



LIGNANO'S 22ND INTERNATIONAL MEETING

Location: Lignano Sabbiadoro
Venue: Municipal Stadium
Type of event: Sport
Date: Tuesday, 19th of July 2011
Track: Mondo Super X Performance

(Italy)

AT THE END OF JULY, THE MUCH ANTICIPATED INTERNATIONAL ATHLETICS SPORT SOLIDARITY MEETING WAS CONCLUDED; IT FOCUSED THE ATTENTION OF ATHLETIC FANS ON LIGNANO SABBIAADORO. MANY BIG NAMES, OF THE CALIBER OF ASAFA POWELL AND OSCAR PISTORIUS, STEPPED ONTO FRIULI'S SOIL ALL IN THE NAME OF SPORT.

A REGION MADE FOR SPORTS

Oscar Pistorius has been the center of attention of all major international sport media. Due to his stunning time of 45.07 in the 400m, this South African athlete has established his presence at the Daegu World Games as well as the 2012 London Olympic Games. This is an impressive achievement, only reached due to the huge sacrifices endured through long and gruesome athletic training. It is not by chance that this important personal record was achieved on Friuli's soil and this makes all of those who worked hard to give this region a reputation for its high quality athletic facilities very proud. The Mondo track that Pistorius competed on, certainly made him self-confident, but beyond that the athlete has found here an environment that he himself has defined as "ideal to run".

NEW ATHLETICS FROM FRIULI

Giorgio Danisi, a member of Nuova Atletica del Friuli (Friuli's New Athletics) the organizer of the latest meeting, told us that Pistorius is not the only athlete who has chosen this region as his favorite training ground. "The first to get here was **Powell** in 2002 – he says – At the time nobody knew him, but he kept coming back and with him came many other athletes. Jamaicans have made this their home and the Americans are coming too. They like it here because they find a special environment made of athletic enthusiasts and excellent facilities. When in 2006 some of those athletes decided to stay a bit longer, because they liked it here, they asked us to find them accommodation and we were very happy. In no time, we found the appropriate place. It is the "Fra i Pini (Among the Pines)" Hotel owned by such an amazing person (Vaccari) that his guests call him "papy". For as long as three months these boys live there as a family. It is funny to think that all of this was born out of a non-profit association founded in 1974. A long time has gone by and everybody can see the results.

THE CITY OF SPORT AND BENSTARE



Immediately after his race, Pistorius left Lignano and moved a few kilometers away to the Gemona's sport center. We went there to have a chat with the person who prepared the track Pistorius used for his training and with Pistorius himself to better understand the reasons for such a choice. In Gemona, we met with **Paolo Bulian of B-Trend**, the company that managed the construction of the training center picked by Pistorius. We asked him how such a significant facility could be established. "It was Gemona's Mayor, Paolo Urbani – answers Bulian – who came up with the idea; he was assisted by the center's project manager, **Enzo Cainero**, and supported by the **Friuli Venezia Giulia Region Sport Department Chief Elio De Anna**". A sport facility of this relevance positions itself within a much wider plan called: "Gemona, the City of Sport and Well Living". It has received a well-coordinated support not only from local and regional institutions but also from **Udine's University** and with the assistance of people experienced in the construction of high-level sport facilities. "Right from the beginning – says Bulian – Mondo made the athletics track while B-Trend built the adjacent parallel straight track and related equipment (also produced by Mondo): throwing cage, high jump, obstacles. It is important to note that the straight track is fully covered. It allows the training to proceed even in adverse weather. The track was put together in 120 workdays. It was a significant effort compensated by the attendance of Pistorius as well as some of the most prestigious South-African athletes who started their training at the beginning of July".

ONE-ON-ONE WITH THE CHAMPION

While we chat with Paolo Bulian, our idol joins us, Oscar Pistorius himself. Meeting him now, with the press on his back asking him about his qualification for London 2012, has been quite an achievement. In spite of that he appears serene and at ease. He shakes our hands and smiles; it does not take much to feel comfortable. Beyond the usual conventional exchanges, we move straight to the questions.

SM: Oscar, why did you pick Gemona for your training?

OP: I picked it because it is a fantastic place to train. All the equipment and facilities that I need are available here. Tracks are perfect for running and to attempt to run ever faster. On top of that, this is a beautiful place. The town is very quiet and everybody is very kind to me because they know that I came here to train and improve myself. Everybody here loves sports and running and I truly feel at home.

SM: What do you think are the advantages of this track?

OP: I believe that the best characteristics of this track derive from its surface and the technology behind it. In case of rain, for example, water runs off the track leaving no puddles behind removing any difficulties to the runner. That is a significant advantage because it allows training under all atmospheric conditions, the response of the surface is excellent too. Other tracks I have used for training are a lot harder and rigid; on this one running is a pleasure. I truly believe that this is the best place for training.

SM: How much longer will you stay in Italy for your training?

OP: I got here at the end of May and I think I will stay, probably, for another week. I will then go back to South Africa to be with my family and my dogs. Later I will come back for another week before going to the San Diego's World Championship and then, maybe, for two more weeks. In the next two months, I will go back and forth.

SM: Had you ever been in Italy before?

OP: Yes, I have been several times in Italy. It is a place with many tracks for athletics and, considering that in South Africa it is very difficult to run in summer, I prefer to come to Europe and above all Italy, which is a central nation with plenty of opportunities.

SM: If you were asked to give advice to young people, why would you recommend athletics?

OP: This is an interesting question because it allows me to talk about sports. Sports, above all team sports, but generally all, push young people into healthy and very stimulating activities. Watching TV or playing video games do not require any physical effort and does not keep the body in shape. Sports teach respect, hard work and demand a constant and total engagement. They can also offer great satisfaction when one can achieve his desired goals. Sports also teach boys and girls the pleasure of being together. I believe that sports are also important for the parents who see their children play in the open air, get out in the sun and perhaps take the dog out as well. Sport is health for the whole body.

SM: Can you describe your typical day?

OP: My typical day is rather boring! (Laughter) I get up when I would like to stay in bed a bit more, around eight o'clock in the morning, and I get ready for my two training sessions. Depending on the weather, I plan my training sessions: only one or none at all, if it is impossible to go on track. Running is a sport that does not require long training hours when compared to other sports that may engage the athlete for 6/7 hours a day. About three hours a day is appropriate because it is a very intense training. When I am in South Africa, I run for two/three hours at most. The eating habits are very important. I must eat in proportion to my running, a lot of green vegetables and fruits, white meats, chicken or fish. Unfortunately, I cannot eat pasta. It is terrible. I am only allowed to have some carbohydrates when we hold long training sessions or if we work on long runs.

SM: How do you feel now that you got your qualification for London 2012?

OP: I feel Wonderful. It is an immense satisfaction reached at the end of a long, arduous work and engagement also characterized by a multitude of media positions. Some were positive, others negative. It is a marvelous opportunity but also a serious challenge. I am very happy to have performed in Lignano in such a way as to deserve the qualification. I was able to get to 45.07 which is one of my best times. In Lignano, everything went well. I know that now I am facing even harder work and that I cannot relax after this success because a very important challenge awaits me. There are big expectations, but also more commitment and hard work!



