

# Munyai leaves trail of dust behind competition

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**The most obvious sign that Clarence Munyai's world was turned on its head by his jaw-dropping record was how he sat with his managers yesterday morning to discuss whether he should compete in the national championship finals.**

Munyai set a new South African 200m record of 19.69 seconds at the ASA Senior and Combined Events Track and Field Championships. The race was held at Tuks Athletics Stadium in Pretoria on Friday.

The 20-year-old broke the 19.84 South African record set last year by Wayde van Niekerk.

Hennie Kriel, Munyai's coach, said he had reservations about the athlete competing in yesterday's wet and cold conditions for a shot at the national title.

Kriel said Munyai's thigh injury forced them to spurn the race.

"We'd have liked him to be SA

champion but the world has just opened up for him," said the coach.

"When Clarence joined us, he had a quadriceps issue and was never really rehabilitated.

"But I would have liked to see how he ran after putting up a time like that. Athletes need to get used to that kind of pressure."

There will be plenty of time for Kriel to see how Munyai reacts to being the man of the hour as Friday's time elevated him from a precocious youngster who held the SA junior half-lap record to the 10th fastest man in the race's history.

The youngster's achievement was no small feat. The record, which was 0.01 seconds slower than African record holder Frankie Fredericks' 19.68 run, would have been good enough to earn Munyai silver at the 2009 Berlin world championships, where Usain Bolt set the current record of 19.19sec.

Although Kriel was expecting a good run from Munyai, he had no idea the



**TOP RUNNER**  
**Clarence Munyai set a new South African record of 19.69 seconds in the 200m sprint** PHOTO: ROGER SEDRES / GALLO IMAGES

athlete would perform so well.

"When he clocked 20.2 seconds in the heats, I knew he had a good time in him.

"He actually told me he thought he could run 19.8. I was sitting with his agent when the scoreboard stopped at 19.7. I thought the clock was broken."

Kriel said he expected the record to change Munyai's life.

"The first benefit, which is one of the things that give me pleasure, is that this will give him a big financial boost.

I hope he learns to invest in himself because staying healthy is expensive.

"I spoke to his agent and big event promoters are already trying to book him. We normally take whichever race we can get, but choosing where we want to run makes things easier."

Last year Kriel said he thought Munyai had the potential to clock a 19.5 second run.

However, Friday's result might force him to change his mind.

"Maybe I should change it to 19.4. The boy is fast and progresses quicker than I thought he would.

"He's only four weeks into his 20th year on the planet but he's already running faster than Usain Bolt did at that age."

Surprisingly, Kriel said they had done nothing different during their off-season preparations.

According to the coach, Munyai stuck to the same tried and trusted

formula of keeping fit and training as often as possible.

Although their plan for the year was to win the African championships so Munyai could compete at the World Cup, Kriel said they would have to make a slight adjustment to their goals.

"Our next race would have been at the Commonwealth Games but we need to find him a 100m race to compete in.

"I believe that in good conditions he can go under 10 seconds and that's an important thing for a sprinter."

The big question now is how the youngster - who admitted to being sucked into running other sprinters' races instead of his own - will handle the pressure of racing at the new level he now finds himself in.

"He was really hurt when he lost to Anaso Jobodwana at the Athletix Grand Prix Series.

"But he's getting better [at accepting defeat]. We're discussing the matter and I think he's outgrowing it."