

EDITOR'S VIEW

We salute you, Caster

WORLD champion Caster Semenya has again answered her detractors the only way she knows best; blaze the trail and set a record along the way.

In the IAAF Diamond League opener in Doha, Qatar, on Friday, Semenya set a new South African mark in the 1 500m by clocking 3:59.92, edging past her own previous time of 4:00.71 to clinch victory.

She didn't seem the least distracted by the IAAF decision that from November 1 it will limit entry for certain international events for female athletes with testosterone levels above a specified level. These regulations are limited to athletes competing in events ranging from the 400m to the 1 500m, the very ones Semenya has excelled in over the last few years.

Women with elevated testosterone must reduce their level for "six months (for example, by use of hormonal contraceptives)" before being eligible to run, and maintain that lowered level. The new rules will be challenged, including by Athletics South Africa, at sport's highest court – the court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) – in Lausanne, Switzerland.

CAS has already ruled once against the IAAF in trying to impose rules on hyperandrogenism.

Many have accused the IAAF of orchestrating a witchhunt

against Semenya, which is supported by the fact that the regulations are aimed at a select group of women. The new guidelines claim women producing a higher level of testosterone than the so-called norm have an unfair advantage over other women. The IAAF is yet to publish the scientific evidence to support this notion.

Semenya is merely the face of a deeper and entrenched discrimination against women, reminiscent of humiliating past practices of sex testing.

University of Pretoria law professor Steve Cornelius has been among those who have rejected the rules, which he believes would be "unlawful in various jurisdictions around the globe". He resigned from the IAAF disciplinary tribunal in a scathing letter to the athletics body's president, Lord Sebastian Coe. It was a brave stand, and many around the globe have supported the professor.

Support for Semenya and those who took a stand against the regulations is growing. Athletics SA has announced it will challenge the new guidelines and go to court if necessary.

The IAAF keeps saying it wants to "level the playing field". The fact that the association is trying to achieve this through the curtailing of an athlete's natural hormone level is simply wrong. We say: Leave our Caster alone. We salute her for making her country, and womanhood, proud.