



New athletics series for SA

David Isaacson

A NEW track and field series could usher in one of the most mouthwatering all-South African sprint rivalries next year as Anaso Jobodwana and Akani Simbine, ready to go head to head for the first time.

The speed merchants competed at their first world championships in Moscow in 2013, but fate has kept them apart. Until now.

The Athletix Grand Prix, boasting total prize money of R1.365-million, will feature three meets, but that could grow in future years, Stillwater Sports agency managing director Michael Meyer said.

Stillwater Sports is organising the series alongside Athletics SA

Each meet will feature 10 to 12 disciplines with prize money for the top eight places.

Winners will pocket R20 000 and runners-up R10 000, with R5 000 going for third place.

With Olympic and world champion Wayde van Niekerk out injured until late into next season, South Africa's premier sprinting showdown could well be between 25-year-old Jobodwana, the 200m world championship bronze medallist from 2015, and Simbine, 24, fifth in the 100m at the Rio Games.

This is the first locally sponsored track and field series in six years, and with the promise of international athletes being brought out, has the potential to resemble the long-defunct Engen Series.

"I think South Africa is the top sprinting nation in Africa, so we'll have to look elsewhere for sprinters to come out as challengers," Meyer said.

He said he had been talking to foreign athletes already so they could schedule the series into their training plans.

The meets are scheduled for Ruimsig on March 1, Tuks on March 7 and Paarl on March 22.

Meyer said announcements on the series sponsors and international athletes would begin next month. – TimesLIVE

