



# FAMILY COMES FIRST FOR CASTER

By CHARLES BALOYI

**LIKE many high performance athletes, Mzansi's golden girl and 1 000m record breaker Caster Semenya can sometimes be difficult!**

Fresh from breaking the 1 000m record of 2:37:20 set by Lize de Kock-Wicksell 35 years ago, Semenya is hoping to set the SA Senior Track and Field Championships alight in the women's 800m and 1 500m events at Tuks Stadium in Pretoria from tomorrow until Saturday. She smashed the 1983 record when she clocked 2:35:43 in the rarely run 1 000m event at the Athletix Grand Prix Series at Tuks Stadium last week.

The Limpopo great will use the double to

prepare for the Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, Australia, next month.

But Semenya seems to have a big problem to hang on to coaches, despite her resounding success locally and abroad.

The Olympic medallist first parted ways with Michael "Sponge" Seme, who helped her to her maiden world 800m title in Berlin, Germany, in 2009. The 27-year-old Limpopo superstar has also worked with former 800m Olympic champion and three-time world champ Maria Mutola of Mozambique.

The Maputo icon coached Semenya to an 800m silver medal at the Olympic Games in London in 2012. Semenya and Mutola were based at the University of Johannesburg.

But Semenya dumped her soon after she returned from the Olympics.

Last month the athlete dumped her third coach, Jean Verster, the reigning SA Sports Coach of the Year. Verster helped the 2018 Laureus Sports Star of the Year nominee bag gold at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2016 and another gold in the 800m at the IAAF world championships held in London in 2017, along with bronze in the 1 500m.

Semenya is now coached by her former training partner, 30-year-old Samuel Sepeng, at the High Performance Centre at the University of Pretoria.

Why does Semenya struggle to keep coaches? Is she too much to handle? Is she getting

big headed? The multiple award-winner strongly dismisses such notions, citing family responsibility as the real reason.

"My family is based in Pretoria and I'm tired of travelling long distances to see them. It's a decision I had to take. My priorities are family and my business."

