

# The Golden Fly Series

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by Armin Margreiter

## ABSTRACT

*Designed to address the challenge of raising the profile of athletics again, the Golden Fly Series is the world's first-ever international city centre athletics tour. The concept sees athletes compete in the long jump and pole vault on the world's largest mobile track and field apparatus, the FlySwat - which has been developed specifically for the series - set up in iconic city centre venues. Spectators are close to the action so they can feel the emotions of each attempt. Series events also include activities to introduce children and young people to athletics and educate them about a healthy lifestyle. The response to the first year of the tour (2013) was positive with large crowds witnessing the competitions in four cities and significant coverage in the media. This case study, written by the creator of the series, describes the concept, covering the background, aims, technical information, marketing activities and an evaluation of the first year. He concludes by stating the concept can work and that the organisers are constantly seeking ways to develop it and extend its boundaries.*

## AUTHOR

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## Introduction

**T**he Golden Fly Series is the world's first-ever international city centre athletics tour. The concept brings the leading Olympic sport - athletics - to the heart of some of the world's most beautiful cities and helps to educate the public about both the sport and a healthy lifestyle through linked activities for children and youths. Meeting the call for new ideas to develop athletics and complementing the more traditional forms of in-stadia competition, it could prove to be an excellent tool that helps to shape the future of the sport.

Launched in 2013, the series concept builds on an idea that was introduced eight years earlier at the Golden Roof Challenge meeting in Innsbruck, Austria, and then expanded to iconic locations in the German cities of Cologne and Munich in 2012. The events in the series provide entertainment for all the family. Entrance is free of charge and fans can observe elite athletes in close proximity competing on the world's largest mobile track and field apparatus, the FlySwat, which has been

developed specifically for the series. Spectators can feel the rush of the air as the athletes power down the runway and share the emotions of each attempt, making each event a unique and highly exciting experience.

In addition to attracting massive crowds in each of the cities visited, the series received wide media interest and obtained significant TV coverage. The awareness generated, has already drawn interest from cities in all corners of the globe.

This purpose of this article is to give a brief description of the concept, including an evaluation of the first year of the series and prospects for the future.

## Background

Athletics has faced a number of challenges in recent decades. On the one hand, populations in Europe and elsewhere have taken to a more passive lifestyle due to increased demands from work or school, not to mention the attraction of electronic games, and thus have less time for sport. This and changing nutrition habits have

led to an increase in obesity and other health issues, particularly among youngsters.

On the other hand there is the challenge within the sport world from relatively new activities such as skating, BMX biking and adventure sports, which due to their 'cool' image catch youthful fans, both as participants and as spectators. There is no getting away from that fact that the interest in our sport has declined and, quite often, stadiums have not been filled for elite competitions. It seems the Queen of Olympic Sport has rather lost impetus.

However, we at the Golden Fly Series sincerely believe athletics is irreplaceable. Contests in the most basic movements of running, jumping and throwing will always be fascinating and athletics offers the basic training for any other sport. We have the most modern training methods, decades of experience and thousands of years of tradition, so why not use them to reinvent athletics as a 'cool' sport?

In 2005 the first Golden Roof Challenge meeting was staged in Innsbruck, Austria. The idea was to try to counter the current trend of



*FlySwat Long Jump Pit*

the sport by offering pole vault and long jump competitions, not in the traditional stadium but in the picturesque Altstadt (Old City). It was the first elite field event competition to take place in a city centre and it proved a hit with spectators. So much so that the meeting has been staged annually to the present day.

In 2012 we took the concept and a specially designed mobile installation for the competition to the German cities of Cologne and Munich, where, again, the audience response was very positive. This led to our decision to create an international series to link the events and promote the sport in general. Thus the Golden Fly Series was born.

The belief underlying the concept is that by revamping and modernising athletics, the oldest organised sport in the world, its profile can be raised once more.

