



Get set for momentous Simbine-Simon showdown

ATHLETICS

By DAVID ISAACSON
In Johannesburg

THE 100m final that never was will happen after all.

Akani Simbine, who withdrew from the South African championships in Pretoria at the weekend after feeling tightness in a hamstring, will compete against newly crowned 100m champion Simon Magakwe in the third and final Liquid Telecom Athletix Grand Prix meet in Paarl tomorrow.

Magakwe, Bruintjies, Roscoe Engel and world U18 200m champion Retshiditswe Mlenga finished in the top five of the 100m final at the Tuks

track, and now they will get to do it again with Simbine in the mix at the Dal Josaphat Stadium.

Seven-times champion Magakwe, who won the title for six straight years until being banned for a doping offence in early 2015, became the first South African to break 10 seconds in the 100m final at the 2014 national championships, beating a field that included Simbine, Bruintjies and Engel.

These days, Simbine is the top dog and he is raring to go in Paarl.

"I felt a tightness in my hamstring and after discussing it with my coach, we opted to withdraw from the championships," Simbine said in a statement released by organisers.

"This was one of the hardest deci-

sions that I have made, as the national title means a lot to me and I enjoy running in front of my home crowd. It is important to me to be able to do that as they always support me, so I feel it is my responsibility to reciprocate by racing at Tuks," said Simbine, owner of the 9.89sec SA record.

The last three holders of the SA mark are Simbine, Magakwe (9.98) and Bruintjies (9.97).

For a few months Simbine and Bruintjies shared the 9.97 mark.

Gauteng-based Bruintjies is the last man to have beaten Simbine on home soil, edging him at the SA championships in 2016, and he is eager to race at his old home.

"I'm looking forward to running at

home," said Bruintjies, who originally hails from Paarl.

Meanwhile, long-jumper Luvo Manyonga has split from coach Neil Cornelius.

Together since 2015, they won the Olympic silver medal in 2016, the world championships last year and, earlier this month, the world indoor championship silver.

They continued working together after Manyonga relocated from Pretoria to Port Elizabeth at the end of last year.

But Manyonga yesterday announced they were splitting, although he has yet to name a replacement.

"He is taking his time to consider all options and opportunities before

deciding on his team to take him to Tokyo 2020 [Olympics]," agent Lee-Roy Newton said in a statement.

In the same statement, Manyonga thanked Cornelius for mentoring him to his successes, which included winning the Diamond League.

"I could not have achieved what I have without his encouragement. However, after such great success, I have had to take stock of where I am and look to find new ways to push the boundaries of performance and continued improvement.

"Considering the change in location and my practical, everyday requirements, I have made a decision to change my performance team and explore other coaching opportunities."

