



# Clarence Munyai is chief among SA's new crop of track and field stars

OCKERT DE VILLIERS

THE SOUTH AFRICAN Track and Field Championships in Pretoria gave a glimpse into the future and it is safe to say sunglasses will be compulsory as it shines brightly.

The odd stalwart such as Caster Semenya and Orazio Cremona stuck to the script, but some of the biggest performances were reserved for youngsters aged between 18 and 21. Chief among the stars was Clarence Munyai, who only joined the senior ranks three months ago.

Munyai, **pictured**, launched himself to 10th place on the world all-time list when he shattered the South African 200m record with an electric 19.69 seconds in his semi-final on Friday.

"I knew the conditions were going to be good and I saw from yesterday (Thursday) the people are running really fast times," Munyai said. "I told myself to come here and put on a show like they did yesterday.

"I knew I had 19.8 in my legs but when I saw 19.7, I was like, eish, I didn't expect that so I am happy."

He chopped a massive 0.15-seconds off the mark that world 400m record-holder



Wayde van Niekerk set in Jamaica in June 2016. The blistering run had clearly taken it out of the youngster as he was forced to scratch from the final on Saturday.

Semenya proved she was possibly in the best shape of her career and the world 800m record may be in serious danger of taking a tumble this year.

The three-time world champion bagged the 1 500m title and produced her fastest two-lap run on home soil in the 800m final on Saturday evening.

Semenya crossed the finish line in a time of 1:57.80 with former South African champion Gena Lofstrand finishing behind her in 2:05.82 with Lee-Anne Blake

bagging bronze in 2:07.73.

"I just ran like I would overseas, for us it is about learning how to run faster even on our own," Semenya said. "To be honest, we are doing great, so we just have to go back to the drawing board and see where we are lacking so that we can improve."

The championships saw the rise of another future star on the first day when 18-year-old Thando Dlodlo posted a new South African junior 100m record of 10.11secs in his semi-final.

Dlodlo was one of the big winners at the senior championships at Tuks Stadium, winning silver in both the 100m and 200m finals. Dlodlo also bagged gold as part of a 4x100m relay quartet and bronze in a 4x400m relay team.

The three-day event produced early sparks when Carina Horn finally broke the 28-year-old 100m record held by Evette de Klerk, taking 0.03s off the mark they shared since 2015.

Horn became the sole owner of the record when she clocked 11.03 on Thursday in her semi-final before bagging the title in the final with a time of 11.08.

"It is a great feeling, I am really excited,

I've been waiting for a few years to race on my home track and I am glad I could do it here," Horn said.

The final day of the championships produced another record-breaking run by a teenager when Zeney van der Walt shattered 400m hurdles legend Myrtle Bothma's 35-year-old junior record.

The Afrikaanse Hoer Meisieskool matriculant knocked 0.69 off the previous mark with a time of 55.05, finishing second behind Wenda Nel, who clocked 55.01 in the final. The 17-year-old Van der Walt launched herself into fourth place on the South African all-time list behind Bothma, Nel, and Surita Febbraio.

The men's 400m hurdles produced a shock result with none of the Commonwealth-bound athletes making it onto the podium.

Rio Olympian Lindsay Hanekom took the spoils signalling his return to his best, posting a winning time of 49.17.

World youth champion Sokwakhana Zazini continued his rise in the senior ranks posting his first sub-49.50 time finishing second in 49.32 with Le Roux Hamman bagging bronze in 49.42.