



# FULL SPEED AHEAD

Clarence Munyai is the fastest man in SA and the second-fastest in Africa, and there's no slowing him down

COMPILED BY NADIM NYKER

**H**E STRODE to the finishing line, his coach's words still ringing in his ears: "They fear you every time you step onto the field, give them more reason to fear you."

And when he crossed the line in a record 19,69 seconds at the recent ASA Senior and Combined Events Track and Field Championships at Tuks Stadium in Pretoria, he drove fear into the hearts of many South African athletes – including golden boy Wayde van Niekerk.

After smashing Van Niekerk's performance, Clarence Munyai (20) is now South Africa's fastest man.

Munyai bit a 0,15-second chunk off Van Niekerk's time of 19,84, which the 25-year-old posted in Jamaica last year before injuring himself during a charity rugby match in October (see page 85).

The new time puts Munyai in the league of some of the world's best: sprint legends Tyson Gay (19,58), Justin Gatlin (19,57), Michael Johnson (19,32), Yohan Blake (19,26) and world record holder Usain Bolt (19,19).

His March result saw

the sprinter climb to 10th place on the 200m world all-time list, surprising even the young man himself.

"I knew I had 19,8 [seconds] in my legs but when I saw 19,7, I was like, 'Eish, I didn't expect that,'" Munyai said after the race.

The Johannesburg-born athlete's new time is also the second best in African history.

It's just one-hundredth of a second off the African record of 19,68 set by Namibia's Frankie Fredericks at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games – two years before Munyai was born.

Munyai still can't believe his lightning feat and is grateful to his coach, Hennie Kriel, who encouraged the speedster with his mantra of becoming the one all athletes fear.

"I keep these words in my mind all the time," he says.

An ecstatic Clarence Munyai recently smashed Wayde van Niekerk's 200m record. He did it in just 19,69 seconds.

**M**UNYAI has had a speedy road to success, dominating both junior and senior circuits.

The track star appeared on the international radar in 2016 at the ASA Senior Championships in Stellenbosch when he won the 200m in 20,73 seconds. Last July he bagged gold in the 200m at the Africa Under-20 Championships in Algeria. He also finished third in his heat at the 2016 Rio Olympics but didn't qualify for the semifinals.

And he's done it all thanks to a strict regimen. He trains six times a week at the High Performance Centre at the University of Pretoria and his pre-race rituals include listening to Kanye West and Jay-Z and remembering coach Kriel's words.

Coach Kriel says he expects the win to change Munyai's life.

"The first benefit, which is one of the things that give me pleasure, is that this will give him a big financial boost.

"I hope he learns to invest in himself because staying healthy is expensive. I spoke to his agent and big event promoters are already trying to book him. We normally take whichever race we can get, but choosing where we want to run makes things easier."

The sprinter now has his sights set on the Commonwealth Games, which takes place in Australia this month.

Watch out world, we bet he'll be a bolt of lightning! ■

SOURCES: IAAF.ORG, IOL.CO.ZA, EWN.CO.ZA, SPORT24.CO.ZA, SUNDAY WORLD, THESOUTHAFRICAN.COM

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