## Aims

The following aims for the project feature in the criteria presented to future hosts of Golden Fly Series events:

- Generate interest in the sport of athletics
- Use a flexible, safe mobile athletics apparatus that meets both the requirements of elite athletes and IAAF regulations for the acceptance of record performances
- Create a new dimension for athletes to compete, complementing traditional stadium athletics
- Educate the population about a healthy lifestyle and the importance of physical activity for children by including children/youth events in the programme
- Make the events of pole vault & long jump easily accessible to the public viewing close up

## Technical Information

### **General description**

The FlySwat is the innovative mobile installation on which Golden Fly Series competitions take place. The apparatus has been developed over several years, with intense testing to cre-

ate an eye-catching and secure setup for the pole vault and long jump. With some additional development the FlySwat can be adapted for the triple jump, high jump and sprints events.

A careful study was made to ensure that the apparatus would be flexible and could be adapted to all terrains: steep gradient, uneven ground such as cobblestones, narrow streets, etc. It has an adjustable base structure that permits height variations to be compensated (max. variation 70cm). Once assembled, it is vibration free - longitudinal vibrations are eliminated by the 12 tonnes of quartz sand in the landing pit, which acts as an anchor, and transverse vibrations are eliminated by special stabilisers in the runway - permitting optimum run-up speeds.

All elements of the FlySwat are IAAF certified and the apparatus can be balanced with millimetre precision, thus making it possible to respect the IAAF Regulations for mobile equipment and ensure performances can be ratified. The precision of the assembly is professionally checked for each competition (during the 2013 series, the maximum differential was 2mm).

The materials used for the FlySwat are an intelligent mix of solid steel elements and high-strength aluminium components, which reduces the weight while optimising the stability of the apparatus at critical points. With all associated equipment it can be transported in an articulated truck or two shipping containers.

For every competition venue, the Golden Fly Series' team engineer makes a site visit to the proposed location. All the relevant features are measured and a detailed computer aided design is prepared. In this way, the host city and the series organisers are well prepared to for the installation work. The assembly and dismantling of the FlySwat can be achieved in less than 24 hours with zero impact on the venue making the whole event environmentally friendly.

*Technical specifications:*

Overall length long jump/triple jump version:  
 72.30m/83.30m  
 Width: 1.50m  
 Weight: 25t (including 12t sand)  
 Runway: up to 61.50m (Mondo synthetic surface)  
 Take-off board: Solid Oak  
 Long/triple jump pit: 11.00m/22.00m  
 Pole Vault Platform: 10.50 x 7.50m  
 IAAF Certified Pole Vault Mat:  
 Benz 8.00 x 6.00 x 0.80m

