

86.34 m! — Sedykh sets new World Record in Cork City Sports

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ON THURSDAY, July 5th Joe Holden was "just winding down". Certainly such was no more than his due, given the excitement of his previous two months and, in particular, that of the evening of July 3rd. It was on that bright Tuesday, at close to 7pm that the culmination of all Holden's late nights had borne fruit, and in a manner for which even he could hardly have hoped. It was Joe Holden, chief Public Relations Officer for the Cork City Sports, who had set about securing a Russian team to appear in Ireland's most prestigious international track and field meeting and who, to his own amazement, had succeeded in enticing the two finest hammer throwers in the world today.

"When I first became PRO for the Cork City Sports three years ago", he mused from behind his desk at the Bank of Ireland, "I told the committee that we should not be satisfied with just getting a handful of the leading Irish athletes; we should go ahead and try and get the best in the world. Needless to say, they thought I was mad, but we extended an invitation to the Russians anyway and, this year, we finally got a commitment....for 1985.

But the day the Soviet boycott of the Olympic Games was announced, I got in touch with the Russian Embassy again and told them that we had a whole different ball-game on our hands. After that I heard nothing for two weeks; then, one day, the phone call came....."

In addition to Vjacheslav Bor-doukov in the triple jump, Lubov Gourina and Irina Podjalovskaja in the women's 800m, Anatoly Kram-olyuk and Valeriy Abramov in the 5000m, and Alexander Kostetskiy in the Harp Lager Mile, Holden was elated to learn that both Yuriy Sedykh (Olympic hammer champion from 1976 and 1980) and Sergei Litvinov (World Champion and world record-holder) were also scheduled

to appear and that, furthermore, they were both intending an assault on Litvinov's own world mark of 84.14m set in 1983.

County Cork is the adopted home-land of Pat O'Callaghan, one of Ireland's most revered athletes (having claimed the hammer gold medal in the Olympic Games of both 1928 and 1932), and it did not take long for enthusiasm to build to a peak sufficient to promote a com-parable trepidation about the some-what limited capacity of the Mardyke Stadium to cope with the throngs who were promising to appear.

But, filled almost to bursting point by the time the two omnipotent Soviets made their appearance at 6.30pm, it was simply appropriate, rather than problematic, that such a number should witness the greatest hammer competition ever staged, and in the land which gave the event its birth.

Throwing first, it was Litvinov who grasped the spectators' attention with the speed and agility of his technique but, fouling his first attempt, it was left to the more powerful Sedykh to hold those same spectators in raptures. In the split second that it took for the implement to emerge from the throwing cage, it was obvious that the first legal throw of the competition was going to be enormous, and as it sailed way beyond the world record mark, the ball and chain invaded new territory and Sedykh captured new hearts.

Without exaggeration, many spec-tators would have left the Mardyke contented, having witnessed that single throw and nothing more. But that Sedykh's gigantic opener was a prelude to an enthralling competition lent an aura of virtual disbelief to the subsequent proceedings. At 86.34, Sedykh had added no less than 2.20m to his compatriot's previous best and, apparently, placed the world record beyond reach....for