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Kenya's Kemboi Charges to Steeplechase Glory

By The Moscow Times

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MOSCOW — Kenya's Ezekiel Kemboi cemented his status as history's greatest steeplechaser to wrap up the action on day six of Moscow's world athletics championship in perfect fashion.

The mohawked Kemboi, 31, has won medals at the worlds dating back to 2003 in Paris. He began his gold-medal streak in Berlin four years ago. He also has two Olympic gold medals, one in 2004 and another in London last year.

"I'm so happy for this medal today," he said on Thursday, insisting that it was anyone's race. "These championships — it's an open game. Everybody wants to win. I'm so happy to have won."

Kemboi's 8:06.01 time on Thursday was roughly five seconds slower than the championships' record he set in 2009, but it was fast enough to elude his teenage countryman, Conseslus Kipruto, an up-and-comer in Kenyan steeplechase. France's Mahiedine Mekhissi-Benabbad,

the London silver medalist, prevented Kenya from the podium sweep with a bronze-medal time of 8:07.86.

In the women's 400-meter-hurdles, Zuzana Hejnova capped her best-ever season with gold in 52.83 seconds, the fastest this year and a massive 0.24 seconds off her previous personal best, which doubled as the Czech record. The silver went to Delilah Muhammad of the United States in 54.09 seconds, while her compatriot Lashinda Demus took the bronze half a second back.

In the men's version, Jehue Gordon of Trinidad and Tobago narrowly edged American Michael Tinsley to gold in a dramatic photo finish for his first senior medal.

Gordon won by one hundredth of a second, dipping at the line for a time 47.69 seconds as he and Tinsley shattered the best time in the world this year, previously 47.93 seconds.

The bronze went to Serbia's Emir Bekric in a national-record 48.05 seconds.

Elsewhere, Swedish runner Abeba Aregawi timed her final sprint perfectly to take gold in the women's 1,500 meters. Aregawi, who switched allegiance from Ethiopia last year, won a comparatively slow final in 4:02.67, ahead of Jennifer Simpson of the United States and Kenya's Hellen Onsando Obiri.

In the field, Ukraine's Bohdan Bondarenko won high jump gold setting a championship record of 2.41 meters and narrowly failing to clear Javier Sotomayor's world record of 2.45 meters by a centimeter.

Mutaz Essa Barshim of Qatar, one of the London 2012 bronze medalists, managed 2.38 meters for silver. The 22-year-old beat Canada's Derek Drouin, another third-placed jumper last year, into the bronze with the same result but fewer failures. That was a national record for Drouin.

Reigning Olympic champion Ivan Ukhov disappointed the home crowd after charging through the early heights but unexpectedly unable to overcome 2.38 meters, though his last attempt was interrupted by a medal ceremony. His 2.35 meters was good for fourth.

The women's triple jump didn't deviate too far from the form book as London 2012 silver medalist Caterine Ibarguen won gold with a world-leading leap of 14.85 meters.

The Colombian, also world silver medalist from Daegu two years ago, equaled the mark with her second attempt to go one better at Luzhniki Stadium.

That effort saw her displace surprise leader and two-time student games champion Ekaterina Koneva, who posted 14.81 meters with the previous jump

Defending world champion and world No. 1 Olga Saladuha was unable to improve upon a round-two jump of 14.65 meters and had to settle for bronze.

Friday sees five medal sets on offer: The women's hammer, the men's long jump, the men's shot put, the men's 5,000 meters and the men's 4x400-meter-relay.

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