

OCKERT DE VILLIERS

SMART ADVICE is to never bet against Usain Bolt but it is not completely outrageous to imagine South Africa's Akani Simbine, pictured, spoiling the Jamaican's fairwell party at the IAAF World Championships in London in August.

If there was any doubt in Simbine's abilities, he snuffed it out on Friday night with his maiden Diamond League victory in Doha, Qatar.

Simbine claimed arguably his biggest victory of his career when he left Jamaican and former world-record holder Asafa Powell, Olympic podium finishers Justin Gatlin of the United States and Canadian Andre de Grasse, in his dust in the Qatari capital.

Dipping below 10 seconds for the sixth time this year and the 13th time in his career with a winning time of 9.99 seconds, Simbine became the first South African

African to win the 100m at a Diamond League meeting.

Running into a headwind of 1.2 metres per second, Simbine dipped first, well

ahead of the rest of the field despite a sluggish start.

"It was a good race and I'm happy with the result and how I executed my first international race," Simbine said.

"I'm excited and more positive about the season ahead and looking forward to going back to training and putting the

work in for the next races.

"I had a very average start and still feel like there's lots of work I need to do but happy with the win and especially winning against such a strong field."

Powell followed behind him in second place with a season's best of 10.08 with Qatar's Femi Ogunode rounding off the podium in 10.13.

While one can only speculate what an in form Simbine will do when he lines up against Bolt at the world championships, the duo is set for a dual in Bolt's final 100m race on home soil at

the JN-Racers Grand Prix in Kingston on June 10.

Former South African sprinter Mathew Quinn said: "Never bet against Bolt, you've got to remember he is just that good, I think Akani will be in the mix, he went from being blown away in the first round, then he becomes a semi-finalist (at Beijing World Championships) to finalist at the Olympics," Quinn said.

"This is his year to win a medal, he's got to go out there and mix it for a medal, he will believe he can win."

"He knows he came up

against the strongest field bar Bolt, Trayvon Bromell and Yohan Blake."

Simbine has shown the potential to become a world beater when he set a South African junior record with a time of 10.19 back in 2012.

He has since become one of the world's biggest sprinting prospects posting a national senior record of 9.89 a month before last year's Rio Olympic Games.

"He knows he can go out there and mix it with the oaks, he is at that level, and that is the cool thing where he is not getting lane one or eight

but flat bang in the middle," Quinn said.

"He becomes race favourite and people want to start beating him but the cool thing about it is he has the confidence to actually put up with that pressure."

In Rio Simbine finished fifth in a star-studded final clocking 9.94 with Bolt racing home for his third consecutive title in the short sprint with a time of 9.81.

It was Bolt's slowest winning time at the Games demonstrating his ability to win even when he is past his best.

Quinn believes for anyone

to beat Bolt in London they would have to run faster than 9.8 seconds.

Simbine's coach, Werner Prinsloo, told TaksSport they were looking at marginal gains to ensure his charge goes from a consistent 9.9-second athlete to running 9.8 times on a regular basis.

"For him to become a consistent 9.9s sprinter we will have to work on small specific details."

"The challenge for me as a coach will be good planning," Prinsloo said.

Meanwhile, Olympic 800m champion Caster Semenya continued her world domination in her specialist event racing to victory in a lightning fast world lead of 1:56.61.

Simbine's fine form makes him the man to beat

