



SA stars out to finish on high

Wesley Botton

While compatriots Luvo Manyonga (above) and Caster Semenya are set to turn out as title favourites tonight, Akani Simbine's coach admits he is not expecting too much after a long season, as the sprinter gears up for the men's 100m event at the first of two Diamond League finals in Zurich.

Simbine's superb campaign was given a shake at the recent World Championships in London, and he was hoping to bounce back from a hip niggle which again saw him narrowly miss out on a major international medal.

His strongest opponent in the entry lists for the series final tonight (9.08pm) was American world champion Justin Gatlin.

"I've got to be realistic. It has been a long and hard season," Simbine's coach, Werner Prinsloo, said.

"I fully realise that at this stage he is physically and emotionally drained, so I don't want Akani to be under unnecessary pressure for his final race of the season."

Meanwhile, with an opportunity to close out a perfect campaign in the long jump (8.45pm), fellow TuksSport athlete Manyonga was aiming to add the Diamond League crown to his world title and the massive 8.65m SA record he set earlier this year.

Eager to emerge from Manyonga's shadow, Ruswahl Samaai was also in the start lists for the long jump along with Khotso Mokoena.

Unbeaten over the 800m distance for two years, Semenya was the firm favourite in her best discipline (8.58pm), though she was due to meet perennial rival Francine Niyonsaba of Burundi.

LJ van Zyl was in the line-up for the men's 400m hurdles (8.49pm), and though Wenda Nel was in the women's 400m hurdles race (8.05pm), the final of her discipline was set to be contested in Brussels next week.

