



GATLIN HEADING FOR MZANSI!



IAAF world champion to run in Athletix Series

By SUNSPORT REPORTER
WORLD sprint champion and Olympic hero Justin Gatlin was confirmed yesterday as one of the elites athletes set to compete at the highly anticipated Athletix Grand Prix Series in Mzansi next month.

The series will start at Ruimsig Stadium on 1 March, then move on to the Tuks Stadium eight days later before concluding at the Dal Josaphat Stadium in Paarl on 22 March.

Athletics South Africa (ASA) president Aleck Skhosana admits that having Gatlin running in South Africa is a big coup for them.

He said: "We have such incredible depth in the sprints in South Africa. To have an athlete of Gatlin's calibre competing here against our athletes means that the world sees us as a major contender in the sprints.

"It also brings other great benefits, as it inspires other aspiring sprinters – and beyond. It also inspires coaches to produce more sprinters of Gatlin and Akani Simbine's calibre."

To date Gatlin has dipped under the 10 second barrier an incredible 55 times, a feat very few have achieved. He has also gone under 20 seconds in the 200m seven times.

Gatlin, the 2017 World 100m champion and the fifth fastest human being ever over both the 100m and 200m events, will line up in the men's 150m race at Tuks Stadium on 8 March in the second of the three Series meetings.

He is certainly the biggest name to compete on South African soil since Michael Johnson in 2001.

The 35-year-old has astoundingly never run a competitive 150m race, so this will be a new experience for him and South Africans.

"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," said Gatlin.

The USA star spoils the retirement party of Usain Bolt in 2017 when he pipped countryman Christian Coleman and Bolt to win his first global title since 2005 – testimony to the longevity of his career.

Bolt is another top athlete who has graced SA's shores this year, spending two weeks here at the end of January.



ATHLETIX GRAND PRIX SERIES
1 March: Ruimsig Stadium, Joburg
8 March: Tuks Stadium, Tshwane
22 March: Dal Josaphat Stadium, Paarl

Justin Gatlin is looking forward to making his 150m debut in South Africa.
Photo by Getty Images

