



Manyonga off to a flyer in Shanghai

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LUVU Manyonga annihilated his competition in Shanghai yesterday to win the opening long-jump competition of the international season. Olympic champion Jeff Henderson and nine others went into this Diamond League battle with the usual array of early-season weapons, akin to hand-grenades and assault rifles. But they were no match for the nuclear missiles unleashed by the charismatic South African on the sand pit.

Manyonga, the runner-up at the Rio

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Games by just 1cm, catapulted to 8.48m on his opening jump, beating the old meet record belonging to Australian Mitchell Watt by four centimetres.

He sailed to 8.49m on his third attempt and then leaped to 8.61m on his sixth and final bid, this time obliterating Watt's six-year-old Diamond League series mark by 7cm.

Manyonga recorded no-jumps on his second, fourth and fifth attempts.

"The track was really fast and that made it difficult and I did a few fouls and that was a distraction.

"I didn't get the distance today I wanted as I was looking for 8.80m, but I know it will come," added the Tlaxcala-based jumper, who is eyeing the 8.95 world record and ultimately the 9m barrier.

"My success has been down to hard work, training, dedication and commitment. I hope now to just go on and

win everything I can this season."

If Manyonga was a little disappointed yesterday, spare a thought for his outgunned competitors; the nearest was more than a full ruler length behind him.

Chinese jumpers Xinlong Gao, Changzhou Huang and Yaoguang Zhang took the next three places with 8.22, 8.20 and 8.19, seeing off Manyonga's compatriot, Ruswahl Samat (8.18), Henderson (8.03) and Emiliano Lasa of Uruguay (7.90).

Khoiso Mokoena, SA's only medalist of the 2008 Beijing Olympics with silver, was eighth in 7.85m.

LJ van Zyl won a three-way fight for second spot in the 400m hurdles, but they were all far behind American Bershaun Jackson, at 34 the oldest in the field.

Van Zyl, Jackson and fourth-placed Kerron Clement were survivors from the Beijing Olympics, where the two US runners took bronze and silver with the South African fifth.

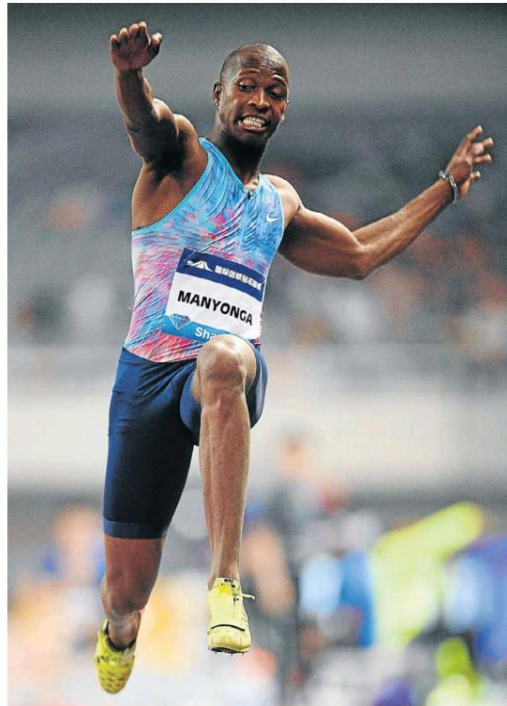
Jackson clocked 48.63sec yesterday while Van Zyl, 31, went over in 49.35 to edge out Rasmus Mägi of Estonia (49.38) and Clement (49.43).

"I started this race more aggressive this time," said Van Zyl. "I came here to run the qualification and I did."

His effort equalled the qualifying standard as stipulated by the IAAF world governing body of athletics, but it's still some way off the automatic A-standard that Athletics SA is demanding.

"My first time in Shanghai was in 2008 – nine years later I still enjoy to run in Shanghai."

In the men's 200m, young American Noah Lyles won comfortably in 19.90 to match the world lead Wayne van Niekerk set at the national championships in Potchefstroom last month.



LEAPS AND BOUNDS: Luvu Manyonga soars to new heights, while reigning Olympics sprint queen Elaine Thompson romps home in 10.78sec in the 100m in Shanghai yesterday Pictures: AFP