



Makhanya and Team SA in high spirits in London!

By CHARLES BALOYI

READY, get set, GO!

The moment of truth is here for South Africa's cream of the crop in athletics.

Team SA touched down in London, England, yesterday ahead of the IAAF World Championships starting on Friday.



There is an air of optimism and positive energy in the team which has its sights set on beating

the best the world has to offer.

Spirits were high when the team touched down in London, determined to rewrite the history books by becoming the most successful team to compete at this biannual World Cup of athletics.

The team of 27 athletes are expected to return with a medal tally in the double figures to improve on the three medals achieved in Beijing, China, in 2015.

With SA's poster boy Wayde van Niekerk, Caster Semenya and lanky long jumper Luvo Manyonga leading the pack, all eyes will be on Team SA.

Athletics SA (ASA) media officer Sifiso Cele said the team was in good spirits and adjusting well to conditions in the capital city of England.

Said Cele yesterday: "The team arrived at the hotel and the athletes can't wait for the championships. It's cur-



Mapaseka Makhanya aims high at this year's World Championships. Photo by Supplied

rently nice and sunny here."

Renowned athletics coach Michael "Sponge" Seme, who coached Semenya to victory in the women's 800m at the 2009 World Championships in Berlin, Germany, has predicted plenty of medals for the team.

Seme, who also coaches Stephen Mokoka, the only 10 000m runner in the

team, said the country had every reason to be optimistic about the team's chances of success.

Seme, who is based at the High Performance Centre at the University of Pretoria, said: "This is the best SA team ever assembled for the World Champs. We have some top class sprinters, which has raised the level of

expectation. This is a golden generation of athletes. You know you will get medals from Caster, Wayde, Luvo and Akani Simbine. We have a talented team."

Mzansi speedster Mapaseka Makhanya, who will take part in the women's marathon with compatriot Jenna Challenor, said she was eyeing a top 20 finish. Makhanya, who will miss the Spar Women's 10km Challenge's Pretoria leg on Saturday due to her participation in London, said she could not wait for her 42.2km event on Sunday.

Said Makhanya: "I missed out on the World Champs in Beijing, this is my chance to make a push for the top 20. I'm so excited I can't wait."

Makhanya sees this as her chance to make up for not going to the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

SA ATHLETES IN ACTION

FRIDAY

- Long jump qualification round: Luvo Manyonga, Ruswahl Samaai, and Zarck Visser (From 8:30pm)
- 1 500m heats: Caster Semenya (8:35pm)
- 100m heats: Akani Simbine, Thando Roto (from 9:20pm)
- 10 000m final: Stephen Mokoka (10:20pm)

SATURDAY

- 400m heats: Wayde van Niekerk, Pieter Conradie (11:45am)
- 100m heats women: Carina Horn (12:45pm)
- 100m semifinal heats: Thando Roto, Akani Simbine (8:05pm)
- 1 500m semifinals: Caster Semenya (8:35pm)
- Long jump final: Luvo Manyonga, Zarck Visser, Ruswahl Samaai (9:05pm)
- 100m men's final: Akani Simbine, Thando Roto (10:45pm)