



Science of Simbine's sprint

OCKERT DE VILLIERS

AWULETHE umshini wami! South Africa will be going into the IAAF World Championships in London with its own AK-47 with Akani Simbine leading the charge in the 100m sprint.

Since making his debut at the 2013 World Championships in Moscow, Russia, Simbine has become one of South Africa's greatest ever short sprinters.

Simbine will now, four years later, go into the global showpiece as the third fastest man in the world this year with his season's best of 9.92 seconds.

The South African has not only established himself as one of the world's best 100m athletes but also as a force to be reckoned with in the half-lap sprint.

He boasts the fifth fastest time in the world this year in the 200m with a personal best of 19.95 seconds.

Simbine may be counted among the top sprinters in the world but it has been a process where he had to find ways to gain every single, crucial fraction of a second to give him an edge.

The South African 100m record-holder has been working with his coach Werner Prinsloo in consultation with TuksSport head biomechanist, Helen Bayne, to find the extra edge.

"A lot of the work we did with Akani initially was centred on the start, the acceleration phase. We broke down his race just to see where his strengths were," Bayne said.

"His top-end speed was world-



AKANI SIMBINE

class since I started working with him but the start and the acceleration phase was where he was giving away time."

Bayne's knowledge is not only well-sought on South African soil but has caught the attention of one of athletic's greatest coaches.

Speaking at a sports conference at the University of the West Indies, Bayne was approached by Usain Bolt's long-time coach Glen Mills.

"That is where Racers Track Club is based and I spoke with coach Glen Mills a few times which was fascinating," Bayne said.

"I nearly fell off my chair when I was talking about the start, the mechanics, and technique. He pulled out a video of Usain Bolt and a couple of athletes.

"He asked me what I thought of this, what I thought of that, but the best thing about that

was that someone with so much success and as one of the top coaches in the world is still looking for more knowledge."

Bayne identified Simbine's start and driving phase as an area where he was losing fractions on the rest of the world.

"It was a great process, we were able to measure how he was applying force to the ground during the initial few steps and how he was generating power," she said.

"We had some objective numbers that showed us that the direction of force he applied to the ground was a little bit upwards but we wanted him to go as much forward as possible."

It had taken two full seasons before they had found the breakthrough to where Simbine consistently dipped below the 10-second barrier.

Since finishing second behind Simon Magakwe, who became the first South African to dip below 10 seconds in 2014, Simbine has catapulted himself into the top sprinting ranks.

Last year proved to be crucial in Simbine's progression when he set a new South African record of 9.89 less than a month before the Olympic Games.

Simbine became the first South African to dip below 10 seconds in the 100m and 20 seconds in the 200m on the same day at a league meeting in Pretoria earlier this year.

The South African sprinting sensation will be going into the world championships buoyed by his earlier season form hoping to claim a rare 100-200m double.

