

Superstar Manyonga wants to pace himself

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South Africa's long jump superstar Luvo Manyonga, who broke the South African indoor record in Paris on Wednesday, wants his team to manage his jam-packed schedule carefully to avoid fatigue.

The 26-year-old Olympic silver medalist and world champion, who was making his indoor debut in France, leapt to an impressive 8.32m to better veteran long jumper Khotso Mokoena's record of 8.18m set in 2007.

The winner of the SA Sports Award for star of the year will return to the sandpit today in Metz, France, before he returns to Port Elizabeth.

He will join Team SA to take part in the World Indoor Championships in Birmingham, England, from March 2 to 4.

His next stop is competing in the Athletics SA Senior Track and Field Championships in Pretoria from March 15 to 17.

Then he will embark on his quest for his first Commonwealth Games medal in the Gold Coast, Australia, from April 4 to 15.

But Manyonga and his team are negotiating with the Grand Prix series organisers to see if he can take part in only the Paarl leg of the three-stage competition.

Manyonga's agent, Lee-Roy Newton, says he is still in discussions with athletics authorities to determine if his star athlete will take part in the Grand Prix series.

"The bottom line is that he can't take part in all events this year," Newton said from France. "We will turn down some of them and this could be one. We have to manage him carefully as the next two years will be madness for him."

An excited Manyonga said: "I have had a good start and my goal is to win gold medals and remain undefeated the whole year."

He plans to break the world record of 8.95m set by American Mike Powell in Tokyo 1991.

● Meanwhile, sprinter Akani Simbine says US superstar Justin Gatlin's plan to race in Mzansi next month will give local athletics a huge boost.

Gatlin won the IAAF world championships 100m title in London last year. He will compete in the 150m event in the inaugural Grand Prix leg at Tuks Stadium in Pretoria on March 8.

Simbine famously beat Gatlin at the Diamond League Series in Doha, Qatar, last year. He clocked 9.99 seconds to beat Gatlin, Asafa Powell (Jamaica), Andre De Grasse (Canada) and Ben Youssef Meitè (Ivory Coast).

The first leg of the Grand Prix is at Ruimsig Stadium, Johannesburg, on March 1, followed by the Pretoria leg and the final in Paarl on March 22.

The last big US athlete to compete in Mzansi was Michael Johnson. Wayde van Niekerk smashed his 17-year-old 400m world record at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2016.

Simbine and Gatlin will be the big attractions of the Pretoria leg.



MAIN ATTRACTION Justin Gatlin (left) and Henricho Bruinjies

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