



Delighted Lewis on top of the world after winning gold

By John Salvado
 Athletics

Tamsyn Lewis yesterday continued her stunning late-career renaissance when she claimed her first individual world title.

Lewis outlasted a strong field including multiple world and Olympic champion Maria Mutola of Mozambique to claim the 800m gold medal on the final day of the world indoor championships in Valencia, Spain yesterday.

Lewis has been a fixture on the global athletics scene since 1994, when she was selected in the Commonwealth Games 4x400m relay squad as a precocious 16-year-old. She has amassed 13 national titles over 400m and 800m, including a second straight 400-800 double last weekend in Brisbane.

There have also been a couple of Commonwealth 4x400m relay gold medals, while she was unlucky to just

miss a berth in the 800m final at the Sydney Olympics.

But until now, individual success had proved frustratingly elusive for the 29-year-old.

The world indoor 800m final had been billed as a battle between Mutola and Spanish star Mayte Martinez.

But Lewis grabbed the lead when a gap opened up with 350m remaining and despite being headed by Ukraine's Tetiana Petlyuk in the last lap, she fought back to claim the biggest victory of her lengthy career.

"When I saw that gap, I said to myself if I'm going to go down it might as well be in spectacular fashion, so I took it and from then on everything went perfectly," Lewis said. "I am in complete shock."

"I was happy to be in the final and then take whatever came from then on. But this probably wasn't in the script. It's amazing."

Lewis's winning time was 2min

2.57sec, with Petlyuk second and Mutola — who has won this title on seven previous occasions — third.

The Australian again paid tribute to older brother Justin, who has rekindled her love of the sport since taking over as her coach three years ago.

"We just came off our Olympic trials and I am really happy to have made the team in the 400 and 800m," Lewis said.

"In the past I have come to international competitions and I haven't run that great."

Lewis will earn \$US40,000 (\$A43,200) in prize money as just the fourth Australian to win a world indoor title and the first since Melinda Gainsford-Taylor in the 200m in 1995.

Meanwhile, pole-vaulter Steve Hooker produced a stunning jump of 5.80m to finish third and Craig Mottram finished fifth in the 3000m final.

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VICTORY: A stunned Australian Tamsyn Lewis after winning the women's 800m final at the World Indoor Championships in Spain yesterday. Picture: AP