland in the first leg of their play-off tie. Gilberto and Goncalo Ramos scored first-half goals for twice former European champions Benfica in the Polish city of Lodz, where Dynamo are in exile following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Red Star Belgrade, the 1991 European Cup winners, lost 3-2 away to Israeli champions Maccabi Haifa, who are hoping to reach the group stage for the third time after 2002-03 and 2009-10.

Haitian forward Frantzzy Pierrot struck twice for Maccabi as the hosts opened the scoring but then fell behind as Red Star replied with goals from Aleksandar Pasic and Guelor Kanga. Pierrot equalized shortly after half-time and Tjaronn Chery grabbed the winner on the hour to give Maccabi a narrow advantage heading into next week's return leg in Serbia. Qarabag drew 0-0 with Czech champions Viktoria Plzen in Baku. — AFP



Benfica's Portuguese forward Goncalo Ramos celebrates after scoring a goal. —AFP

Kuwaitis grab medals at pan-Islamic games



Abdullah Shaaban

KONYA: Kuwaiti swimmer Waleed Abdulrazaq won the silver medal of 50-m butterfly contest in the Islamic Solidarity Games. Finishing with a time of 23.66 seconds, Abdulrazaq made a new national record for this competition. Compatriot Abdullah

Shaaban followed suit and grabbed the silver medal of the -60 kg Men's Single Kumite competition. The Turkiye-hosted event, which brought together some 6,000 athletes from across more than 50 Islamic countries concluded on Thursday. — KUNA



Waleed Abdulrazaq