



Young Zeney has her eye on Myrtle's record

Ockert de Villiers

JOHANNESBURG: Breaking the South African junior women's 400m hurdles record double her age is but one milestone for Zeney van der Walt as she looks to leave an indelible mark on the sport.

The Afrikaanse Hoër Meisieskool matriculant knocked 0.69 off the previous mark when she finished second with a time of 55.05 seconds at the recent South African Track and Field Championships in Pretoria.

The 17-year-old Van der Walt launched herself into the fourth place on the South African senior all-time list when she shattered one-lap hurdles legend Myrtle Bothma's 35-year-old junior record.

Bothma, was oblivious that she still held the record, but believed Van der Walt had the potential to break her senior mark, set in 1986.

"I saw her running at the Grand Prix at Tuks and I told her coach her technique looks good but they just need

to look after her," Bothma said. "If they look after her, if she trains well, she would definitely be able to break the record."

Van der Walt's coach Maritza Coetzee believes her teenage charge has a bright future ahead and would feature in at least three Olympic Games. The reigning world youth champion Van der Walt has her sights on Tokyo 2020.

"I don't focus that much on the future, I'd rather put in the work now and while I have a specific time in the back of my head I just try to do my best at the moment," Van der Walt said.

"At the moment I am focused on the World Junior Championships in Finland."

Van der Walt gave eight-time national champion Wenda Nel a run for her money in the final at the senior championships.

It was arguably Nel's toughest race on home soil in five years crossing the line just 0.04 ahead of the Van der Walt.

