

Stars ready to shine at ASA Champs

THE excitement around track and field hits high speed this week as top athletes head for a super clash at the three-day ASA Senior Championships at Tuks Athletics Stadium in Tshwane.

This championship is South Africa's premier brand and runs from tomorrow to Saturday. It has proved to be a highly-awaited competition among athletes.

Having shown good form at the inaugural Athletix Grand Prix Series, the country's top athletes are eager to shine this week.

Last week, Olympic champion Caster Semenya, confirmed that she will compete in the 800m and 1.500m events. After securing gold and bronze at the IAAF World Championships in London last year, she is geared up for another international double at the Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, Australia, next month.

"The 800m and 1.500m are the main thing [for me] at the moment because we're focusing on the middle distance," Semenya said after setting a national 1.000m record of 2:35,43 on the Tuks track last week, breaking a 35-year-old record.

Sprinter Akani Simbine (pictured), who opened his season with a 10,05 victory over 100m at the Grand Prix meeting in Tshwane, said he too will turn out in two individual events at the annual national championships.

After winning the 100m title and taking second place behind Wayde van Niekerk in the 200m final in Potchefstroom at the same Champs last year, Simbine will again target both sprints



PHOTO: GALLO IMAGES

in the capital city, this time in the absence of the injured 400m world record holder.

"I'm going to double up the 100m and 200m," Simbine said. "It's something I feel I need to do because I need to get race-fit before the Commonwealth Games."

Long jumper Ruswahl Samaal, who launched an impressive 8,24m leap in Tshwane last week, is also eager to compete for the national crown with the World Championships bronze medalist lining up against in-form global champion Luvo Manyonga.

"The ASA Champs are always good because I compete against the world's best, which motivates and brings out the best in me," Samaal said. "I'm really looking forward to it, and to giving the people a good show." — Sport24.

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