

# Gatlin set to fire in SA over 150m

**Ockert de Villiers**

REIGNING WORLD 100m champion and 2004 Olympic gold medalist Justin Gatlin will make his maiden run on South African soil after he was revealed as a marquee athlete for the Athletix Grand Prix Series on March 8.

The controversial American sprinter will line up in the men's 150m race at the fast Tuks Stadium track but it is yet to be confirmed who he will go up against.

The fifth fastest sprinter in the history of the 100m shocked Jamaican legend Usain Bolt in his swansong at last year's world championships in London when he raced to victory in a time of 9.92 seconds for his first world title since 2005.

Gatlin has been a divisive figure in track and field athletics after he served bans for two doping offences earlier in his career.

"I have obviously done 150's

in training, but have never raced over that distance before. It will be interesting to see how I do. It is also my first race of the season which adds to the excitement for me," Gatlin said in an Athletix Grand Prix statement.

Gatlin has dipped below 10 seconds 55 times in his career while he has also gone under 20 seconds seven times in the 200m.

The mouthwatering prospect of Gatlin lining up against South Africa's sub-10 machine Akani Simbine in Pretoria will remain a pipe dream with the two sprinters scheduled for different events.

Simbine will back into the blocks in the 100m on his favourite track while Gatlin will race through the half bend.

Meanwhile, world long-jump champion Luvo Manyonga added the South African indoor record to his list of accolades at the Meeting Paris Indoor on Wednesday.

The outdoor record-holder improved the national record that was jointly held by Khotso Mokoena and Ruswahl Samaai by 14 centimetres at his first indoor event.

His jump of 8.32m on his second-last attempt was just four centimetres short of the African record Ignisious Gaisah set in 2006.

He improved the national record on his first attempt of 8.23m.

He broke the South African outdoor record twice in 2017 boasting a personal best of 8.65m at the national championships in Potchefstroom in April.

His national and continental record launched him into 11th place on the world all-time list.

Manyonga completed a winning streak over a full calendar year over 10 meetings before finishing the year off with the Diamond League Trophy in the long jump.