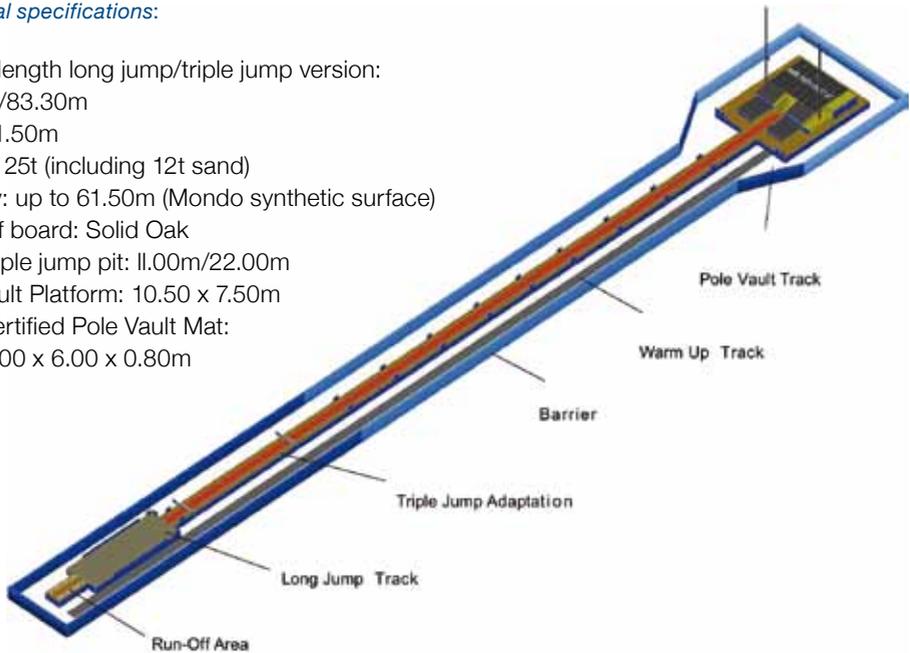


Figure 1: The FlySwat apparatus

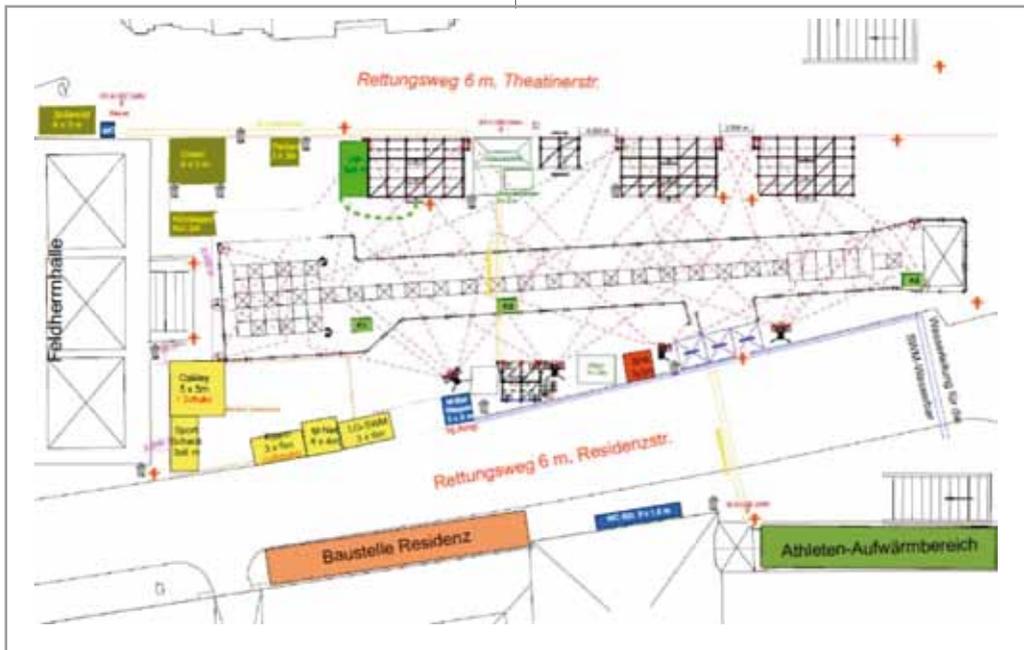


Figure 2: Layout for the Golden Roof Challenge meeting in Innsbruck, Austria, including the positioning of the FlySwat, video-feed camera positions and seating areas

## Marketing & Promotion

As a live spectator concept, a key marketing feature for a Golden Fly Series competition is the event presentation. To start with, the city-centre venues are selected for their accessibility and beauty and then professionally dressed with prominent and consistent branding. Next, a team of international announcers uses modern techniques, including music, to provide interest and entertainment in every moment (no dead time) and create an exciting atmosphere among the spectators. Finally, a live-feed video-wall shows all attempts and slow-motion action replays plus results to keep the audience 100% informed.

To meet the criteria set in the aims of the project, the series organisers have developed a communications strategy to publicise and promote the events both locally and internationally. The strategy emphasises digital and social media in addition to the more traditional media. Key elements of the work in this area are as follows:

**Website** - The Golden Fly Series Homepage: [www.goldenflyseries.com](http://www.goldenflyseries.com) publishes all the latest news and results.

**Livestream** - A cooperation with Eversport was fixed to distribute a high-quality livestream from Golden Fly Series Events worldwide.

**YouTube Channel** - Golden Fly Series created its own channel on YouTube, sharing the excitement of our competitions on the web, including trailers and highlight videos: [www.youtube.com/channel/UCUtwmluko0S1rjIVS-gE7ZXA](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUtwmluko0S1rjIVS-gE7ZXA)

**Facebook** - Golden Fly Series is building a small but faithful community; we use it as an outlet for regular updates and news: [www.facebook.com/GoldenFlySeries](http://www.facebook.com/GoldenFlySeries)

**Twitter** - @GoldenFlySeries - Live feedback and updates from our competitions started in the last season and is growing steadily.

