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Pichardo vs Taylor triple jump rematch eagerly anticipated in Lausanne

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The 40th edition of Lausanne's famous Athletissima meeting, the ninth event in this season's **IAAF Diamond League**, offers a welter of events featuring that priceless commodity within any sport – true competition.

A total of 10 reigning Olympic champions, seven world champions and nine European champions will converge on the Stade De La Pontaise on Thursday night. Among the most eagerly awaited confrontations will be the re-match between the two triple jumpers who reached historic heights – or rather, lengths – in the opening IAAF Diamond League meeting of the season in Doha, Cuba's Pedro Pablo Pichardo and Olympic champion Christian Taylor.

No other triple jump competition had previously involved more than one man surpassing 18 metres, but the pair became only the fourth and fifth men in history to better that mark as Pichardo eventually triumphed with an IAAF Diamond League record of 18.06m, with his US rival just two centimetres behind.

Since then, Pichardo, who jumped 18.08m in Havana less than a fortnight after Doha, has established himself as a clear leader in the Diamond Race with victories in Rome and New York.

The Cuban, who turned 22 last week, is also unbeaten this year and has fond memories of Lausanne after getting his first big international victory as a senior here two years ago.

Taylor, who won in Birmingham a month ago, will be eager to demonstrate his enduring competitiveness as the two men face each for the second time this year.

Competition will be just as tight in some of the marquee events on the track.

Britain's Mo Farah faces a strong Ethiopian trio in the 5000m comprising Hagos Gebrhiwet, Imane Merga and the prodigious 17-year-old who won in Rome in a world-leading time of 12:58.39, Yomif Kejelcha.

### **Thrilling two laps beckon**

It took a time of 1:43.56, the fastest run so far this year, for Ethiopia's world 800m champion Mohammed Aman to defeat Olympic silver medallist Nijel Amos of Botswana in Rome.

Amos, who clocked 1:43.80 on that night, will have his chance for revenge here, but the issue will be more complicated, indeed much more complicated, given the presence of resurgent Olympic champion and world record-holder David Rudisha.

The Kenyan, who has suffered with intermittent injury problems in the past couple of seasons, won in New York in the second-fastest time seen so far this year, 1:43.58.

Add to that two other men who have already dipped under 1:44 this season, Kenya's Job Kinyor and Pierre-Ambroise Bosse of France, and it is clear the final track event of the evening is set to be an outstanding race.

The same will be true of the men's 400m hurdles, where local hero Kariem Hussein – known in the many parts of the local media as the 'Swiss Pharaoh' because of his Egyptian origins – takes on a field including USA's 2005 world champion Bershawn Jackson, who heads this year's world lists with 48.09.

There is tight competition too in the women's 1500m, where the in-form Jennifer Simpson, Sifan Hassan and Dawit Seyaum, who finished respectively first, second and third in Rome, will be on the start line, as will Sweden's world champion Abeba Aregawi.

Swiss local star Mujinga Kambundji will contest the 200m, but she will be hard pushed to keep up with the world's two fastest women of last year, US Olympic champion Allyson Felix and European champion Dafne Schippers of the Netherlands.

Felix got her 2015 IAAF Diamond League campaign off to a tremendous start in Doha with a 21.98 200m, which equalled the IAAF Diamond League record. It was the fastest time in the world since her Olympic triumph three years ago.

Schippers, meanwhile, recently set a Dutch 100m record of 10.94 and will now be keen to better her own 22.03 national 200m record set last year in Zurich.

### **Lavillenie looking to put things right**

After his underwhelming performance on home soil last Saturday, when he could only finish joint fifth with a best of 5.71m in Paris, 2014 world athlete of the year Renaud Lavillenie has an early opportunity to get back to business as usual in the pole vault.

The world record-holder faces some of the event's strongest contenders in Germany's Raphael Holzdeppe, who beat Lavillenie to the world title two years ago and who recently cleared 5.92m, and Greece's Konstantinos Filippidis, who won in Paris with a national record of 5.91m.

The Olympic champion has won in Lausanne four times, his best performance of 5.87m being just four centimetres short of the stadium record set by USA's Brad Walker eight years ago. This looks like an attainable target by Lavillenie and, perhaps, several others.

The men's javelin event has already produced some of the kind of excitement generated by the men's high jump last year, and all the usual suspects are in the field including Finland's 2007 world champion Tero Pitkamaki, who threw 89.09m in Turku last month, Trinidad and Tobago's Olympic champion Keshorn Walcott, Czech Republic's world champion Vitezslav Vesely, who threw 88.18m at Birmingham last month, and the Kenyan who trumped that effort with his final throw of 91.39m, Julius Yego.

Fitness concerns may have forced Usain Bolt to cancel his planned appearance in the men's 200m, but the Stade de la Pontaise has what Bolt has described as "one of the best curves in the world".

This could bring out the best in South Africa's fast-improving Anaso Jobodwana, who has managed 20.04 this season, and Britain's Zharnel Hughes, who ran Bolt close in New York.

The men's shot put will bring together the best athletes from the USA and Europe as Germany's two-time world champion David Storl and Poland's double Olympic champion Tomasz Majewski face US champion and world leader Joe Kovacs as well as two-time world indoor champion Ryan Whiting.

The two US athletes who head the lists in the 100m hurdles this year, Sharika Nelvis (12.34) and Jasmin Stowers (12.35), look the most likely winners in this event, but the presence of four other top US hurdlers including 2008 Olympic champion and 2015 US champion Dawn Harper Nelson means nothing can be taken for granted.

Unfortunately an achilles tendon problem has robbed the women's high jump of Croatia's two-time world champion Blanka Vlasic, but the presence of Olympic champion Anna Chicherova and two-time European champion Ruth Beitia means the contest will be of the highest quality.

The first of the evening's Diamond League events, the women's discus, offers Sandra Perkovic, unbeaten in her four IAAF Diamond League outings this year, the chance to secure an early win in the Diamond Race but she will possibly have her hands full against Cuba's much-improved Denia Caballero, who recently produced a world-leading throw of 70.65m in Bilbao.

The men's 100m, which is not a Diamond League event here, brings together the two fastest men so far this year, USA's Justin Gatlin and Jamaica's Asafa Powell.

**Mike Rowbottom for the IAAF**

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