

Bruintjies eager to show his pedigree

Sprinter seeks respect, sponsors

By **Daniel Mothowagae**

"No matter how many times people think that I'm done, I'll always comeback for another fight."

This quote is among a series of inspirational lines that keep sprinter Henricho Bruintjies going.

He spent much of his time on Twitter, often indicating the type of moods he's in on a particular day.

But if there's one thing: Bruintjies never really lived up to the sub-10 seconds speed that shot him into prominence as SA's 100m record holder three years ago.

Instead, the 24-year-old sprinter from Paarl, Western Cape, has been living in the shadow of Akani Simbine and Wayde van Niekerk who have both gained much traction in the past few seasons.

Bruintjies' 9.97 seconds blitz led the 2015 sprint revolution that followed up on Simon Magakwe's 9.98 seconds in 2014.

"What has been the hold up?" "There has been lots of ups and downs but the problem is that local athletes don't get support from the federation, and I am not afraid to say it," alleged the outspoken athlete.

"I have been left out in the [national] team many times when I had, in fact, qualified."

"I feel there is a lack of management skills in our federations," he said.

Going forward, Bruintjies said he will focus on his game and no longer stress about the controversy that always overshadow the SA Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (Sascoc) and Athletics SA (ASA) selection policies.

Though he made the team to the 2016 Rio Olympics, Bruintjies was among the track and field athletes who were controversially left out of last year's IAAF World Championships due to ASA's stringent selec-

tion criteria.

He also didn't make the cut in Team SA for the Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, Australia in April.

"I don't really care about selection. I need to make a living. Once you have a sponsor and don't get selected to major events, it's a problem. My focus will be on making the Diamond League," said the Tuks, Pretoria-based Bruintjies.

He said he was looking forward to race in all the three meets of the inaugural Athletix Grand Prix next month.

The series start in Ruimsig, Johannesburg on March 1.

“My focus will be on making the Diamond League”



Henricho Bruintjies to focus on his fitness to race in the Athletix Grand Prix next month. / ROGER SEDRES/GALLO IMAGES