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Wayde's other planet

Occasion for an Ostrava celebration as Bloem sensation jolts Johnson's WR

OCKERT DE VILLIERS

THE WORLD is in awe of Wayde van Niekerk as the South African proved once again he is the heir apparent to the soon-to-be-vacant sprint king title.

Van Niekerk dismantled yet another Michael Johnson world mark when he posted a new 300m world best 30.81 seconds at the Ostrava Golden Spike meeting on Wednesday evening.

The South African knocked 0.04 off the previous mark Johnson set in Pretoria back in 2000.

"I had a nervy build-up because I've been avoiding the 300m and the 400m but I'm glad to finally break through that and it is a good step towards the 400m in Lausanne," Van Niekerk said.

"I'm feeling quite positive and let's see how it goes. I just need to keep on working and improving and hope to keep on making the country proud."

Van Niekerk was followed by Botswana's Isaac Makwala in second place while fellow South African Clarence Munyai posted a new junior world best of 31.61.

Munyai annihilated his national junior best taking more than a second off the time he posted earlier this year.

The previous world junior best of 32.08 held by America's Steve Lewis was posted in a one-lap race.

"It inspires me a lot because going into this race I think everyone knew Wayde was to run a world record and I also wanted to be part of that history," Munyai, a TuksSport/HPC sponsored athlete, said.

"It was one of the best races I've run and my aim was to run sub-33 and I nearly best. And I did that."

From the beginning I knew I had to come out really fast and run my own race.



"I knew the guys I was running with did 400m and if I used my 200m speed in the beginning it could be an advantage."

Van Niekerk is proving to be the rightful heir to Bolt's sprint crown breaking the Jamaican icon's meeting record in Ostrava.

He is the only man to have gone under 10, 20, 31, and 44sec in the 100, 200, 300, and 400m distances.

Flying below the radar in the 400m, Van Niekerk will be back in the blocks at the Lausanne Diamond League meeting next week for his first one-lap international

race of the season.

Boasting the South African 200m record of 19.84 and the new 300m world best, Van Niekerk's form suggests athletics enthusiasts can expect more fireworks in the 400m.

In his world record-breaking run at last year's Olympic Games, he came close to becoming the first man to dip below 43 seconds with a new global mark 43.03.

It is no longer beyond the realm of possibility for Van Niekerk to achieve what was once deemed impossible to go sub-43.

Meanwhile, 100m hurdler ace Rikenette Steenkamp became only the second South African to dip below 13 seconds in her specialist event.

The short hurdler posted a new personal best of 12.99, edging her within 0.05 of Corien Botha's national record.

"It is a big breakthrough even if it is just below 13 seconds. I believe it is a massive confidence boost especially against a strong field," Steenkamp said.

"It was an amazing experience."

"Two days ago I didn't even know I was going to run here."

I believe strong competition brings out the best in you. There were a lot of butterflies but the goal for the evening was to run sub-13."

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