

Athletes Show Some Color in Support of Gays

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Anna Chicherova of Russia competes in the women's high jump qualifying round. **Fabrizio Bensch / REUTERS**

Swedish high jumper Emma Green-Tregaro made a discreet but colorful show of support for Russia's gay community at the world championships on Thursday.

The 28-year-old painted her nails the colors of the gay pride rainbow flag for the qualifying round of the event and after needing just two jumps to reach the final will get the chance to show off her manicure again.

Russia, which hosts next year's Winter Olympics in Sochi, passed a controversial law in June outlawing the promotion of homosexuality.

"It felt right," Green-Tregaro told reporters, adding that she had gotten the idea after seeing a rainbow over the Russian capital. "I wouldn't say it was a protest — more of a statement

of what I think."

Swedish sprinter Moa Hjelmer also had her nails painted in the rainbow colors Thursday when she ran in the 200-meter heats at Luzhniki Stadium.

"Some teammates have done the same," Sweden team spokesman Fredrik Trahn said. "The federation has not discussed it. It is all up to the athletes."

Shocking pink was the dominant color of the 200 meters heats, with 100 meters gold medallist Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce's bright hair extensions and matching spikes blazing a trail across the Luzhniki Stadium track.

After her exertions in the shorter race, it was not surprising to see the Jamaican, aiming to become the first woman in 22 years to win a world championships sprint double, ease down near the end of a heat she won in 22.78 seconds.

Fastest time of the day went to three-time world champion Allyson Felix, who was more than happy to finally get a taste of the action, gracefully speeding to 22.59.

"These last days, I was watching the action on the TV and finally I could get out there," said the American, who with eight world championship golds to her name needs one more to set a record.

"I'm happy with my run today. I was focused on my start, on working the turn and easing comfortably on the home straight."

The sparse Moscow crowd had plenty to cheer about, with defending world champion Maria Savinova, the quickest of three Russian athletes, to go through to Friday's 800-meter semis.

In a fast heat, Savinova, also the Olympic champion, looked comfortable as she finished third to take the final automatic qualifying spot in 1:59.44. Heat winner Brenda Martinez of the U.S. had the best time of the round with 1:59.39.

There will also be three Russians in Saturday's high jump final with world and Olympic champion Anna Chicherova leading the way.

As was shown by the raucous support given to pole vaulter Yelena Isinbayeva during her emotional victory on Tuesday, the home athletes can expect more vociferous backing in the finals.

Trinidad and Tobago's Keshorn Walcott pulled off a massive upset when he won the Olympic javelin title in London, but a year on, having struggled with injuries for part of this season, he failed to make the world championship final, finishing 19th in qualifying.

Material from The Associated Press is included in this report.

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