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Ennis in the frame to push Sotherton for honours

David Powell, Athletics Correspondent

Jessica Ennis underlined her potential to take medals at the Olympic Games and World Championships up to London 2012 and beyond yesterday. She improved her personal best score to win an IAAF World Combined Events Challenge heptathlon in Italy yesterday. It was a victory built on the foundations of a stunning first day.

In the opening event, on Saturday, Ennis equalled her best 100 metres hurdles time, recording 13.12sec, but even that was put into the shade by her performance in the high jump. Improving her personal best from 1.91 metres to 1.92, she then jumped 1.95 to equal the British record held jointly by Diana Elliott (1982) and Susan Jones (2001). Competing in Desenzano del Garda, Ennis also recorded a personal best in the long jump, with 6.40.

Finishing with 6,388 points, Ennis moved closer to Denise Lewis (6,831), Judy Simpson (6,623) and Kelly Sotherton (6,547) in the British all-time rankings. This follows her Commonwealth Games bronze and personal bests in the European outdoor and indoor championships in the past 14 months.

Yesterday Ennis, a student of psychology at Sheffield University, finished more than 200 points clear of athletes of the calibre of Marie Collonvill , of France, and Margaret Simpson, of Ghana.

Collonvill , who finished in the top eight at the last Olympics and World Championships, was runner-up and Simpson, the bronze medal-winner at the last World Championships, was third. Sotherton, who now has Ennis hot on her heels to become British No 1, was not competing.

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