



SIMBINE SHINES!

Star has reason to celebrate

By CHARLES BALOYI

MZANSI'S fastest man Akani Simbine had to choose between soccer and athletics.

The 25-year-old sprinter's dream was to play for his favourite team Kaizer Chiefs as a child.

But things didn't go according to his wishes, as he was introduced to athletics, the sport that has taken him all over the world.

It has been an amazing year for the Tuks-based athlete on and off the track.

Simbine has many reasons to celebrate this year as he scooped major titles.

The sprint ace won a gold medal in the men's 100m final at the Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast Australia in April. He clinched the African sprint title at the Continental Championships in Asaba, Nigeria in August.

This year, he signed an R8 million three-year sponsorship deal WITH Liquid Telecom to help him prepare for the 2020 Tokyo, Japan Olympic Games.

As part of his Olympics preparations, the deal will allow him to take his coach Werner Prinsloo on a full-time basis and go to Europe with him for a period four months each year.

Last week, Simbine received Minister Tokozile Xasa's Special Award at the SA Sports Awards in Bloemfontein for his outstanding season.

He is also sponsored by Adidas and



SA sprint sensation Akani Simbine doesn't regret choosing running over soccer.

Photo by Getty Images

Mercedes-Benz, and has athletics to thank for all that.

Simbine said: "It's been the best year for me. I signed some important deals and won big titles, and the cherry on top was an award I didn't expect from the minister."

Simbine says he occasionally plays football with his friends in his spare time.

"I've been playing football since I was 12. At 16, I played for Highlands Park in the Castle League's lower

division in Kempton Park.

"My dream was to play for Chiefs. I played as a right winger and thought I'd make a living out of the sport until I had to choose between soccer and athletics.

"Things took a turn as I chose athletics, a sport that I didn't know much about. And it has turned out to be the best decision I've ever made."

Next year, he hopes to win his first 100m IAAF World Championships medal in Doha, Qatar.