**Flickr** - Photo feed channel with pictures from all our events, available for download [www.flickr.com/photos/goldenflyseries/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/goldenflyseries/)

**TV Coverage** - In 2013 the series agreed a two-year contract with IEC in Sports and an additional deal was negotiated with Quattro Media to ensure highlights and newsreel coverage of the series will be distributed widely in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, as well as in Asia. The product has found acceptance with broadcasters and a total audience of 60 million is expected. A live signal package is being developed and should be ready for all the tour stops from 2016.



Figure 3: Golden Fly Series Facebook page

## Kids Programme

Children are the future of athletics, both as participants and fans, so it is important to educate them about the sport and how it can contribute to a healthy lifestyle. For this reason the Golden Fly Series requires all its tour stops to organise a side programme for children. Kids love to run and jump, so what better way to teach them than by organising special events on the FlySwat.

The local organisers have developed several scenarios to permit children to compete in jumps and sprints. For example, in Innsbruck the EUREGIO School challenge has been or-

ganised to link with the Golden Roof Challenge for the past five years. Eight thousand children from 200 schools in the neighbouring regions of Tirol (AUT), Sud-Tirol (ITA) and Trentino (ITA) compete in long jump competitions in their schools and local elimination rounds to qualify to compete at the final in Innsbruck on the day of the International Golden Roof Challenge – just before the elite athletes!



Figure 4: Golden Fly Series activities for children and youths

## 2013 Evaluation

The first year of the Golden Fly Series was a success with positive feedback from the participating athletes, the Austrian athletics federation and local organisers. A total of 64 elite athletes competed in the events including 12 World Champions, six World Championship medallists, five Olympic finalists and three more Olympic medallists. The best performance was a 5.80m vault in Cologne by Björn Otto (GER).

## 2013 Facts and Figures

- Between 60,000 – 70,000 spectators
- TV broadcasts reached 60 million
- Radio partners promoted and covered the event at all four stops
- There was wide coverage both online and in the written press
- Unique, photogenic locations in every city
- Live result of all events to LED Walls
- Slow-motion action with take-off board and cross-bar cameras
- Youth Programmes - Similar concepts have been used for the
- Golden Fly Series Tour Stops to develop the sport among young people
- Hundreds of kids competed on the FlySwat with thousands participating in the preliminary rounds to reach the final.

## Future Prospects

Although there are a number of challenges to be overcome, interest is growing in the Golden Fly Series concept and the indications for the coming seasons are positive. An exciting step forward will come in 2016 with new tour stops both in and outside of Europe. It is expected that the announcement of the new venues will increase media interest in the project, which in turn will enhance the programme.

One of our first development priorities will be to seek a special permit from European Athletics as soon as the series organisers can ensure adequate financial security to meet the permit criteria. Our plans also include developing the FlySwat and expanding into other disciplines including the triple jump, high jump, sprints and a Kids Decathlon.

An innovation already in place for 2015 is a radar-coupled laser line system called “Prime Line” developed for the series. The system is used in the long jump and triple jump where a laser line visible to the audience, media and athletes marks the leading distance to beat providing an extra dimension of interest.



2013 Golden Fly events

## Conclusion

The Golden Fly Series can be considered a very young project, but its first year of operation was a success, proving the concept can work, and indications for the future are positive.

The Golden Fly Series concept offers a plug-and-play entertainment solution, including the necessary competition apparatus, for local organisers. The unique presentation sees elite athletes perform in cross-fire on the FlySwat, thus creating a highly exciting event with no 'dead' period between attempts. Staging the events in city centres adds value to the host cities by showcasing their tourist landmarks. This innovative approach to athletics will help to bring the sport to new audiences by offering small venues the chance to host elite competitions.

As the Golden Fly Series concept develops, it is planned to make the FlySwat more versatile, add events to the repertoire and continue to produce a solid ex-stadium experience. As the series organisers, we are constantly seeking ways to develop the concept and extend its boundaries with the overall aim of polishing the athletics diamond and once again attracting large crowds of enthusiastic fans.

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