

Sport

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SA hockey men fight back for famous win

Gary Lemke

SA's men's hockey players have been knocking on the door against the so-called bigger nations at the Tokyo Olympics, but yesterday they barged right through, beating Rio 2016 bronze medalists and World No 4 Germany for the first time in an international competition.

They have impressed in their previous three games — all defeats — in Pool B, but they have taken the fight to their higher-ranked opponents.

They went down 3-1 to Great Britain, led 3-0 before losing 5-3 to the Netherlands and were involved in a 13-goal game against Belgium, losing 9-4.

Yesterday, they came back from 2-1 down to beat Germany 4-3.

Mustapha Cassiem scored the winner in the 48th minute. Germany got the opening goal with a variation that was eventually prodded home by a diving Timm Herzbuch.

SA pulled level with their first penalty corner of the game as Matt Guise-Brown got his second of the tournament with a low, strong drive.

SA's next circle penetration created another goal with vice-captain Keenan Horne diving into the ball and finishing superbly to give the African champions the lead.

The European runners-up fought back with two goals in the second quarter to lead at halftime 5-2.

Constantin Schaib got the equaliser through a field goal, picking up a rebound, before Lukas Windfelder got the goal from a penalty corner.

Though Tobias Hauke received a yellow card just before halftime, the South Africans did not capitalise on it.

As the heat made things more difficult, the South Africans defended with heart before springing the perfect counterattack with Nic Spooner bursting through the middle and finishing superbly into the bottom left corner making it 3-3 into the final quarter.

In the final quarter as Germany allowed SA into the circle, Cassiem crossed the ball which took a massive deflection into a priceless goal.

The South Africans had taken the lead at 4-3 with 12 minutes remaining and they held on for a famous victory.

"It's awesome," SA captain Tim Drummond said.

"It's something we're trained really hard for and moments like this and results.

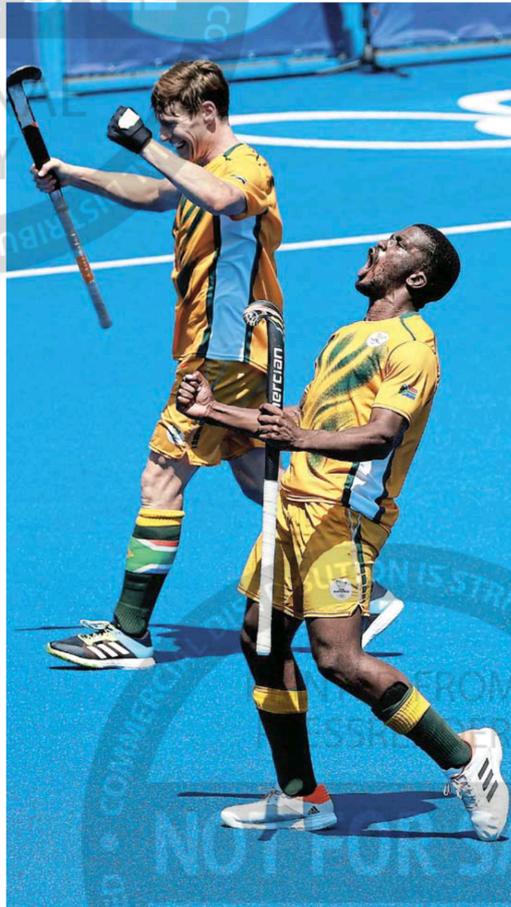
"We knew we had it in us and it's just great for the guys to get this feeling now and hopefully we can remember this feeling."

Earlier yesterday morning, Tarianna Schoemaker and Kaylene Corbett both won their women's 200m breast-stroke semifinal heats.

Schoemaker touched in a time of 2:19.33 while former Pearson High School star Corbett won her heat in 2:22.08.

They were the second and fourth fastest qualifiers heading into the final at 5:41 am on Friday morning.

SA's most decorated Olympian, Chad le Clos, bowed out of the Olympics yesterday evening after failing to advance out of the 100m butterfly heats. — teams.co.za



MAGIC MOMENT: Samkelo Mvimbi and Timothy Drummond of Team South Africa celebrate after beating Germany 4-3 in the men's Preliminary Pool B match on day six of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games at Oi Hockey Stadium on Wednesday. Picture: BUDA MENDES/GETTY IMAGES

Versatile Willemse ready to provide Bok cover

George Byron

Versatile Springbok star Damian Willemse says he is ready to cover several backline positions from the bench against the British and Irish Lions tomorrow.

