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Gift, Munyai's showdown with big guns

Teens out to upset favourites at SA Champs

By **Daniel Mothowagae**

While almost every pundit is placing their bet on big-name sprinters dominating the National Championships this weekend, rising sprinters Gift Leotlela and Clarence Munyai have vowed to crash the party in Potchefstroom, North West.

The Tuks High Performance Centre-based duo – who represented SA at the Rio Olympic Games last year – are showing glimpses of experience gained from last season and their speed is at another level.

Nicknamed “The Gift of Speed”, Leotlela, 18, has already stunned Olympic champion Wayde van Niekerk in a 100m final last month.

Munyai, 19, also showcased his immense potential when he clocked 20.10 sec at the Gauteng North League meeting last month.

“My goal in Potch is to take advantage of running with world-class athletes,” said

Leotlela, a sports science student at University of Pretoria.

The lad from QwaQwa, Free State, cited his 20.28 winning time – a new personal best – at the SA Junior Championships in Cape Town last week as his highlight so far.

“Not being able to defend my junior national title [in Cape Town last week] due to injury has made me hungrier to go out and run with the big boys,” warned Munyai, the defending senior 200m champion.

The Tuks High School matriculant opened his season with the African 200m junior record time of 20.10.

Both sprinters credited their veteran coach Hennie Kriel for turning them into flying machines since their union in 2014.

They aim to qualify for the IAAF World Championships in London in August.

“Machine Clarry”, as Munyai’s peers call him, said he doesn’t want to be remembered as “one of those guys who were fast”.

“[But] when people speak about Usain Bolt, they should also mention my name,” boasted the lad from Muldersdrift, Johannesburg.



Rising sprinter Gift Leotlela will line up in the short sprints at the SA Senior Championships in Potch this weekend. /

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