

Record king Zazini not resting on laurels

Even winning gold not be enough for the teen prodigy who still wants another record

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WINNING gold is not enough for Sokwakhana Zazini, but breaking his own world record would give him the satisfaction.

Many would be content to bag a gold medal in a major athletics event, but certainly not for the South African prodigy.

Fresh from his gold-winning performance in the 400m hurdles at the IAAF World U-18 Championship, Zazini made no bones about the fact that things didn't exactly go as he had planned.

Ideally, he would have been content to go a step better than he did back in March.

Nonetheless, he accepted victory, achieved in a barn-

storming performance as he went unchallenged across the line in the time of 49.27.

"It didn't go exactly as planned because I had to change (my lead leg) but I couldn't. I don't know what happened," Zazini said.

"I wanted to break the world record again, but it's fine, I'll take it."

"Getting out of the blocks quickly was the whole plan and I followed the coach's instructions. I thank all who helped me reach this point."

Touted as a favourite, Zazini stormed out of the blocks and comfortably led and dominated the 400m hurdles final in Nairobi on Saturday, winning the race by some margin.

He finished well clear of Kenya's Moitalel Naadokila who took silver and Baptiste Christophe of France who came third.

The 17-year-old sprinter's win was the third-fastest time in World U-18 Championships history, though short of his record of 48.84.

The TuksSport High School pupil set a new world youth record at the Gauteng North Championships at the University of Pretoria in March.

His record time of 48.84 seconds was 0.17 seconds faster

than run by American William Wynne in 2007 and his misgivings about his time in Nairobi on Saturday are perhaps understandable.

But given his tender age, drive and determination, Zazini could still improve on his time before he gets out of the teen event.

"I feel great because I've really been looking forward to this moment and now it has come. I'm really happy," Zazini said.

South Africa led the medals table ahead of last night's events, the country's youth team having raked in three golds and a bronze.

High jumper Breyton Poole added six centimetres to his personal best to earn the boys high jump title, as he cleared 2.24m to ease to comfortable victory.

He was just one centimetre short of Jacques Freitag's 18-year-old national youth record.

Zeney van der Walt snatched gold from right under the nose of Jamaican Sanique Walker in the 400m hurdles, dipping over the line to win by just 0.04 in 58.23sec. "I did not expect to win," Van der Walt admitted.

"I just kept on pushing till the end because I still had the energy. I'm very happy."

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MORE TO COME: South African U-18 hurdles athlete Zazini Sokwakhana. PICTURE: GALLO IMAGES