



MUNYAI MAULS MARK

Youngster surprises coach and himself to smash Van Niekerk's SA 200m record

OCKERT DE VILLIERS

CLARENCE Munyai celebrated his own personal moon landing by shattering the South African 200m record in a time of 19.69 seconds at the SA Track and Field Championships in Pretoria yesterday.

The 20-year-old took a massive 0.15sec chunk off the previous mark world 400m record holder Wayne van Niekerk posted in Jamaica in June 2016.

It was pure bliss for Munyai as he covered almost another half-lap after crossing the finish line celebrating his greatest achievement in a career that is still in its infancy. "I knew the conditions were going to be good and I saw from yesterday the people are running really fast times," Munyai said.

"I told myself to come here and put on a show like they did yesterday. I knew I had 19.8 in my legs but when I saw 19.7, I was like, *etish*, I didn't expect that so I am happy.

"I'm just 20 and a 19.69 is a massive achievement and I never thought I was going to run that quick at this age."

Munyai slashed almost half-a-second off his previous best – the SA junior record of 20.10sec he set a year ago at the same Tuks Stadium venue.

His time launched him to 10th place on the world all-time list while it is also the fastest time in the world since 2015 when Jamaican icon Usain Bolt and America's Justin Gatlin clocked 19.55 to win the world title in Beijing.

Munyai became only the fourth South African to dip below 20 seconds over the half-lap sprint, joining an exclusive club that includes Van Niekerk, Anaso Jobodwana and Akani Simbine.

The youngster's long-time coach Hennie Kriel took his

athlete aside shortly after he walked off the track and they shared a word before hugging.

Kriel, who strikes a "Dirty Harry" figure, found it difficult to hold back the emotion of his charge's achievement.

"I didn't expect a 19.6; if everything went well, I was expecting a 19.9," Kriel said.

"Personally it means a lot, but more for Clarence and SA sprinting this is fantastic. It shows you the potential and dealing with Clarence; he tends to be an up-and-down person. For him to stay in that zone is a challenge."

Kriel said Munyai's race during the morning heats where he posted 20.23 was the best performance he has ever seen from the athlete.

"When he started with the warm-up, I called him, 'Clarence, I was thinking about something, you are probably the fastest bend runner in the world, if not the fastest at least in the top five'," Kriel said.

"He showed it again today. I've never seen him in a race in the last three years not coming out of the bend first."

Meanwhile, Carina Horn, who broke the SA women's 100m record the day before in her semi-final in 11.03sec, reclaimed the national title for the first time since 2015.

South Africa's fastest women crossed the line in a fast 11.08 in the final in cool conditions, with a resurgent Tebogo Mamathu hot on her heels.

Mamathu improved her personal best three times in two days with a final time of 11.27. Cassidy Williamson bagged bronze in 11.31.

Bringing the evening to an emphatic end, Simon Magakwe won his seventh 100m title in 10.07sec. It is the first time since he served a two-year doping ban that he has stepped onto the podium at the nationals.



Clarence Munyai competes in the 200m at the SA Championships in Pretoria yesterday.

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