TIME ANALYSIS
FOR THE
IAAF World Championships
LONDON 2017
800 m Women’s

Dr Brian Hanley and Dr Athanassios Bissas
Carnegie School of Sport

Stéphane Merlino
IAAF Project Leader
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Event Director</th>
<th>Project Director</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr Brian Hanley</td>
<td>Dr Athanassios Bissas</td>
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<td>Louise Sutton</td>
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<td>Josh Walker</td>
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INTRODUCTION

The women’s 800 m final was held in the late evening of August 13th. The heats were held three days earlier on August 10th, with the semi-finals the following evening. In the six heats, the first three finishers qualified automatically, and the six fastest non-automatic qualifiers also progressed. There were three semi-finals; the first two in each qualified for the final automatically, along with the two fastest losers. The average speeds for each athlete over every 100 m segment are included in this report, as well as a graph of each athlete’s position at each 100 m split. The split data were provided by SEIKO. The results of the final are shown below.

Table 1. List of abbreviations used.

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<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>Q</td>
<td>Automatic qualifier for next round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q</td>
<td>Qualified for next round as fastest loser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DQ</td>
<td>Disqualified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL</td>
<td>Leading time in the world this year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNF</td>
<td>Did not finish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PB</td>
<td>Personal best time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>Season’s best time</td>
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Heat 1

Figure 1. The mean speeds for each 100 m segment for each athlete in Heat 1.

Figure 2. The position of each athlete after each 100 m segment in Heat 1.
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### 4100  Balciūnaitė, Egle (LTU) Q SB

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**IAAF**

*Leeds Beckett University*  
*Carnegie School of Sport*
Heat 2

Figure 3. The mean speeds for each 100 m segment for each athlete in Heat 2.

Figure 4. The position of each athlete after each 100 m segment in Heat 2.
<table>
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Heat 3

Figure 5. The mean speeds for each 100 m segment for each athlete in Heat 3.

Figure 6. The position of each athlete after each 100 m segment in Heat 3.
### 4209 Semenya, Caster (RSA) Q

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Posn. 1

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Posn. 2

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Posn. 3

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Posn. 4

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Posn. 5

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<td>15.92</td>
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<td>15.79</td>
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<td>15.78</td>
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</table>

Posn. 7
Heat 4

Figure 7. The mean speeds for each 100 m segment for each athlete in Heat 4.

Figure 8. The position of each athlete after each 100 m segment in Heat 4.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
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<th>200m</th>
<th>300m</th>
<th>400m</th>
<th>500m</th>
<th>600m</th>
<th>700m</th>
<th>800m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>(KEN)</td>
<td>Race Time</td>
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<td>1:46.39</td>
<td>2:00.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Sharp, Lynsey</td>
<td>(GBR)</td>
<td>Race Time</td>
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<td>27.61</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

---

**IAAF**

**Carnegie School of Sport**
Heat 5

Figure 9. The mean speeds for each 100 m segment for each athlete in Heat 5.

Figure 10. The position of each athlete after each 100 m segment in Heat 5.
<table>
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Figure 11. The mean speeds for each 100 m segment for each athlete in Heat 6.

Figure 12. The position of each athlete after each 100 m segment in Heat 6.
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Figure 13. The mean speeds for each 100 m segment for each athlete in Semi-final 1.

Figure 14. The position of each athlete after each 100 m segment in Semi-final 1.
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**Race Times:**
- **100m:** Times for the 100m distance.
- **200m:** Times for the 200m distance.
- **300m:** Times for the 300m distance.
- **400m:** Times for the 400m distance.
- **500m:** Times for the 500m distance.
- **600m:** Times for the 600m distance.
- **700m:** Times for the 700m distance.
- **800m:** Times for the 800m distance.

**Posns:** Positions of the athletes in the race.
Semi-final 2

Figure 15. The mean speeds for each 100 m segment for each athlete in Semi-final 2.

