

'I WILL NEVER FORGET'

Caster and Carina do SA proud

Ockert de Villiers

JOHANNESBURG: Caster Semenya and Carina Horn struck a blow for South African female athletics when they both breached magical barriers at Friday evening's Diamond League meeting in Doha.

The opening meeting of the 2018 Diamond League series saw Semenya break through four minutes in the 1 500m, while Horn became the first SA female to dip below 11 seconds in the 100 metres.

Semenya stuck it to the IAAF on Friday night when she smashed the SA record she set at the Commonwealth Games last month by posting a winning time of three minutes, 59.92 (3:59.92).

Semenya could be affected by the new controversial female classification rules the IAAF introduced on April 26, which will go into effect on November 1.

The amended regulations will attempt to regulate women who naturally produce testosterone levels above five nanomoles per litre and are limited to athletes who compete in events ranging from the 400m to the mile.

She broke former SA legend Zola Budd's 34-year-old 1 500m record with a time of 4:00.71 in Australia last month.

The SA middle-distance queen sat back in sixth place going through the first lap with pacemakers Emily Tuei and Noelle Yarigo taking the field through 800m in 2:11.00.

Kenyan Nelly Jepkosgei took the lead at the bell with Semenya changing gears with half a lap to go and then surging past Jepkosgei to claim victory.

Jepkosgei finished in second place in 4:00.99, while Habibat Alemu of Ethiopia bagged the bronze in 4:01.41.

Horn, in turn, did not make it onto the podium in a loaded 100m field, but that should not



A LOT TO SMILE ABOUT: Carina Horn believes she can consistently run below 11 seconds after breaking the SA 100m record in Doha on Friday.

Picture: MUZINTOMBELA, BACKPAGEPIX

take anything away from her significant milestone.

Breaking through the barrier, she became only the ninth African athlete to enter the top 100 on the world all-time list.

The TuksSport athlete chopped 0.05 seconds off her previous record, crossing the line in fifth place with a time of 10.98secs.

She shaved 0.03s off the 28-year-old record first set by Evette de Klerk back in 1990.

"I still battle to believe that

at long last I managed to run a sub-11s race," Horn said.

"When I saw 10.98s going up on the electronic scoreboard next to my name, all the long hard hours, the sacrifices and the disappointments were forgotten. All that mattered was that I had achieved what I set out to do many years ago.

"It was the breakthrough I have been dreaming of. It is the one moment in my athletics career which I will never forget."

Horn proved she could hold her own against some of the world's greatest sprinters which included 200m world champion Dafne Schippers of the Netherlands and 100-200m double silver medallist Marie-Josée Ta Lou of the Ivory Coast.

The top-five places in the race were almost an all-African affair with Ta Lou winning the race with a world-leading time of 10.85, with Nigeria's Blessing Okagbare finishing

second in 10.90.

Rio Olympic 100-200m double gold medallist Elaine Thompson of Jamaica rounded off the podium by clocking 10.93.

Buoyed by her achievement, Horn believes she can consistently run below 11 seconds.

"I guess as long as I am capable I will always be on a quest to gain that extra hundredth of a second when racing," she said.

"I am sure my coach,

Rayner Schopf, has already started to plan as to what I need to do to be faster."

Triple-jump legend Khotso Mokoena proved that he was far from a spent force, leaping to 16.92m in the hop-skip-and-jump event to claim sixth place.

The Beijing Games long jump silver medallist is showing superb form in the twilight of his career after he leapt to 17.09m in Pretoria earlier this year.