



Mzansi's long jumpers lead the pack in Shanghai

By SUNSPORT REPORTER

LONG jumper Luvo Manyonga's coach at TuksAthletics, Neil Cornelius, says his athlete, arguably the hottest prospect in international long jump at the moment, sees tomorrow's Diamond League meeting in Shanghai, China, as a good dress rehearsal for the World Championships in London.

Cornelius said in Shanghai athletes might just be vying to get a psychological upper hand: "One good jump by any athlete could get the others to start worrying.

"It is not often you get a competition where seven athletes can boast a personal best of 8.40m and better."

Three are South African: Manyonga, Khotso Mokoena (8.50m) and Rushwal Samaai (8.49m).

Manyonga sets the pace, having registered jumps of 8.62m and 8.65m in competition this season.

He is reported to be the first athlete to jump further than 8.60m since 2009.

Lee-Roy Newton, his agent, says he can't remember when last any athlete has managed two attempts of over 8.60m so early in a season.

If everything goes according to plan Cornelius hopes the South Africans will send a clear message to the Americans that their domination in the long jump event is about to come to an end.

Current statistics inspire Cornelius' confidence, as the top five jumps on the IAAF list this season are all credited to South Africans.

Samaai's attempt of 8.49m is third best of the season so far.

Manyonga's 8.46m is the fourth best and Samaai's 8.35m slots in at fifth.

Manyonga has made no secret about the fact that he has his sights set on Mike Powell's long-standing world record of 8.95m set in 1991.

The Tuks athlete is clever enough not to make bold predictions. He prefers to let his legs do the talking and then he will mouth-off afterwards.

He said he believed himself capable of a few more really big jumps this season, but after last year's fiasco at the national championships in Stellenbosch, where he overstepped five times, he now realises the importance of making his first jump count.

"That was definitely a turning point in my career," Manyonga said. "My coach will never let me forget that a good first jump buys you five more."

The top six of last year's Olympic Games all compete tomorrow – Jeff Henderson (USA), Manyonga, Greg Rutherford (Britain), Jarrion Lawson (USA), Jianan Wang (China) and Emiliano Lasa (Uruguay).

