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CASTER Semenya and retired hurdler LJ van Zyl were honoured at Tuks Athletics' centenary celebrations last night. | African News Agency (ANA)

Track wizards named as Tuks Athletes of the Century

OCKERT DE VILLIERS

SOUTH African track sensation Caster Semenya and retired one-lap hurdler LJ van Zyl were named as the Tuks Athletes of the Century last night. The pair were honoured at Tuks Athletics' centenary celebrations.

Semenya has established herself as one of the country's greatest track athletes since she burst on to the global scene at the 2009 World Championships. Nine years since she won her maiden world 800m title in Berlin, she has added two more gold medals at the global championships and two Olympic titles. She experienced a stellar 2018 season, racing to a 800m-1 500m double gold at the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games and set four SA records.

Van Zyl has beaten top contenders who include Olympic silver medallists Luvo Manyonga and Llewellyn Herbert.

Former high jump wizard Jacques Freitag is one of a select few athletes who has won the world youth, junior and senior titles. He is the only South African to have achieved this feat, winning the 1999 World Youth title, the 2000 World Junior and 2003 World Senior titles.

Van Zyl has been among South Africa's greatest track stars, holding the SA 400m hurdles record and boasting the 2002 world junior title, a 2006 Commonwealth Games gold medal and a 2011 World Championships bronze medal.

Tuks Athletics also honoured South Africa's male and female 100m record-holders Akani Simbine and Carina Horn as their athletes of the year.

Simbine won both the Commonwealth Games and African Championships 100m titles this year. Horn became the first South African woman to dip below 11 seconds at the Doha Diamond League less than two months after breaking Evette de Klerk's 28-year-old record.