



# Dimbaza speedster ready to shake it up with great man

By DAVID ISAACSON  
In Johannesburg

USAIN Bolt and Justin Gatlin head into the world championships in London this week, sharing identical 100m season's bests of 9.95 seconds with one other athlete.

Can you name him?

Well done if you were thinking South African, but it's neither of the usual suspects, Akani Simbine or Wayde van Niekerk (who are actually ranked higher).

No, the third local speedster in the mix is 'Tuks' student Thando Roto, who is looking to pull off a surprise or two in this event.

Roto, who is set to fly out with the SA-based members of the team yesterday evening, is scheduled to line up in the 100m heats in the opening session of the showpiece on Friday night (9.20pm SA

time).

And he's planning to stick around for the semifinals and final on the Saturday.

"I'm expecting to make the final," said Roto, 21.

Roto originally hails from the Eastern Cape, having grown up in Dimbaza township near King William's Town, not far from Phakamisa township, the home of Anaso Jobodwana, the 200m bronze medallist at the 2015 world championships.

Roto started out playing soccer, rugby and cricket on the streets with the neighbourhood kids.

"We made small bets," said Roto.

"Like for a packet of chips. Both teams would buy the packet and then we'd play.

"The winners would take the packet and go eat it."

It was only in high school in Limpopo, after his mother had relocated to Pretoria, that he discovered his talent for speed.

Off his own bat, he applied to get into 'Tuks' high school and won a spot.

The rest is history.

So how does he feel about facing legends such as Bolt and Gatlin, as well as the younger guns such as Andre De Grasse and Yohan Blake.

"Racing those guys doesn't worry me. I've raced Akani and Wayde and they're up there with them," he declares with a hit of bravado.

When Simbine flew into the top eight of the 100m at the Rio Games last year, he became the first South African to grace an Olympic final in 84 years.

No South African has reached the 100m final at a world championships to date; imagine two of them settling into the blocks at 10.45pm on Saturday. Simbine and Roto.

Van Niekerk isn't in this battle, instead on his 400m-200m double.

Roto set his 9.95 personal best at the Gauteng North championships in March, finishing second behind Simbine, who went 9.92. — DDC



THANDO ROTO

