



News Release

Friday 25th January 2008

ATHLETICS SHOWPIECE AT ODYSSEY ARENA BELFAST

Top class athletics returns to the Odyssey for the 5th time this Saturday and Sunday for the Woodie's DIY Irish Indoor Athletic Championships organised and promoted by Athletics NI and Athletics Ireland. Belfast City council and Sport NI are the funding partners.

A record entry of over 1000 athletes in the various disciplines have again been attracted by both the rare opportunity of competing indoors plus to challenge a sprinkling of top internationals competitors from the British Isles, the US, Kenya, Germany, Sweden, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

While the organisers were naturally disappointed by the withdrawal of World Indoors hurdles champion Derval O'Rourke, there is still ample competition over the 2 days to command plenty of interest. This includes Derval's own event where the consistently world class (and eye catching) Jenny Kallur will clash with GB indoor record holder and UK Number 2 Sarah Claxton. Claxton could well get the verdict here as she has the greater experience on the indoors circuit.

The women's 60m will again be a highlight with Ballymena's Anna Boyle desperate to recover some of the form which enabled her to break the Irish record at this venue 2 years ago. However North Down's Amy Foster may have other ideas- especially after her crushing outdoors victory over Boyle in the NI Championships last year. Both local girls will however need to keep a wary eye on British junior international Anike Shand-Whittingham who recorded a useful 7.54secs to take the southern title a week ago.

The men's long jump should be a fascinating contest featuring Athens Olympic silver medallist John Moffitt of the US and the Czech Republic's Roman Sebrle. Current World and Olympic decathlon champion Sebrle can simply be described as the world's best athlete. However his best long jump is unlikely to seriously challenge Moffitt who had a World top 20 leap last June of 8.19m. Sebrle will also compete in the hurdles and shot.

In the men's sprints, Ballymena's Paul Brizzel will have his first competitive outing following a year of injury, Like Boyle he will be hoping that this venue (where he broke the NI record in 2004) will again assist him to challenge two world class US sprinters. Rae Edwards and Josh Norman have both recorded spectacular outdoor times of 10.09 seconds. Edwards is currently in top form as shown by his 6.81 secs indoor time in the US ten days ago.

US dominance is expected in the men's hurdles where Rob Hughes (who was 4th in the US championships last year) should take care of Basildon Gianni Frankis who was last year's European Junior bronze medallist.

The men's high jump should command special interest as the top Irish names will be joined by a world ranked athletes. Kourish Foroughi (Star of the Sea), Gary Coulter (Ballymena) and Jason Harvey (Lagan Valley) will face James Nieto from the US who cleared 2.26m in the World Championships last August. With this quality competition a Odyssey record could well be on the cards.

Something special may well emanate from Ferrybank's Kelly Proper in the long jump. Her 2 week old Irish record of 6.25m may fall in Belfast where she also set new figures of 6.19 a year ago.

Finally, other athletes to keep an eye on include Eva Massey in the shot, James McIlroy in the 1500m, Gareth Turnbull in the 3000m, Deidre Ryan in the High Jump and Olympic qualified walkers Olive Loughnane, Rob Heffernan and Jamie Costin.

Action gets under way at 4:30pm on Saturday and 1:30pm on Sunday. The event will be shown on RTE on Sunday night. Tickets available at the Odyssey Box Office.

Official website address with final timetable: www.indoorathletics.net

For further information contact:

- **Clare McCoy on 02890 602707/ 07841804032 or Brian Hill on 07815069697**

Notes to Editors:

1. The event is called the **Woodie's DIY Irish Indoor Athletics Championships** and must be called this at all times.
2. It takes place on 26th-27th January 2008 in the Odyssey Arena, Belfast. Tickets are available now from Ticketmaster from Adults £9.00 and Concession £6.00.
3. The event will be covered by **RTE** and their Internet on Sunday 27th January 08.
4. The Indoors features the Phoenix Natural Gas "Olympic Flames" Age Group Championships (Ages 13-18) and the 'Search for A Star' Primary Schools Initiative.
5. The event acts as Irish selection trials for the World Indoor Championships in Valencia at the beginning of March.
6. For media accreditation details email marketing@niathletics.org or call the Athletics NI office on 02890 602707.

www.indoorathletics.net



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**Irish Indoor
Athletics Championships**

Sat 26th Jan 08 @ 5pm
Sun 27th Jan 08 @ 2pm
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