



Akani Simbine reckons South Africa have the sprinting speed and talent to win relay gold at the Commonwealth Games.

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RELAY RECORD BECKONS FOR SA'S SPEEDSTERS

'We have a better team than Jamaica or the Brits,' says super sprinter Simbine

OCKERT DE VILLIERS

SOUTH Africa finally got the relay team it has been dreaming of for the last four years, now it was up to the athletes to produce the goods.

National 100m record-holder Akani Simbine is adamant South Africa is the team to beat at the Commonwealth Games in Australia.

A quartet consisting of Simbine as the anchor, Anaso Jobodwana, Clarence Munyai, and Henricho Bruinjies has the potential to shatter the South African record that was set at Glasgow 2014.

While Simbine has a realistic chance of winning a medal

in the 100m at the Games, he fantasises about the possibilities of a double gold with a victory in the relay.

"It would always be nice to have more than one gold, the relay gold would be a great one for South African athletics because we've been saying for the last four years now that we have a quality relay team and they could win a medal," Simbine said.

"It's always been we could, we could, we could but we didn't and now we have an opportunity."

Four years ago, former national record-holder Simon Magakwe anchored a relay team that included Bruinjies, Simbine and Ncincilili Titi to

a record of 38.35 seconds.

South Africa has since then hardly performed as a relay team or had many opportunities to train together, nor race at a major championship.

At the 2015 IAAF World Championships in Beijing the relay team failed dismally due to a lack of preparations when a mistake at the first change over between Bruinjies and Jobodwana ended their charge for silverware in the heats.

South Africa failed to send teams to the IAAF World Relays in 2014, 2015, and 2017, failing to capitalise on the rising sprinting revolution.

The country has produced five sub-10 second athletes since 2014 but it is yet to trans-

form this into relay success.

Simbine believes South Africa's time has come to show the world that it is not an empty revolution starting at the Games.

"Comparing ourselves against Jamaica or the Brits, the way I look at it we have a better team than them," Simbine said. "It is just a matter of putting the sessions together and getting the baton around."

"I am very positive about the Commonwealth Games in the sense of the 100m and the 4x100m relay team."

Simbine will back into the blocks in the 100m heats on Sunday on the first day of the track and field programme.

After featuring in both the

2016 Olympic and the 2017 World Championships final and with only two five-placed finishes to show for it, Simbine said he was ready to get the monkey off his back.

"In the past when I competed at a major event I had a mindset of just wanting to get through each round. It was a case of I will see what happens if I get to the final, and then I see what happens if I get to the final," said the Tuks sprinter.

"But my mental approach has changed. I now just see 'gold'. I believe I am worth a gold medal. I have done the work, and I am at a point where I can get it. I want to make South Africa proud."