



IAAF Worlds preview: Women's steeplechase

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★★★★★ (1 rating)

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Gulnara Galkina is arguably one of the most dominant athletes in the current era of world athletics. She has only ever lost one steeplechase final - but, unfortunately for her, that happened to be the 2007 World championships final.

She bounced back last year to win Olympic gold and became the first woman in the history of the event to break nine minutes - her third World record since breaking it in 2003. But there is still one thing missing from Galkina's medal cabinet - World championship gold.

Galkina has contested three steeplechase races this year, winning them all with ease. In Rome she defeated compatriot Yekaterina Volkova by a clear margin of six seconds. But Volkova will likely pose a stronger threat in Berlin.

Volkova is the only athlete to have won medals in all three global steeplechase finals since 2005, and is the defending champion, winning the Osaka final when Galkina suffered her only defeat to date. And with a PB of 9:06.57, she is the second fastest woman of all time.

Joining Galkina and Volkova on the Russian team is Yuliya Zarudneva, who has improved by leaps and bounds. Starting the year with a 9:54.9 PB, she ran 9:34.47 in May, improved another 10 seconds in June, then won the Russian title with another 10-second PB, clocking 9:13.18.

But perhaps the biggest threat to an all-Russian podium is the vastly experienced Spaniard, Marta Dominguez. The former two-time world 5000m silver medallist took up the steeplechase last year and went into Beijing as an underdog. But just when she moved up a gear on the last lap to move into medal position, she hit a barrier and did not finish.

This year, however, has gone much better for Dominguez and she has taken the Spanish record down to 9:09.39, the fastest time in the world this year. Dominguez is a European champion, indoors, outdoors and on the cross-country. She is yet to win a world title, but at the age of 33 Dominguez may have finally found the event that brings her global glory.

The dark horses this time round, however, could come in the form of US athlete Jenny Barringer. American record-holder Barringer is undefeated in the steeplechase this year and although she has not set a PB in her specialist event, she has smashed all of her other PBs - including a sub-four-minute clocking for 1500m.

Leading the African challenge is World junior record holder and Olympic sixth-placer Ruth Bisibori. She has clocked 9:17.85 this year, but finished only fourth at the Kenyan world trials. The winner on that occasion was former World junior champion Gladys Kipkemboi, while 9:22.33 athlete Milka Chemos was third, making up the Kenyan team for Berlin.

Other potential challengers include Tunisia's Habiba Ghribi and Ethiopian duo Zemzem Ahmed and Sofia Assefa.



By: Getty Images

Gulnara Galkina-Samitova heads to Berlin as the only woman ever to break nine minutes in the 3000m steeplechase.