Figure 16. The position of each athlete after each 100 m segment in Semi-final 2.
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| 4166 | Cichocka, Angelika (POL) Q SB | Posn. 2 |
| Race Time | 100m | 200m | 300m | 400m | 500m | 600m | 700m | 800m |
| 100m | 14.11 | 28.69 | 44.16 | 59.69 | 1:15.29 | 1:30.25 | 1:44.99 | 1:59.32 |
| 400m | 14.11 | 14.58 | 15.47 | 15.53 | 15.60 | 14.96 | 14.74 | 14.33 |
|   | 59.69 |   |   |   |   |   |   | 59.63 |

| 4350 | Lipsey, Charlene (USA) q | Posn. 3 |
| Race Time | 100m | 200m | 300m | 400m | 500m | 600m | 700m | 800m |
| 100m | 13.76 | 28.07 | 43.39 | 58.98 | 1:14.33 | 1:29.56 | 1:44.24 | 1:59.35 |
| 400m | 13.76 | 14.31 | 15.32 | 15.59 | 15.23 | 14.68 | 15.11 |   |
|   | 58.98 |   |   |   |   |   | 1:00.37 |   |

| 3911 | Sharp, Lynsey (GBR) q | Posn. 4 |
| Race Time | 100m | 200m | 300m | 400m | 500m | 600m | 700m | 800m |
| 100m | 13.57 | 28.09 | 43.48 | 59.14 | 1:14.58 | 1:29.87 | 1:44.43 | 1:59.47 |
| 400m | 13.57 | 14.52 | 15.39 | 15.66 | 15.44 | 15.29 | 14.56 | 15.04 |
|   | 59.14 |   |   |   |   |   | 1:00.33 |   |

| 4227 | Büchel, Selina (SUI) | Posn. 5 |
| Race Time | 100m | 200m | 300m | 400m | 500m | 600m | 700m | 800m |
| 100m | 13.72 | 28.26 | 43.69 | 59.31 | 1:14.80 | 1:30.06 | 1:44.81 | 1:59.85 |
| 400m | 13.72 | 14.54 | 15.43 | 15.62 | 15.49 | 15.26 | 14.75 | 15.04 |
|   | 59.31 |   |   |   |   |   | 1:00.54 |   |

| 4100 | Balciūnaitė, Egle (LTU) SB | Posn. 6 |
| Race Time | 100m | 200m | 300m | 400m | 500m | 600m | 700m | 800m |
| 100m | 14.11 | 28.52 | 43.97 | 59.48 | 1:14.94 | 1:30.06 | 1:45.30 | 2:00.48 |
| 400m | 14.11 | 14.41 | 15.45 | 15.51 | 15.46 | 15.12 | 15.24 | 15.18 |
|   | 59.48 |   |   |   |   |   | 1:01.00 |   |

| 4135 | Verstegen, Sanne (NED) | Posn. 7 |
| Race Time | 100m | 200m | 300m | 400m | 500m | 600m | 700m | 800m |
| 100m | 13.71 | 28.17 | 43.53 | 59.12 | 1:14.52 | 1:29.76 | 1:44.92 | 2:00.92 |
| 400m | 13.71 | 14.46 | 15.36 | 15.59 | 15.40 | 15.24 | 15.16 | 16.00 |
|   | 59.12 |   |   |   |   |   | 1:01.80 |   |

| 4275 | Ajok, Docus (UGA) | Posn. 8 |
| Race Time | 100m | 200m | 300m | 400m | 500m | 600m | 700m | 800m |
| 100m | 13.86 | 28.40 | 44.05 | 59.51 | 1:15.14 | 1:30.44 | 1:46.19 | 2:02.00 |
| 400m | 13.86 | 14.54 | 15.65 | 15.46 | 15.63 | 15.30 | 15.75 | 15.81 |
|   | 59.51 |   |   |   |   |   | 1:02.49 |   |
Semi-final 3

Figure 17. The mean speeds for each 100 m segment for each athlete in Semi-final 3.

Figure 18. The position of each athlete after each 100 m segment in Semi-final 3.
### 3660 Niyonsaba, Francine (BDI) Q

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### 4090 Wambui, Margaret Nyairera (KEN) Q

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Figure 19. The mean speeds for each 100 m segment for each athlete in the Final.

Figure 20. The position of each athlete after each 100 m segment in the Final.
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**Semenya, Caster (RSA) WL**  
Posn. 1

