

Subject: Silva Defends Pole Vault At The Mall Title; Lavillenie Wins Men's Title

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Silva Defends Pole Vault At The Mall Title; Lavillenie Wins Men's Title

WEST DES MOINES, Iowa – Renaund Lavillenie, the men’s 2012 Olympic gold medalist from France, and Yarisley Silva, the women’s 2012 Olympic silver medalist from Cuba, won the sixth annual Drake Relays Pole Vault at the Mall presented by Hy-Vee on Wednesday (April 23) at the Jordan Town Creek Center.

A boisterous crowd was on hand to witness some of the best men's and women's pole-vaulters in the world compete in the individual and team competitions.

Lavillenie, the 2013 Drake Relays Vault in the Mall runner-up, posted the best mark on the men's side clearing the bar at 18-8 3/4 (5.71m).

Steve Lewis, a 2012 Olympian from Great Britain, turned in the second-best jump on the men's side, leaping over 18-3 3/4 in his third attempt, to match the leap of Lavillenie.

Both jumpers were unsuccessful in clearing 19-0 3/4 (5.81m), a height that would have established a new event record. Lavillenie won the competition based on clearing 18-8 3/4 on his second attempt.

“It was good for me to take the win today and to be here because it was a crazy atmosphere,” Lavillenie commented.

“It was awesome to get a win and tie out with Renaud,” stated Lewis. “It gives me plenty of confidence for the season – this is my second competition back and I didn’t compete indoors so this was like a little taste of an indoor season for me, which is awesome. The atmosphere was electric like last year, but this year I knew what to expect and it was a really good time.”

On the women's side it came down to a battle between the defending champion Silva and Kylie Hutson, the 2011 Pole Vault at the Mall champion.

Silva, a Cuban who came into the event with the second-best women's mark in the world this year at 15-1 (4.60 m), cleared a height of 15-4 1/4 (4.68m) on her first attempt to establish a world-leading mark.

Hutson also surpassed the 15-4 1/4 plateau on her second attempt to match Silva's world-leading mark at the height. Both she and Silva missed on all three attempts at 15-8 1/4 (4.78m) to give Silva the individual championship.

"This was my second time that I competed in this competition in the United States and I feel very happy," said Silva. "Today it was great to compete against some of the best in the world. I respect them all. I'm very happy to be here. I like the environment and the people and the competition."

In the combined championship, Hutson and Brad Walker, a two-time Olympian, captured the title with a combined height of 34-0. Walker cleared a height of 18-8 3/4 (5.71m), while Hutson surpassed 15-4 1/4 (4.68m).

"This was my fourth time here, so it's always exciting coming here and I always enjoy it," Hutson explained. "There's people lining the runway and just clapping and cheering. Everything was so great. I took a lot of jumps tonight, but it's also exciting for me because I took a lot of jumps and I was really tired. That's always a good sign for later in the year when I'm on bigger poles. I love it here, every year."

Rounding out the men's field was Jack Whitt, Mark Hollis, Mike Arnold, and Shawn Francis registering clearances of 18-5, 18-5, 18-1 and 17-0 3/4, respectively.

On the women's side, Becky Holliday, cleared a height of 15-0 1/4 (4.58m), while Mary Saxer and April Steiner-Bennett registered jumps of 14-9 (4.38 m), 14-4 1/4 (4.28m), respectively. Marion Lotout failed to surpass the opening height of 14-4 1/4 (4.28m).

-DRAKE RELAYS-