

Fourie, Steenkamp revive 100m-hurdles

Which South African female athlete won three national titles in 2021 and nearly set a national record?

This is a question few sports fans might know the answer to.

The honour befalls the 19-year-old Marione Fourie. Don't try and do an internet search to find out more about her heroics. It would be a futile exercise. The Tuks Sports Science student is the invisible athlete of South African athletics.

The only clue that Fourie is one of South Africa's rising stars is found on the SuperSport website.

Steenkamp and Corien Botha are the only ones to run faster than 13 seconds.

It refers to her as the South African junior champion, as well as two top times she recorded during national events.

Fact is that Fourie is the South African senior and u.20 100m-hurdles champion. In May, she won the South African students title as well.

The South African 100m-hurdles record holder, Rikenette Steenkamp, is the last athlete to have won all three titles in the same year.

Last month at a meeting in Pretoria the new and former South African champions duelled



Marione Fourie (left) and Rikenette Steenkamp in action in the 100m-hurdles at a recent club event in Pretoria. Photo: Reg Caldecott

it out for only the second time, Steenkamp won in 13.23s with Fourie second in 13.26s. The youngster was victorious in their first encounter.

Fourie's time would have been a new South African junior record if it was not that the wind (+2.4m/s) from behind was too strong. Taylon Bieldt ran 13.35s in 2016 in Poland.

The last time that any local athlete apart from Steenkamp

dipped under 13.30s was in 2017. Claudia Heunis ran 13.23s.

Steenkamp, who dominated the shorter hurdles event from 2016, is excited about being challenged on her home turf.

"For Marione to run sub-13.30s at 19 is brilliant. Our rivalry could revive 100m-hurdles racing in South Africa. How great would it not be if we can have two local athletes dipping under 13 seconds in the same race in South Africa?"

Steenkamp said.

Kyla van den Bergh, who ran 13.66s this season, could also be in the mix to push the boundaries in South Africa's 100m-hurdles racing.

In the history of South African athletics, Steenkamp and Corien Botha are the only ones to run times faster than 13 seconds.

Fourie admits that she would not have believed it if someone told her she would win three

national titles this season. E this season, she did not win often. Not in major races and She had not even dipped under seconds.

She credits her coach, Jau Strydom for the turnaround in her athletics career. Strydom confidently predicts that Fourie is capable of being even faster.

"We just need to sort out small things in her technique," commented.