

## Shange races to 2nd place in Portugal

Lebogang Shange (HPC) got oh so close to being compared to Nelson Mandela on Saturday when he finished second in the 20km IAAF Race Walking event in Rio Maior, Portugal.

Alvaro Martin, last year's European under-23 silver medallist, got the biggest win of his career when he took the men's title in 1:21:03. Shange was in second place, 20 seconds later.

Ecuador's Andres Chocho, winner of the South American Race Walking Championships last weekend, finished third in 1:21:58, showing very little after-effects of his hectic schedule.

The South African record holder's performance did not go unnoticed. Apparently the race-organizer told Shange afterwards that he was rooting for him because in the 25-year history of the event no athlete of Africa has ever managed to win it.

"The organizer told me that if I had won he would have considered me to be the 'Mandela' of African Race Walking, which would have been a great honour," the HPC-athlete said.

Shange's consistency is beginning to pay dividends. He is currently the leader on points in the IAAF Race Walking Challenge series, which is a first for South African athletics.

Last month Shange's fearless approach to racing led to him finishing third at the Circuito Internacional de Marcha 20km Race Walk event in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

Being a perfectionist means that Shange is not really happy with his performance on Saturday. He did not say it outright but when he talked about how his race played out it was clear that he does not race to finish second.

His definition of frustration is to have his legs 'die' on him in the last kilometre and then getting passed.

It seems as if Shange is starting to get the hang of racing aggressively.

“On Saturday I immediately took the lead. While trying to work out what my race tactics would be I played with the idea of making the pace hard for a kilometre or so and then slowing down slightly over the next six kilometres.”

Shange, Martin and Chocho were racing shoulder to shoulder up to 15 kilometres but then the real battle started.

Chris Britz, Shange’s coach, is satisfied with the way Shange raced.

“My main challenge from now until the Olympic Games will be to make sure that Lebogang does not overdo things. He has to realize that there is still a long way to go before Rio. If he wants to be fit for the Games, he will have to save his legs.”

This week Shange will try to defend his South African title in Stellenbosch. Afterwards he plans to go to a training camp in Spain.

His next international race will be the IAAF World Race Walking Team Championships (7-8 May) in Rome.

\*\*\* In Podebrady, Czech Republic, on Saturday, Anel Oosthuizen not only managed to qualify for the Olympic Games in Rio when she finished 17<sup>th</sup> in a time 1:34:49, but her time is also a new South African 20km race walk record.