



Mamatu sorts out snub with record time

SIMNIKIWE XABANISA
sports@citypress.co.za

Not long before she powered her way to being South Africa's second-fastest sprinter a fortnight ago, the pleasantly bubbly Tebogo Mamatu had her nose miltily put out of joint.

The women's 100m race at La Chaux-de-Fonds in Switzerland was arranged in five heats leading to one final, and when she found herself in the second heat, she was slightly bemused at not being in with the "fast people" in the first heat.

So she set about fixing things by running a personal best of 11.21 seconds in her heat (her previous fastest was 11.37, which didn't count because she had an illegal tailwind of 2.8m per second.

But she ultimately made her point in the final, which she won in a new personal best - and legal - time of 11.04.

"When I saw my start list, I was in lane six and I was like: 'Ugh, I don't like lane six. But I told myself it was fine. I still had energy and I didn't feel tired or anything, so I felt ready for it. I told myself I needed to blast the start, and when I did exactly that, I was shocked," Mamatu said.

"I actually thought I'd made a false start, to be honest, so at the back of my head I kept wondering if I had. But then I saw everyone continue running. I told myself I was going to push through the line because normally when my start is great, I die at 60m or 70m. I was so shocked I didn't die. When I dipped, I thought I was second until my coach, Hennie Kriel, told me I was first. I couldn't believe it."

Her failure to "die" aside, the 24-year-old from Dobsnoville, Soweto, also shocked herself by dipping under Athletics SA's stringent qualifying standard of 11.10 (the IAAF's is 11.24) and becoming only the second South African woman after Gaster Serenya to qualify for the World Championships outright. The competition will be held in Doha in September.

"I'm excited because I've always told my boyfriend (fellow Tuls sprinter Thando Roto) that, for athletes like me to make it there, you need to run at the World Champs. Every athlete who's at the top started by qualifying for those and getting the experience there.

"So I'm truly excited, but I still can't believe that I qualified. But I can't make it the main thing because I still have to run at the All Africa Games. Looking at the World Champs, if I can make the semifinals, I'll be happy. Anything beyond is a bonus," she said.

Having always said she wanted to join compatriot Carina Horn (10.98) as a sub-11-second 100m athlete, Mamatu said her new time had given her something to work with.

"I believe I have the potential to go sub-11, so this gives me something to work towards; this gives me more motivation."

Mamatu said running free of thigh and hamstring injuries led to her upturn in fortunes, which have also seen her become the senior South African champion for the first time this year.

"I had a proper off season and I went into the season injury free. So I went through all the stages of my training properly - that for me is a contribution."

Apart from persevering through injuries, Mamatu's story is that of a youngster who was found by athletics before she even had the opportunity to think about what she wanted to do with her life.

When she was in primary school in Soweto, a Mr Nkomo saw her potential early and decided she would only do athletics at school and no other sports.

This also often meant she couldn't go out and have fun with her friends.

But it didn't take long for it to pay off as she got a bursary at Monument Hoërskool and later a scholarship to study sports science at The University of Pretoria. The eldest of three daughters born to traffic officer Khetriwe, Mamatu is still unsure where her running talent comes from as her mother played netball, but didn't go very far.

If anything, she probably should have taken her late grandmother more seriously when she told her that she also used to run.

Having chosen a fellow sprinter for a partner, Mamatu says it makes her life easier as Roto understands exactly what she goes through as an athlete.

Both have lightning fast starts, and Mamatu admitted that things did get a little competitive when they trained together.

But having just achieved her personal best time, she's well and truly in possession of bragging rights.

PUSHING THE PERSONAL BEST
Tebogo Mamatu at this year's Sizwe Medical Fund and 3SixtyLife ASA Senior Track and Field and Combined Events Championships in Germiston

PHOTO: ROSEY SIDDES / GALLO IMAGES



COACHES

RECORDS

Frank Lampard's coaching record

Derby County

P	W	D	L	GOALS
57	26	15	16	103.80

Sol Campbell's coaching record

Macclesfield Town

P	W	D	L	GOALS
27	7	10	10	36.43

Steven Gerrard's coaching record

Glasgow Rangers

P	W	D	L	GOALS
93	50	24	19	195.90

