



Steenkamp runs a fast time overseas

The South African 100m hurdles record holder, Rikenette Steenkamp from TuksAthletics, proved last week in Stockholm by running 13.21s that it is only a matter of time before she starts dipping under 13 seconds regularly.

Eefje Boons (Netherlands) won the B-race during the Stockholm Diamond League Meeting in a time of 13.12s with Pedrya Seymour (Bahamas) second in 13.19s followed by Steenkamp in third place.

Her time in this race is one of the fastest in the history of South African 100m hurdling.

Only five local athletes have ever clocked faster times.

What made Steenkamp's performance special is that it was the first time in nearly 10 months that she raced.

When it comes to racing internationally, the local star's CV is quite impressive. In the 12 races over the past three years, there were at most three occasions on which she did not finish in the top three.

Unfortunately, she is possibly one of the unluckiest athletes when it comes to injuries.

In December, while she was on holiday with her family, she sustained an injury while fooling around with friends.

It was a freak accident and at first, there was a real concern that she might not race at all this season.

The second setback happened round about March when she was well on her way to a full recovery. Steenkamp did a time trial during training.

In the midst of

it, she came to an abrupt halt due to feeling severe pain.

Her coach, Hennie Kriel, and the physiotherapist, Karen Gibbs, wisely decided that Steenkamp should not race at all until she made a complete recovery. It meant she had to forego competing at the USSA Championships as well as the South African Championships.

"Rikenette has the makings to become one of the greats of South African athletics, but then she has got to be managed appropriately.

"The reality, however, is that she will never be able to race as often as most other athletes can. It will always be important to decide where she is going to race, and the challenge for her will be to make it count when she does," said Kriel.

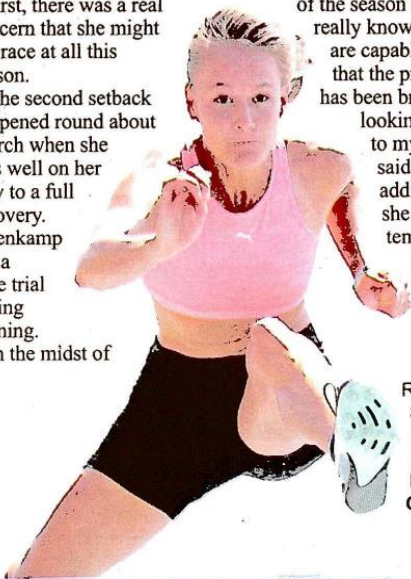
Steenkamp admitted being frustrated by being a mere spectator during the national championships but added she understood why she could not race.

It was all about making sure her bigger goals become a reality.

Relief spelled in capital letters possibly sums up Steenkamp's feelings moments after she crossed the finish line last week in Stockholm.

"I always tend to be slightly nervous before my first race of the season as you don't really know what you are capable of, but now that the proverbial 'ice' has been broken I am looking forward to my next race," said Steenkamp, adding that when she raced the temperature was a mere 12 degrees Celcius.

Rikenette Steenkamp in action on the practice track. Photo: Reg Caldecott



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