**Niyonsaba, Francine (BDI)**  
Posn. 2

**Wilson, Ajee (USA)**  
Posn. 3

**Wambui, Margaret Nyairera (KEN)**  
Posn. 4

**Bishop, Melissa (CAN)**  
Posn. 5

**Cichocka, Angelika (POL) PB**  
Posn. 6

**Lipsey, Charlene (USA)**  
Posn. 7

**Sharp, Lynsey (GBR)**  
Posn. 8
COACH’S COMMENTARY

The 800 m event is one of the most tactically challenging track event in athletics as it is not run in lanes, yet still run at speeds well above critical speed (~120 to 140% of speed of VO2 max. or 80 to 85% of maximum sprint speed (MSS))\(^1\). In other words, there is very little room for tactical errors since they come at a very high metabolic cost given everyone is running so close to maximum speeds. Depending on the individual athlete’s fibre type, and the overall time for the race (e.g., 1:45 for men is metabolically different from 2:00 for women), the 800 m is truly at the cross-roads of metabolism, with energy source production being between 50 and 70% aerobic\(^2\), with the rest of energy coming from glycolytic and stored phosphogen sources (anaerobic metabolism)\(^3,4\). The ~15 s longer 800 m race time for women pushes their event to be more aerobic\(^2\) and more similar to the energy system requirements of the 1500 m, which is probably one of the main reasons why more women attempt the 800 m and 1500 m double\(^5\) (e.g., both Caster Semenya and Angelika Cichocka made the finals in the 800 m and 1500 m events), whereas more men become event specific specialists.

It is obvious Ajee Wilson (USA) tactically enjoys leading as she has led nearly every race all season. The final was no different, as she led through the initial 200 m in a split of 27.13 s. These fast first 200 m splits in 800 m racing certainly have implications for both those wanting to run 1:55, as well as those who want to win a medal – as the tactical position at this point was critical for making the top-4 (other than Semenya), which indicates that for the majority of the field there wasn’t time later in the race to make up the ground. The pace slowed a bit after 200 m, as Wilson and Francine Niyonsaba then co-led through 400 m in ~58 s flat. The race then exploded over the last 300 m, as Semenya clocked a 41.49 s for the last 300 m (1:50 800 m pace!) and dominated for the win in a new PB and WL time of 1:55.16 (8\(^{th}\) fastest 800 m ever run!). Some of the strongest incoming odds for a winner in the entire 2017 IAAF World Championships were Semenya at 82% to win, and she did not disappoint.

There are several elements of this race to unpack that truly give indications that the women’s 800 m WR of 1:53.28, all the way back from 1983, will be under serious threat by Semenya. First, with a 400 m PB of 50.40 and 1500 m PB of 4:01.99, there is little doubt that Semenya would have both the speed and endurance (or anaerobic speed reserve (ASR))\(^6,7\), see details in men’s 1500 m write up on ASR) for an assault on the 800 m record. Second, in this 800 m event, Semenya did a lot of running well off the rail (including almost completely in lane 2 for the 3\(^{rd}\) corner (400 to 500 m); calculations indicate she ran an extra 6 to 8 m, which would indicate a time of 1:54.2 to 1:54.5 if she just ran on the rail (similar to her tactics in the 1500 m). Finally, Semenya achieved a negative split in this race with a first 400 m of 58.53 s and the second 400 m in 56.63 s (~1.90 s), which is the exact opposite approach of modern 800 m world-record pacing tactics that almost always dictate that a positive, to more even, split would be advantageous for record setting\(^8-10\).
Unlike the men’s 800 m, the women’s 800 m event went almost perfectly to the incoming rankings, as athletes ranked 1, 2 and 3 in the world ended up gold, silver and bronze (Semenya, Niyonsaba and Wilson, respectively). The global depth in the women’s 800 m event right now is impressive, as all eight finalists broke 1:59.

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Prof. Andrew Jones (University of Exeter) and PhD candidate Gareth Sandford (Auckland University of Technology) for their editing and constructive feedback on this analysis.

**References**


CONTRIBUTORS

Dr Brian Hanley is a Senior Lecturer in Sport and Exercise Biomechanics. Brian’s particular research interests are in the area of elite athletics, especially race walking and distance running, as well as the pacing profiles adopted by endurance athletes. He is also interested in musculotendon profiling of athletes to appreciate internal limiting and contributing factors affecting performance, in addition to longitudinal studies measuring the technical development of junior athletes as they progress to become senior athletes.

Dr Athanassios Bissas is the Head of the Biomechanics Department in the Carnegie School of Sport at Leeds Beckett University. His research includes a range of topics but his main expertise is in the areas of biomechanics of sprint running, neuromuscular adaptations to resistance training, and measurement and evaluation of strength and power. Dr Bissas has supervised a vast range of research projects whilst having a number of successful completions at PhD level. Together with his team he has produced over 100 research outputs and he is actively involved in research projects with institutions across Europe.

Dr Trent Stellingwerff serves as the Director of Performance Solutions / Innovation & Research at the Canadian Sport Institute Pacific. He is also the Director of Sport Science & Sports Medicine for Athletics Canada. His primary sport and research focus is via his physiology and nutrition expertise, primarily to Canada’s National track and field team. Trent has more than 80 peer-reviewed scientific publications in the areas of exercise physiology, skeletal muscle metabolism and performance nutrition and supplementation.