

## SPORTS

# Gardiner, a legitimate challenger to world 400M record of 43.03

Steven Gardiner is in rare company. He is in uncommon territory. Gardiner has gone under 44 seconds twice, the last time, just about a week ago in Dohar, Qatar. The 43.87 for an easy Diamond League 400 meters first place gave Gardiner a meet, stadium, and national record.

He goes into this weekend's Diamond League event in Shanghai, China as the leading 400 meters runner in the world and is definitely a marked man for the other elite competitors. They know that other than just a tough foe to come up against, but he is getting better and stands as a legitimate challenger for the world record of 43.03, now held by South African Wayde van Niekerk.

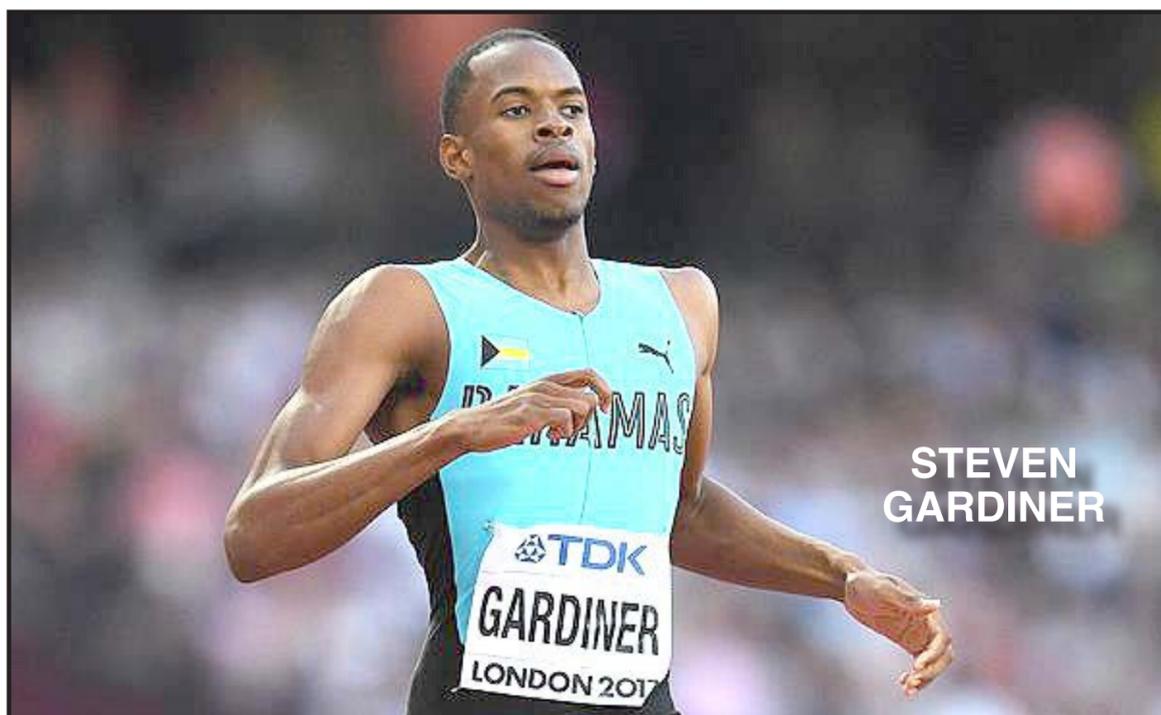
Although he is indeed the world record holder, van Niekerk, when healthy figures to be hard-pressed when he steps up to the Bahamian. The next time, van Niekerk will be clashing with a much more confident and improved Gardiner than the runner he comfortably out-paced when he won the gold at the IAAF World Championships last year. Gardiner took second for the silver, a few days following an exhausting semifinal in which he clocked 43.89.

The native Abaconian has established himself as a global star, one that is still rising. He looks to become entrenched as one of the all-time best, and not just flash for a few years.

It is noteworthy that 2018 marks the 50th year since Americans Lee Evans and Larry James eclipsed the 44 seconds standard for the 400 meters in 1968. Indeed, half a century later, Gardiner is poised to do what no other Bahamian has done, achieve a world outdoor track record. (Tommy Robinson and Danny Smith held the 300 yards and 50-yard high hurdles indoor marks, respectively).

The man who discovered Gardiner, coached and nurtured him

## Coach Williams calls for more government sports funding



STEVEN GARDINER

### SPORTS SCOPE



BY FRED STURRUP

"The Bahamas Government should help this young man out (more). Look what Steve has done. The Bahamas Government should celebrate this young man. He has the ability to do really great things and if he gets the right financial assistance, the country would be quite proud of him and his achievements. I feel strongly about that," said the coach who is based in Moore's Island at his homemade sports academy.