The multi-skilled Willemse can play at No 15, 10, 12 and his presence among the replacements gives the Bok coaching staff a number of options for tomorrow's deciding Test at the Cape Town Stadium (kickoff 6pm).

Bok coach Jacques Nienaber has opted for a six-two split on the bench after the Lions took a 1-0 lead in the series last week.

Trevor Nyakane and Vincent Koch will provide cover at prop, while Marco van Staden takes over from Rynhardt Elstad as loose forward cover along with Kwagga Smith.

Herschel Jantjies and Willemse will provide support in the backline.

"For me the coaches are always clear with the plans and where they want me to play," he said.

"I know that I will be covering 10, 12 and 15 this weekend.

"Playing at 12 is not that different to 10.

"One difference is being in the front line and chasing the kicks, and I have played Currie Cup and club rugby at 12, so there is not really much differ-



DAMIAN WILLEMSE Picture: GETTY IMAGES

ence. At the end of the day it's still rugby with tackle and chase, and doing other stuff, so it is not too much of a big change."

Willemse, 25, said team goals took priority over any particular preference he had for a position.

"Here are the Springboks, our goals are never higher than team goals.

"I'm happy to be helping wherever I can for the team and where the coach needs me.

"I'm lucky to be able to fulfil all those roles, and I enjoy doing that, so it is a case of anything for the team and for the Springboks to win the Lions series."

"We will see who will cover which position between me and Willie le Roux.

"It could depend on an injury or a tactical movement on the

"We will see closer to the time on Saturday who will take which position."

Willemse has been in the system with coaches Jacques Nienaber and Rassie Erasmus since 2018.

"I know the system and have got used to the structures: I've been playing 15 and 10, but not so much 12.

"Having a guy like Damian De Allende in the squad is also great," Willemse said.

"I can learn from him and I ask him a lot.

"Now I must take the opportunities because the coaches are backing me.

"It is really important, and they have given me the licence to go out and play."

He said playing against the British and Irish Lions was a once-in-a-lifetime event.

"It is important to grab my opportunities and play with everything I have for my country."

Willemse said losing the opening Test had not deflated the Bok squad.

"All of these guys are professionals and we have been in this position a few times.

Div stays cool ahead of crunch EP match

George Byron byron@theherald.co.za

EP Elephants head coach Peter de Villiers is keeping a cool head and has distanced himself from the hype surrounding his team's crunch match against the Falcons at the Bosman Stadium in Brakpan today.

Victory could catapult the Elephants into the Currie Cup semifinals and breathe new life into Eastern Cape rugby.

Ahead of the most important match since he took over as EP's head coach in January, De Villiers has avoided using phrases such as "do-or-die" and "must-win".

EP's season took flight when they pulled off a gutsy win over the SWD Eagles in Despatch.

Asked how he viewed the Falcons clash, De Villiers said: "Let us say the win against the Eagles last week has brought us back into contention to be in the semifinals."

The former Springbok mentor said there was not much extra that could be done to prepare the team ahead of the trip to Brakpan.

"In the lead-up we will focus on managing the few injuries we picked up against SWD," he said.

"We will get through those injuries and not be stupid by aggravating any small niggles.

"Even if we only have one full training session for the week it is not a bother for me.

"That is because we have set a platform during the year.



TRAINING HARD: EP Elephants head coach Peter de Villiers, right, watches his team prepare for a session at the scrumming machine. Picture: GEORGE BYRON

"We started in January so there is nothing new we can do in one week.

"What is so brilliant for me now is that when I speak to the players I can see they are going to coach one another.

"They will speculate on what lines they should have run among one another.

"They will be coaching one another and we can identify things that went wrong by walking through the stuff."

EP skipper Sherwin Slater said the Brakpan showdown would be like a final.

"This next game against the Falcons is absolutely crucial for us," he said.

"The Falcons need a win and EP also need a win to reach the playoffs.

"So this is a must-win game for us and we will make sure we prepare properly."

Elephants forwards coach Aslam Abrahams says patience and sticking to structures will be the key to success.

Sprint star looking to run the perfect race in 100m

I can be very dangerous, says Simbine

David Isaacson

Sprint star Akani Simbine will be "very dangerous" if he runs the perfect race at the Tokyo Olympics at the weekend, he said.

