



Best foot forward...

KEAGAN MITCHELL

Bellville Athletics Club star hurdler, Antonio Alkana, 26, reigned supreme when he won the men's 110m hurdles for a seventh consecutive year, at the Western Province Senior Championships, held at the Parow athletics track last month.

To top of his day, Alkana was crowned 100m sprint champion, in a time of 10.15 seconds to see off favourite Roscoe Engel, from Tygerberg Athletics Club, who had been champion since 2009.

His relay team also stopped the clock at 41.93 seconds to win the gold medal. It included 200m WP junior and senior champion Ethan Noble; bronze medallist in the 200m and 400m sprint events, Dyllon Scheepers; and Tyler Linnen, a finalist in the 100m sprint event.

Alkana will now hope to defend his 110m hurdle title at the Athletics South Africa (ASA) Senior Championships, in Potchefstroom, later this month.

However, he will have his work cut out for him when he comes up against the University of Pretoria's Tiaan Smith, who pushed him till the end in the men's 110m hurdles at the ASA speed series, in Germiston, in Johannesburg, a fortnight ago.

Alkana went on to claim the gold medal in a time of 13:52 seconds, followed by Smith and his teammate, Hamman Muntingh,

who finished third.

Alkana started his track and field season back in February when he won the gold medal in the 110m hurdles in a time of 13.86 seconds at the WP league 3 meet at the Parow athletics track.

There he went on to win the 100m sprints in a time of 10.26 seconds. Alkana also won the 110m hurdles event at the top 10 interclub meet in a time of 13.85 seconds, at the Parow athletics track, last month.

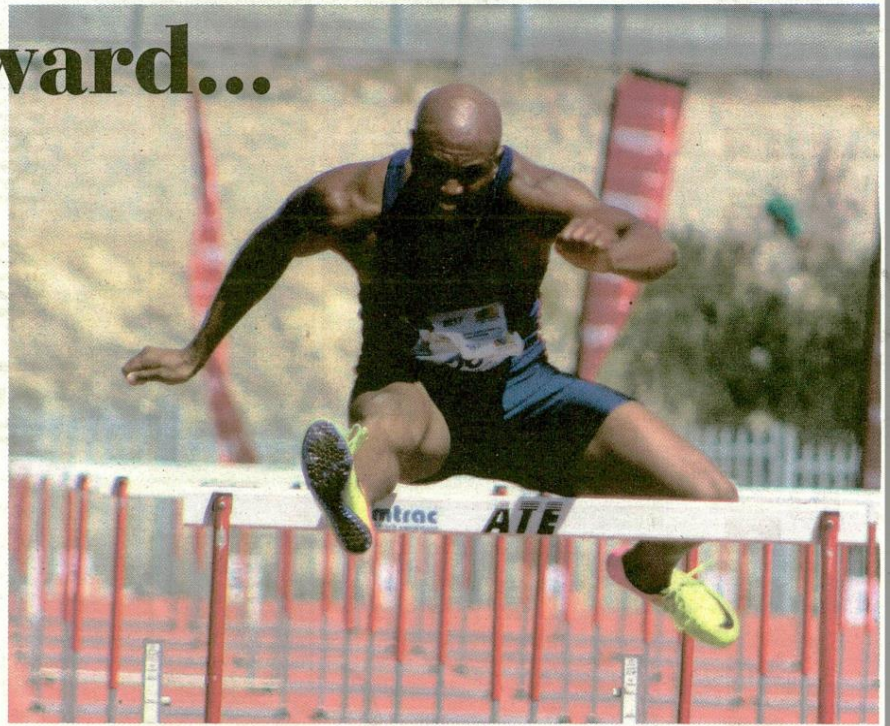
Like most athletes, Alkana said the plan is to stay injury-free and qualify for the world senior championships, in London, later this year.

"I am happy with the way my season is going. I am getting better race by race but there is always room for improvement. The goal is to run good times at nationals before I go over to Europe and take part in the diamond league meets. Long term goal for this year is to do well at the world champs," he said.

Last year, Alkana's lifelong dream came true, when he made the semi-finals of the 110m hurdles at the Rio Olympics.

"I enjoyed the experience and going up against the best in the world. I can always look back at my races, see what I did wrong and work on how to perfect it," he said.

Alkana won gold at the All African Games, in Congo Brazzaville, in 2015 and narrowly missed out on the semi-finals of the same



PICTURE: KEAGAN MITCHELL

■ Bellville Athletics Club's Antonio Alkana is in fine form ahead of the ASA national championships, set to take place in Potchefstroom, later this month.

event, at the world championships, in Beijing, in China.

"Beijing was a pleasant experience because it was my first major competition. The All African Games was a proud moment as I won the gold medal and set a new personal best of 13.32 in the 110m

hurdles. This was also a new games record," he said.

Alkana's athletics career started, in 2004, at Malibu High School, in Blue Downs. His breakthrough came in matric when he came fourth in the boys' under-19, 110m hurdles at the South African high

schools' championships, in Rustenburg, in the North-West province.

"All the hard work at training over the years had finally paid off. I never gave up and knew one day I would reach my dream of competing on the international stage," said Alkana.

