



Gatlin among big names headed to SA

Daniel Mothowagae

REIGNING world 100m champion Justin Gatlin has been confirmed as the latest big name to enter the inaugural Athletics SA (ASA) Athletix Grand Prix series next month.

According to the organisers, the 35-year-old American sprinter will line up in a rarely run 150m event at the Tuks Stadium in Tshwane on March 8, in the second leg of the track and field meet that ASA launched in December.

"I have obviously done 150s in training, but have never raced over that distance before," Gatlin said.

"It will be interesting to see how I do. It is also my first race of the season, which adds to the excitement."

His imminent arrival in the country comes a few weeks after a whirlwind tour of SA by Usain Bolt, the Jamaican legend who Gatlin vanquished at last year's IAAF World Championships to claim the global short dash crown.

"Having Justin Gatlin running in South Africa is a big coup for us," ASA president Aleck Skhosana said.

"We have such incredible depth in the sprints in South Africa.

"To have an athlete of Justin Gatlin's calibre compete 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 pro-

duce the calibre of sprinters like Gatlin and Akani Simbine." Just two days ago, World Championship 10 000m silver medallist Joshua Cheptegei was the first big name to confirm his participation in the Grand Prix three-meet series.

The Ugandan star will run at the first two events, according to the organisers – at the Ruimsig Stadium, Johannesburg on March 1 and Tuks Stadium on March 8.

The final leg will take place at the Dal Josaphat Stadium in Paarl, Western Cape on March 22. – TimesLIVE