The World No 2, bidding to become the first SA competitor to make the Games 100m podium since 1908, storms into action in the first round of competition tomorrow, with the semifinals and final on Sunday.

Simbine finished fifth at Rio 2016 having lowered his SA record to 9.89 sec a few weeks before.

This time he is angling for a medal, having slashed his national mark to 9.84 earlier this month.

That also stands as the African record.

"I feel like an actual competitor for a medal," the 28-year-old Commonwealth Games champion said.

Simbine, who has been in the top five of the world since 2016, was stung after finishing fourth at the 2019 world championships.

"In Rio I felt like a young athlete who was just going there just to run and see how far I can get in the rounds.

"But it's changed now, you know.

"I'm a different athlete. I've matured as a sprinter.

"I've learnt a lot through the years.

"It's an exciting time and we're looking forward to the



AKANI SIMBINE Picture: GALLO IMAGES

weekend." American Trayvon Bromell is the only man to have gone faster this year, clocking 9.77 in June.

But right behind Simbine are the other two US runners in the field, Ronnie Baker (9.85) and Fred Kerley (9.86).

Three days after setting the African record, Simbine finished second behind Baker in Monaco.

But he took consolation that, despite a poor start, he still beat Bromell, Kerley and Canadian star André de Grasse.

"Knowing that I still had those races in my legs and coming out and still performing as I did [in Monaco].

"For me and to coach [Werner Prinsloo] it did give us some confidence — knowing I do have a lot of petrol in the tank and just knowing I can catch those guys after not such a good start and having to run them down."

The key in Japan will be

executing all elements of the race correctly.

"I'm looking to do the best I can, to show that we can be very dangerous if we run a clean race and we run a perfect race and it's just looking to running the best race that we can.

"It's a matter of making sure that every race that I run this week is as perfect as it can be and as clean as it can be," Simbine, one of three SA sprinters in the field, alongside Gift Letlela and Shaun Maswanganyi, said.

The only SA sprinter to reach the Olympic 100m podium was Reggie Walker, the winner at the first London Games 115 years ago.

Much has been said about the different texture of Tokyo's spectator-less Games, delayed by a year because of the Covid-19 pandemic, but Simbine said the 2021 showpiece was the real test of an Olympic sprinter.

"You see the Olympic rings everywhere.

"Just being in a space where you're surrounded by different sports and the greats of the sports reminds you that you're part of the elite, a small group of the world that comes together every four years to compete and do the best they can."

Simbine is also in the 4x100m relay team, which is scheduled to compete in the heats on Thursday next week. — TimesLIVE

EP looking for every opportunity to get better — Moodley

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Eastern Province strength and conditioning specialist Runesan Moodley believes the squad's work at the Madibaz High Performance Centre will add another dimension to their pre-season cricket preparations.

Moodley, who also held a similar position for the defunct Warriors, feels the addition of scientific elements is allowing them to further home in on all areas of their game.

Moodley said visual skills testing was one aspect that was new to their training.

"We are constantly looking to improve on certain areas of our game, whether it be just one or two percent; big thanks to the Madibaz HPC for welcoming us."

"We have made our training just a little bit more scientific to provide our players with that base that we need to perform," he said.

Moodley said the visual skills element would take their game to a new level.

"In terms of the visual skills we are doing a lot of FitLight training, which has a lot to do with the visual aspects of the game."

"We have also added isokinetic testing in terms of shoulder strength.

"We are just trying to get

some scientific data from which to base our approach to training on," Moodley said.

He said they had adapted well to the new stimulus.

"The HPC brings that extra edge in terms of high performance by being in that kind of environment, surrounded by other professional athletes.

"They have also constantly looked at ways of improving their own game."

"We are trying to make the training and conditioning a little bit more individualised this season than in previous seasons.

"I think that the players enjoy that attention to detail and being able to sort individual concerns when it comes to rehab and strength and conditioning," Moodley said of the centre at Nelson Mandela University.

He said the team had been largely unaffected by the two-week move to level 4 of the national lockdown earlier in July, as they had put in some extra work only weeks before the announcement.

"Luckily for us, we had been going at it for three weeks prior. We were due for an off week, so theoretically we were only about a week behind.

"Luckily, we were able to get in that three-week phase before the president's announcement," Moodley said.