



GIANNI BRERA CIVIC ARENA

Construction start: **1805**
 Inauguration: **1807**
 Design: **Luigi Canonica**
 Owner: **City of Milan**
 Capacity: **10,000 seats**
 Completion of work: **1827**
 Sports: athletics, football, **American football, rugby.**
 Dimensions: **238 x 116 m**

Sport Architecture
 (Italy)

IN SPITE OF ITS TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF AGE, THIS AMPHITHEATER, BUILT BY NAPOLEON, STILL IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TRACK & FIELD STRUCTURES IN ITALY. DUE IN PART TO THE TRACK BUILT BY MONDO, IT IS IN FACT ONE OF THE SITES PREFERRED BY THE BEST INTERNATIONAL TRACK & FIELD ATHLETES.

200 YEARS OF HISTORY

Designed in 1805 by the neo-classic architect Luigi Canonica, the Milan Civic Arena, over its 200 years of history, has hosted all kinds of events, not just sport, before becoming the ideal Track & Field place in the Lombard capital city. Still today, it remains the only structure in the city capable of hosting high level Track & Field events. Under Milan's Municipality management, in the '90's it was substantially renovated such that it could stay up to date with all new IAAF rules. In 2002, the venue has been dedicated to Gianni Brera, a sport journalist and writer.

THE TRACK

Over the years, the Arena's track has been replaced or overhauled several times. The historical track, made of hardened black earth, that initially was 500 m long, was reduced to 400m in 1963, in accordance with the latest international rules, and paved with the same red earth that is used for tennis courts. In the early '70s, taking advantage of new technologies, the old track was fitted with a synthetic resin lining. The most recent refurbishment took place in 2007 when a Mondo track was installed. "Having verified its residual elasticity - remembers Roberto Franz, director of Mondo's Sport Turf & Outdoor Sport Division -, a new Sportflex SX Classic 12mm layer was bonded over the existing track, also laid by Mondo in 1977. To achieve the characteristics requested by IAAF and to obtain certification, the correct thickness for the new flooring was determined through laboratory tests". Athletes' comments on the new track have all been very favorable; they like its speed and promptness, two characteristics required to achieve the best results. "It is a competition track, ideal to assure best performances; it is not by chance that it has allowed very many important results in the past few years; athletes are happy to come here to race on this track. David Rudisha, for example, after this years' meeting, said he would return in 2012 to attempt to conquer a new 800m world record", remarks Franco Angelotti, president of Milan's Notturna Organizing Committee meeting, the most important Track & Field event in the Lombard capital.



THE ARENA AND ATHLETICS

Today, the Civic Arena is the meeting place for the "Atletica Riccardi 1946" society; within it, the society promotes training for young athletes and the competition "Milan fastest boy and girl". The Arena has also hosted international Track & Field competitions since 1913; during its history, it has produced 12 world records. The most prominent events recently held are the 1996 IAAF Grand Prix final, the 2007 Europe Cup final and the 2009 Italian Absolute Championship. The most prestigious though is the annual gathering for the International "Notturna di Milano" meeting that over the years has seen the attendance of some of the most acclaimed, both national and international, Track & Field athletes.

THE "NOTTURNA DI MILANO"

"The "Notturna di Milano" - remembers Franco Angelotti -, was born in the '70s only to be suspended for about 20 years, until in 1998, it was decided to re-start a new Notturna. Since then the meeting has been held uninterrupted with the exception of the 2006 edition cancelled because of the IAAF de-certification due to excessive track wear and in 2007 when, with the new track in place, Milan hosted the Europe Cup final which forced the cancellation of the Notturna". The Notturna was restarted in 2008 with an edition that saw the prominence of two Italian female athletes: Elisa Cusma and Antonietta Di Martino. In 2009 the meeting was dedicated to the late Candido Cannavo' who was the director of the Italian sport newspaper "La Gazzetta dello Sport". Main athletes of the 2010 edition were the three times 100m European champion Christophe Lemaitre, the 800m world champion Caster Semenya and Andrew Howe who, in the 200m, has conquered the meeting's record. The 2011 edition has not been a disappointment with the attendance of 15 Daegu World Field & Track Championship medal conquerors and more great champions like David Rudisha, Marcin Lewandoski, Oscar Pistorius, Antonietta Di Martino, and Simona La Mantia. The Notturna di Milano, just as Track & Field in general, suffers however, for the indifference that in the Lombard capital generally surrounds the athletic sports activities as a whole.

SPORT BENEFITS

"It is difficult to organize the Notturna – confirms Franco Angelotti -, because the entrepreneurship dominated city provides a weak response. The Notturna is not just about sport, but a promotion for the city's Track & Field as well. Aside from the public institutions, without which we could not hold the event, the industry and banking world remains deaf to our requests not only for the lack of support for the Notturna but also the sport groups that are active on the territory with thousand of young people. This is quite sad because when a young person is involved in sports it is likely he or she will become a good citizen; besides, sports also save on the financial burden of the national health institutions because, as demonstrated by research carried out in other European countries, young, sport involved people are healthier and more disease resistant".

MILAN AND ATHLETICS

What once was, together with Rome, the most important city promoting Track & Field activities in Italy, today performs a secondary role. This is mainly due to the pathetic conditions of its sport facilities and the lack, during the last few decades, of an effort to revive the city's athletic interest. "The problem is not just lack of financial resources; the real problem is a matter of culture – comments Franco Angelotti. If sports were perceived not as a cost but rather as a social investment, the financial support would probably be available. When, as an example, roads are damaged by severe weather conditions, repairs are promptly executed because they are considered essential for people to go to work safely; sport should be seen in the same fashion. If young people do not have access to sport facilities, there is a risk that they will pursue alternative activities that, in some cases, will not turn them into good citizens".

NOT JUST SPORT

"For a long time, now, a debate has been going on regarding the use of the Arena for events that have nothing to do with sport – says Roberto Franz -. Track & Field activities are also penalized by sport events that prevent the use of the track for training: rugby and soccer tournaments and other sports. Heavy stress on the track is also induced by trucks, forklifts and other vehicles that, several times during the year, are rolling over it to prepare for concerts and other non-sport activities. Normally a track like the one fitted in the Arena should last up to 15 years, but its actual life varies significantly depending on the kind of activities performed on it. Concerts and other non sport events certainly do not help". "The use of the Arena, during the summer period, for extraneous activities prevents or makes difficult to organize Track & Field events – adds Franco Angelotti. Of course, we must understand that the municipal authority must face financial costs and therefore a reasonable equilibrium must be obtained. Everything would be easier if Milan possessed more adequate facilities". If one considers that the most important Track & Field facility in Milan is frequently unavailable and that Milan is the only European city with more that a million people that does not possess a Track & Field dedicated venue, one realizes the extent to which this city has been left behind and how much this failure negatively affects the national Track & Field performance.

"What Milan needs is better facilities because if it is true that the Arena's track is the best in all of Lombardy, it is equally true that this stadium was built more than 200 years ago with all the parking difficulties determined by its central position. Ideally, Milan should have a sport facility dedicated to Track & Field similar to the one in Florence. In addition to the high performance track, required for valid sport events, multiple training tracks are required in the various sections of the city. Besides the one in the XXV April center, there is a need for at least two or three more that could be linked to athletic activities by schools and sport groups in each section", concludes Franco Angelotti.



