

# World championships javelin, 2005: (BBC discovers we have no athletes either)

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## Abstract

A short overview of the world championships javelin final in Helsinki 2005 and the revelation today when the BBC officially discovered we have no athletes either. Coming on top of the shock of Wimbledon when it was discovered once again we have no tennis players, it is understood there are now high level discussions to have only pundit discussions and trackside interviews with anybody who happens to be passing, interspersed with action replays of British triumphs such as Agincourt, the 1966 World Cup, Virginia Wade winning Wimbledon in 1977 and London being awarded the 2012 Olympics, for that essential feel-good factor.

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## 1 Overview

It started with Steve Backley being interviewed around 4pm. The wind was really blowing and he pointed out that this would make things very difficult. That is the last we saw or heard of him because the BBC would not like to use anybody who actually knew anything about the event and it was the last sensible thing said about the competition. Fortunately it was raining so hard that the BBC had to show some of it because the Finn audience was as usual raving about the jav and wildly indifferent to 10,000m heats and the narcotic charms of Brendan Foster who, bless him, could put a shark to sleep.

The event started in dreadful conditions. It was bucketing down. Nick Nieland did not qualify as he unfortunately got knocked out in the last round by the Estonian who eventually won. So once again, no Brit athletes in a World final. In fact during the whole day, I saw only three Brit athletes, Tim Benjamin, Kelly Sotherton and Jo Pavey. That I think was it.

While it was pouring down, most of the athletes were struggling to make 80m. The BBC commentator made the telling comment that this is because the javelin is slippy. Clearly he has not heard of towels or resin or indeed javelins, (shouldn't those athletes be running round the track ? What's that long stick they are carrying ? Is it the pole thingy ?).

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Makarov then opened out on the third round and got an 83m in and was looking good - the first time anybody had thrown through the point properly and got the elevation right for the wind. The javelin stuck in at around 30 degrees instead of around 50-60 as most of the other athletes were managing so he got the flight right. The young Finn, Sitipaki or is it Siiiiittiiiiipaaaaaaaaaakiiiiii or something, (there is a rumour that in Wales in the 6th century, all the vowels were rounded up and deported to Finland), looked overwhelmed and threw very poorly - no extension and far too tense with all the expectation. He simply had no control and was only just around 80m some 11m down on his season's best. Ivanov was off form also as was Frank.

4th round. The Estonian was obviously wired and it had stopped raining and was not at all bad. This throw was the business - he reached back and held it perfectly for the strike and wallop, straight through the point. Incidentally, we nearly missed this as the BBC had decided to inject a little more excitement into dull old athletics by showing us a replay of London getting the 2012 Olympics in Singapore. Anyway it flew 87.17m. This wasn't a fluke as he got an 85+ later. Then Thorkildsen (the one with the tea-cosy on his head) got going. He looks a very affable young man and was really enjoying it. Each round he crept closer finishing I think with 86.40 or so, and in the end it was a very close run thing and he lost with dignity and great good humour. None of the other athletes really got into it, so it was the Estonian whose name sounds like a cat bringing up a fur ball, Thorkildsen and Makarov as one, two and three and a pretty good competition considering the conditions earlier. What a wonderful occasion for Estonia and their first ever world gold. They beat us in the Eurovision song contest as well but then who doesn't.

No doubt heads will roll at the BBC for showing so much of a field event.

Now the good bit - the BBC have finally noticed amidst all the trackside interviews, action replays of the 1966 world cup final, action replays of us being awarded the 2012 Olympics, endless discussion of all kinds of completely useless frippery, that WE HAVE NO ATHLETES. Oh dear. Sue Barker girlfully struggled with this concept but then she is used to it from Wimbledon as WE HAVE NO TENNIS PLAYERS either. Well two. So she started a discussion.

Seb Coe then reminded everybody that these championships were nearly in London, and wouldn't it have been terribly embarrassing to have no athletes in it. Fortunately, we were judged too incompetent to have it in London saving everyone from this dreadful loss of face. There followed a long discussion of why we are so crap. Coe, Johnson and Jackson all basically said the same thing and I hope UKA are listening. Our coaching infrastructure and support is completely shot, well surprise, surprise and its not as though we haven't been telling them for years or anything. I was half tempted to send them an e-mail with the heading:

\*\*\*\* BREAKING NEWS \*\*\*\*

BBC discovers we have NO ATHLETES. Shock, horror. Have they been abducted by aliens ? Why do we have more commentators in Helsinki than we have athletes ? Could commentators take some athletes with them as hand luggage ?

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Actually the worst thing is that I'm sure UKA know exactly what's wrong but seem to be thoroughly incapable of doing anything about it. The most depressing thing heard was that we should be bringing in foreign coaches presumably for fear of embarrassing ourselves at the Olympics by not having any athletes there either. It does not seem to occur to them that UK coaches might benefit from a little payment as well, to allow them to live whilst spending the enormous amount of time required these days to perfect their skills. It similarly does not seem to have occurred to anybody that the UK is a world leader in sports science and biomechanics - how the hell do we fail to capitalise on that ?

We could of course play our trump card as host and request that obesity become an Olympic sport then we will be quids in, innit, although Florida would be expected to be fiercely competitive in the prestigious super-heavyweight class where light is noticeably bent in the competitors' gravitational field.

Your correspondent now has a private bet that one or more of our sports supremos will suggest that we buy in world-class athletes with citizenship plus financial deals in time for the games but perhaps I'm really getting a little too cynical there.