



Sprinters set to steal the show

SIMBINE: STIFF CHALLENGE AWAITS OVER 100 AND 200M

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With versatile sprinter Wayde van Niekerk watching from the sidelines, Akani Simbine is eager to retain his crown as the country's fastest man, though the national record holder has a battle on his hands in Pretoria this week.

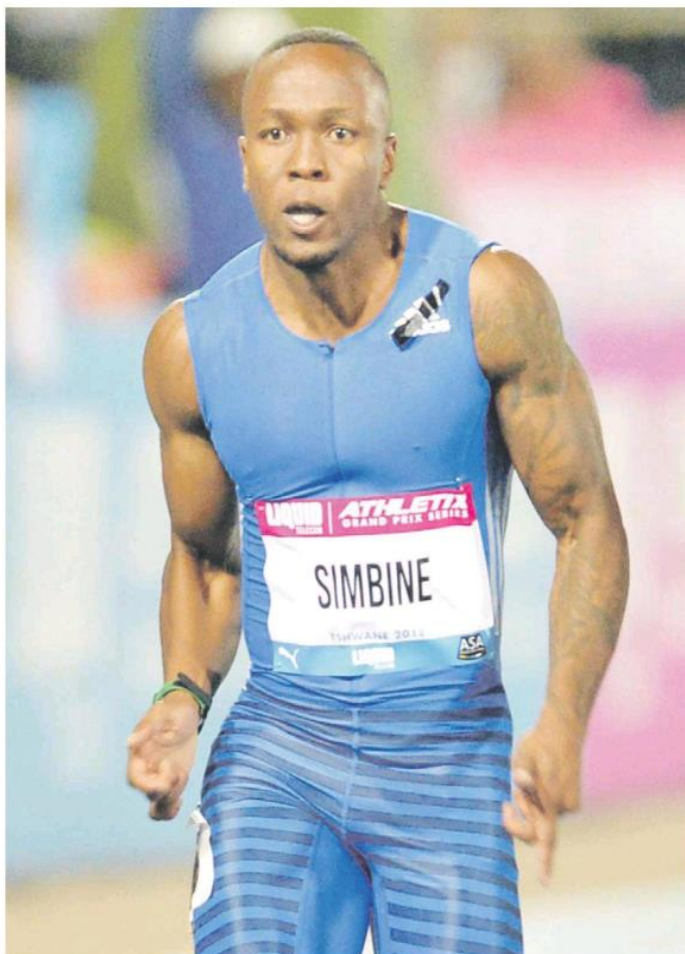
While he was not as explosive out the blocks as he had been in recent seasons, Simbine opened his 2018 campaign by storming to victory in 10.05 seconds in the 100m race at the Liquid Telecom Grand Prix meeting at Tuks Stadium last week.

Having narrowly missed out on the podium at the 2016 Rio Olympics, and again at the World Championships in London last year, he was satisfied with a relatively sedate season opener, by his own standards.

"Every year we start off really quick and then we kind of struggle at the end of the year," Simbine said ahead of the three-day SA Senior Championships starting today. "I'm pretty happy with where we are at the moment ... now we can build on that, and hopefully we'll get faster and faster as the year goes on."

Simbine was set to face a powerful line-up in defence of his 100m title, despite the absence of injured Van Niekerk, and his strongest challenges were expected to come from former World Championships 200m bronze medallist Anaso Jobodwana and 20-year-old Clarence Munyai.

On the comeback trail, Jobodwana clocked a wind-aided 10.07 over the 100m distance and Mun-



CHALLENGE. Sprinter Akani Simbine will have his work cut out at the SA Senior Championships starting in Pretoria today. Picture: Gallo Images

yai set a personal best of 10.10 last month.

With all three men showing superb form, they were set for a titanic double clash in the 100m and 200m contests.

Meanwhile, though Olympic javelin throw silver medallist Sunette Viljoen was set to join Van Niekerk on the sidelines due to in-

jury, world champions Luvo Manyonga and Caster Semenya were both set to successfully defend national titles in the capital city.

Manyonga was up against World Championships bronze medallist Ruswahl Samaai in the long jump and Semenya was aiming for a double in the 800m and 1 500m events.