~ Coach Rev. Anthony Williams

into a top talent, Rev. Anthony Williams, sees the world record in the future

"I believe he might go after it next year, not this year. He is picking up very fast. He just needs to maintain himself and would advise that he go after the record next year. I don't know what they have planned.

"I don't know what he and his coach have in mind, but my advice would be to focus on the world record next year.

"Of course, you don't know what will happen when van Niekerk comes back and they hook up," said Coach Williams.

On Wednesday, Coach Williams also took the opportunity to throw out a challenge to the government.

"The Bahamas Government should help this young man out (more). Look what Steve has done. The Bahamas Government should celebrate this young man. He has the ability to do really great things and if he gets the right financial assistance, the country would be quite proud of him and his achievements. I feel strongly about that," said the coach who is based in Moore's Island at his homemade sports academy.

Gardiner was Coach's Williams' prized pupil. He has come a mighty long way. Only 12 men in history have travelled the 400 meters distance faster than Gardiner. Certainly, the government should revisit its financial program for elite athletes. Gardiner is a tremendous commodity.

Meanwhile, the expectation is that the 22-year-old will simply move on from strength to strength on the world stage, as one of those very unique athletic products that come along just once in a while.

### Go Steven!

• To respond to this column, kindly contact Fred Sturrup at [sturrup1504@gmail.com](mailto:sturrup1504@gmail.com).



CLASSIC ON THE WAY—The 2018 Fredrick Bastian Track and Field Classic takes place June 2 at the Grand Bahama Sports Complex. Expected to be in competition among the top junior and senior athletes are Shaquiel Higgs pictured above, left, pictured above, center Michael Mathieu, and Correy Sherrod, pictured right.

(TFN FILE PHOTOS)

# Top juniors and seniors expected for upcoming track and field classic

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Once again the top junior and senior athletes will put on a show at the Grand Bahama Sports Complex.

The second annual Fredrick Bastian Track and Field Classic takes place Saturday, June 2 beginning at 11:00 a.m.

A number of local track and field clubs, along with clubs out of New Providence, and the United States are expected to take part in this year's edition of the annual memorial meet hosted by the Kenyan Knights. The late Fredrick Bastian coached the Kenyan Knights before he

passed away a few years ago.

Current head coach, Jason Larrimore met with *this daily* this past Wednesday to detail what residents could expect from the upcoming meet.

"We have 28, top junior athletes coming from all around the U.S (United States)," he voiced, "Alonzo Russell will be present for the 300 meters invitational, along with Ojay Ferguson, Ramon Miller and we're still trying to get Michael Mathieu and Stephen Newbold in that as well. But we should have a good field put together for the invitational.

"The 28 top junior athletes that are the top (athletes) in their events so we should have a pretty good

show from them. The juniors, here and from all around The Bahamas should also put on a good show as well."

The meet is expected to feature races in all sprints, middle distances and field events.

The Kenyan Knights' coach further noted the American athletes will be representing the National Scholastic Athletic Foundation. The organization is known for hosting the New Balance National Indoor and Outdoor Classics, held in March and June, respectively.

Since Larrimore took over the Club in the wake of Bastian's passing, he explained it has not always been easy but nevertheless keeping the legacy of the former track and field coach

alive is well worthwhile.

"Nothing is easy but I feel it's worth the struggle. We just try to keep pushing forward regardless, because I never had it easy. But it's become like breathing to me now. So going forward with his legacy and coaching these athletes, who are a spirited bunch, has been worth it."

From a local standpoint, Larrimore added that spectators can look forward to sprinters Shaquiel Higgs, Nestario Williams, and a CARIFTA gold medalist out of Nassau competing in the boys' Under 20 division, but that is still pending. The CARIFTA gold medalist Larrimore referred to is Joel Johnson.

Larrimore furthered that they

will look to field all-star relay teams during the meet to stretch the competition, going up against some of the relay teams coming from the United States.

"You'll also have Corey Sherrod, William Forbes, Ty Dawkins in the 400m.

"We're trying to put together some all-star relay teams because based on the times the team from the U.S ran prior to this event, it's going to be fast. So we want to put out a good competition for the crowd."

For local meets, Larrimore highlighted that the support is hardly equal to that of the High School All-Island Track and Field Championships (Island Sports) and urged local residents to show their support.

"We've been trying to push the event to make sure that we get that support. We get the support from the athletes. We have a lot of athletes that said they are coming. We have Road Runners coming out of Nassau, Swift Athletics, Bahamas High Performance and Speed Dynamics. We'll also have Moore's Island here as well and they always put on a good show.

"From for our local clubs we expect Golden Eagles, Rock's Athletics, Fast Track, Neymour's Athletics and Invictus."

Larrimore closed, "This is one of the only meets they may get to compete in before junior nationals to prepare them for World Juniors. So we expect everyone to turn out."