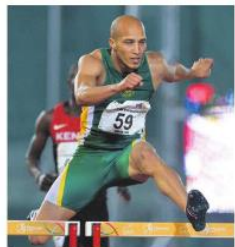




Fredericks on a mission at the start of his international campaign in Prague



FORMER Commonwealth champion Cornel Fredericks will be a man on a mission today when he starts his international campaign at the Memorial Josef Odlozil Meeting in Prague. Fredericks is fully aware that no fewer than 13 international athletes have already this season clocked times faster than 49 seconds in the 400 m hurdles, but no South African athlete has yet been able to do so.

South African 400 m hurdler Cornel Fredericks starts his international campaign today. **PHOTO: GALLO**

The Tuks athlete is for the moment South Africa's fastest hurdler, having run 49,27 seconds in March.

Constant Pretorius set a massive new personal best on Saturday by running 49,28 sec. At the end of last year his best time was 50,64 sec, which means that Pretorius has improved by more than a second.

The South African record holder, van Zyl, has so far run a season's best of 49,29 seconds.

It is interesting to note that in the history of South African athletics only 10 400 m hurdles athletes have man-

aged to dip under 49 seconds.

According to Fredericks, he and his friend, the Olympian Lindsay Hanekom, debated a few days ago as to what it will take to qualify for the final at the World Championships in London.

"We agreed that the international athletes have already set the standard and that the challenge for us as South Africans is to catch up. Without a doubt we need to start running sub-49 second times because that is the only guarantee to get invited to the bigger races which will enable us to get used to race under pressure."

Fredericks is hesitant to make any prediction about the time he might run tomorrow.

"I had a good three weeks of training and I am confident that I am capable of running fast times. Whether it is going to be in Prague is debatable. I felt I was on track to dip under 49 seconds before the South African Championships in Potchefstroom but as luck would have it I had to withdraw from competing due to lower back injury. I am only now starting to regain my confidence. So racing in Prague is going to be a case of "test-

ing the waters' to see where I am at the moment."

Fredericks is shortlisted to race at the Diamond League Meeting in Oslo (June 15).

All probably depends on how his race plays out today. He will definitely race in Samorin (June 17).

Hanekom is also racing in Prague. It is only his second race for the season, therefore he has no big expectations.

"It will just be great to be back on the track doing what I like. That is to race," said the Tuks athlete.

— SuperSport.