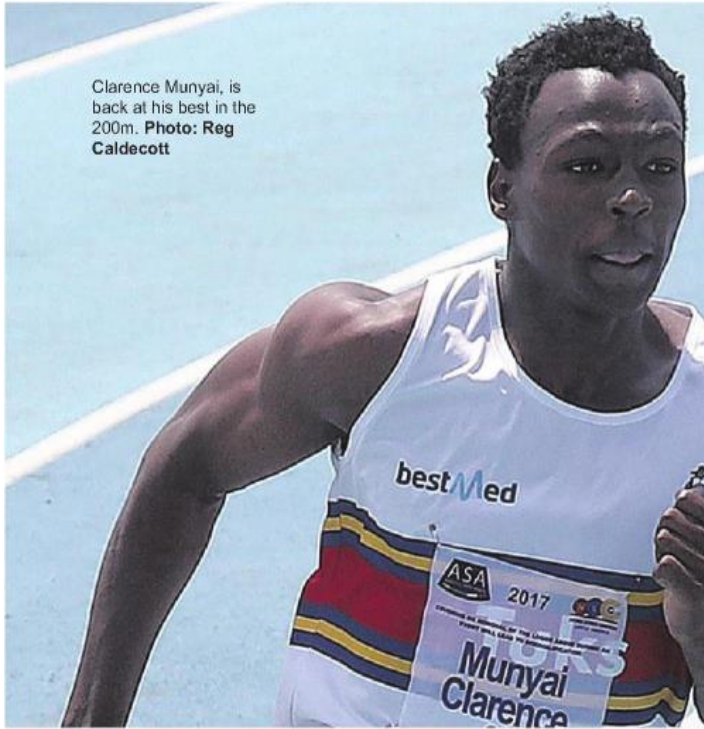


Local athlete runs world-class 200m time



Clarence Munyai, is back at his best in the 200m. Photo: Reg Caldecott

"I am in the lucky position that I can go out fast with the best running a good curve or I could start out slightly slower and be fast when it matters."

The South African 200m record holder, Clarence Munyai, is back at his best and he qualified for the world championships in Doha last week when he won the 200m in Heusden, Belgium, in a brilliant world-class time of 20.04s.

The Tuks-based sprinter showed his rivals a clean pair of heels by bursting out of the starting blocks. He never relented, widening the gap with each stride. Belgium's

Jonathan Borlee was second in 20.88s and Kobe Vleminckx, also from Belgium, third in 21.06s.

It is his best performance since March last year, when he ran a time of 19.69s. Munyai has been going through a tough time ever since – and not due only to untimely injuries.

The biggest drawback was that he started to doubt his abilities as a sprinter. He was getting scared to race because he feared he might fail. In part, it was due to being a perfectionist. Every time Munyai settles in the starting blocks, he wants to race to the best of his ability.

But the reality in sport is that an athlete often has to fail before he can succeed.

Munyai's saving grace is his genuine love for speed. There is nothing he relishes more than to challenge the stopwatch. Having someone like Hennie Kriel (Grigora head coach) helping him is a definite asset. As a coach, Kriel is continuously emphasising to all his athletes never to accept mediocrity.

Kriel predicted from day one that Munyai has what it takes to beat the world's best 200m sprinters.

Getting the Tuks-based sprinter to believe it proved to be somewhat more challenging.

As to why he prefers racing 200m, Munyai said: "I am in the lucky position that I can go out fast with the best running a good curve or I can start out slightly slower and be fast when it matters."

He was hesitant about predicting any times.

"I prefer to let my legs do the talking first, and then I will discuss what happened afterwards.

"For the first time, I am strong and fit enough to really go through three rounds of serious racing," Munyai said, referring to when he might race at a major championship.