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## Fast season starts for Powell, Campbell-Brown and Jones in New York



Veronica Campbell-Brown scorching to a comfortable 50m victory in New York (Victah Sailer)

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New York, USA - The inaugural **U.S. Open**, held in Manhattan's Madison Square Garden on Saturday (28) night, was the scene of sparkling season openers for sprinters and hurdlers with something to prove. The final four events of the opening meet in the **2012 IAAF Indoor Permit Series** were all contested over the rare 50-metre distance, and they produced convincing wins for four veterans who were up against deep and younger fields.

### Powell and Campbell-Brown take the sprints

In the evening's pair of finales, Jamaicans dominated the 50m dashes and New York's always-faithful Jamaican contingent gave them bigger cheers than the home athletes received. Asafa Powell, 29, a

two-time outdoor World 100m bronze medallist, belied his reputation for underperforming on big occasions by leading from gun to tape - in his first indoor race since 2004 - and edging his frequent relay teammate Nesta Carter, 5.64 to 5.67.

"I had a slip in the blocks," Powell said, "but as soon as I got out, the race was over." Justin Gatlin of the U.S., the 2005 World 100m and 200m champion who returned in 2011 from a four-year ban after a drug sanction, was a well-beaten fourth. The race was billed as a world record attempt, but Canadian Donovan Bailey's 5.56 from 1996 survived easily.

Reigning World indoor 60m and World outdoor 200m champion Veronica Campbell-Brown, 29, blasted from the blocks and opened a wide gap over the women's 50m field; she won in 6.08 to American Jessica Young's 6.20.

"This is a step in the right direction. Now I have to get back to training. Hopefully this is a preview of what is to come," she said. Campbell-Brown, or "VCB," as her name was abbreviated by chanting fans, will attempt this year to become the first-ever winner of three Olympic 200m titles.

### **Jones is back**

Just as the Jamaicans had swept the sprints Americans dominated the hurdles. Twice World indoor 60m Hurdles champion Lolo Jones produced the second fastest 50m Hurdles time in U.S. history to hold off a high-quality field in 6.78. Only heptathlon World record-holder Jackie Joyner-Kersey's 6.67 from 1995 is faster among American performances. The race was the first for Jones, 29, since she underwent surgery for an impingement to her spine.

"In August, I couldn't walk," she said. "I got here and thought, 'Why'd I decide to come here for my first race back? This is a very tough field!'"

Tiffany Porter of Great Britain edged Kellie Wells of the U.S. by a scant 0.01 in 6.83 to finish second. Dawn Harper, who won the 2008 Olympic 100m Hurdles after Jones hit the penultimate hurdle while leading, was never a factor and finished fifth. During a post-race interview, three-time World decathlon champion Dan O'Brien was cheered by the crowd when he produced a magazine featuring a cover photo of Jones in an elaborate swimsuit and persuaded her to sign it.

Another two-time World indoor 60m Hurdles gold medallist, American Terrence Trammell, 33, seems ageless: he won his first World title in 2001, took another in 2006 and was second in 2010. He got a great start in the 50m hurdles here and held off his countryman David Oliver, who finished one place behind Trammell, just as he had in that 2010 Worlds race. Trammell's time was 6.45; Oliver was five-hundredths of a second behind.

### **Kiplagat over Lagat**

In the men's mile, Bernard Lagat was denied a return to his winning ways on this track, where he is a crowd favorite, having won a record eight Wanamaker Mile titles before losing last year. This time, the 37-year-old Kenyan-born American, who is the reigning World indoor 3000m champion and won an unprecedented 1500m/5000m double at the 2007 World Outdoor Championships, was upstaged by 22-year-old Silas Kiplagat of Kenya who, like Lagat, was a silver medallist at last year's outdoor Worlds in Daegu, Korea. Kiplagat, who ran the 1500m in Daegu while Lagat ran the 5000m, led with less than 400m remaining in a tactical race here. Lagat attacked first, with a lap and a half left in the 11-lap race; Kiplagat pounced half a lap later, regained the lead, and held on to edge Lagat, 4:00.65 to 4:00.92.

"I'm really ready now," the unperturbed Lagat said afterward about beginning his campaign to make a fourth Olympic team and contend for the 5000m gold in London.

The women's mile, which was contested by an all-U.S. field, ended in an upset win for Brenda Martinez in 4:34.62; Anna Pierce, who was fourth in the 2010 World Indoor Championships at 800m and was starting a comeback here after a down year in 2011, was well back in third at 4:39.97.

### **A 600-yard dogfight**

Men's 400m and long-hurdles specialists battled in an exciting race over the rare 600-yard distance. Tabarie Henry of the U.S. Virgin Islands took the pace out hard; he was passed at about 300m by Bershawn "Batman" Jackson of the U.S., the 2005 World champion at the 400m Hurdles, who seemed headed for victory until Rennie Quow of Trinidad, the 2009 World bronze medallist at 400m, made a huge move with half a lap left. Quow caught Jackson four steps from the tape and out-leaned him, 1:11.20 to 1:11.31; Henry was a close third in 1:11.75.

Fantu Magiso of Ethiopia easily won a lackluster women's 800m in 2:07.54 ahead of high schooler Ajee Wilson, last year's World Youth champion, who clocked 2:09:09. Keshia Baker and Dawn Dorr, both of the U.S., fought hard in a much tighter 500-yard race, with Baker prevailing, 1:03.74 to 1:04.35.

### **No fluke for Whiting**

Americans won two of the evening's three field events. Reigning World champion Jesse Williams took the high jump at 2.29m and called it a good start to his season; a video screen showed him performing trick slam-dunks with a basketball.

Ryan Whiting's 21.16m Shot Put victory over three-time World indoor champion Christian Cantwell and 2005 World outdoor champion Adam Nelson can no longer be called an upset; it was his second straight victory over them in the Garden. The event was augmented by a bit of gimmickry, which went unexploited: none of the competitors managed to land a throw in a small triangular area at the center of the shot sector, near the 20m mark; any shot that had hit the triangle would have earned its putter a US\$2,000 bonus.

Jillian Schwartz of Israel won the pole vault at 4.52m after Jenn Suhr of the U.S., the 2008 Olympic silver medallist, no-heighted while opening at what was Schwartz's eventual winning mark. On each attempt, Suhr had easily enough height for a clearance but came down too close to the bar to avoid it.

### **Stuart Calderwood for the IAAF**

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