

# Leotlela wins again

**KWAZI SOKHELA AND THORISO PHASHA**

UP teenage sprint sensation, Gift Leotlela, exemplified his sprinting credentials in the men's 100m final on 31 March in the final of the Varsity Athletics series. Spectators were disappointed when they found out that Leotlela's fellow UP training partner, Thando Roto, had to withdraw from the race as a precaution due to a niggle he sustained in training.

Leotlela went into the men's 100m final undoubtedly as the favourite, and he did not disappoint as he ran a record equalling time. Eighteen-year-old Leotlela ran a swift 10.12 seconds, which equalled his South African Junior record to solidify himself as the finest junior sprinter in the country. Thando Roto might've had something to say about that, but on the night, Leotlela was by far the best sprinter on the track.

Speaking to *Perdeby*, Leotlela said that he was happy: "I'm consistent; I'm running consistently good times, so it means I'm heading somewhere". He added that he was just hoping for good conditions during the race and to set another personal best. The young athlete has had a range of recent successes. On 8 March during the 2<sup>nd</sup> leg of the Athletics South Africa (ASA) Speed Series in Bloemfontein, he shocked pundits by defeating the 400m gold medalist at Rio Olympics, Wayde van Niekerk, in the men's 100m, stopping the clock with



**Gift Leotlela.** Photo: Stefan Stander.

a time of 10.00 seconds. The times that were registered were recorded using hand timing methods due to a technical fault with the official electronic timing system. As a result, there are no official electron times.

Leotlela joined the likes of Akani Simbine and Clarence Munyai in breaking records this year when he bettered Akani Simbine's previous national junior record of 10.19 seconds in the 100m with a 10.12s at the Athletics Gauteng North (AGN) championships, which were hosted at the Tuks Stadium on 17 and 18 March. Leotlela was clearly in a league of his own as he ran to the finish line, beating his nearest opponent, Obakeng Maoka (UJ) by more than four tenths of a second to scoop the gold medal. After the race, Leotlela said, "I was happy with all the phases of my race except the final 10 metres. My season so far has been really good and I'm looking forward to the SA Junior Championships in Cape Town to defend my title". The SA Youth and Junior Championships will be taking place on 7 and 8 April.