

20 Year Old Jamaican Junior 4x400 Record in Danger – Rusea’s Coach



The Jamaican women’s Under 20 4x400 metres relay record has stood for 20 years but Rodrick Myles, head coach of the Rusea’s School, says it could go this year. Coach Myles was convinced by compelling 400 metre races at last week’s Boys and Girls Championships that a 2021 national under 20 team could go as fast as 3 minutes and 26 seconds.

He is confident that the Jamaican record of 3:29.04 by Kerron Stewart, Sheryl Morgan, Melaine Walker and Patricia Hall at the 2001 Penn Relays will tumble.

Last week, Aallyyah Francis of Rusea’s outran Garriel White of Hydell High, 52.51 seconds to 52.77 in class 1 and in class 2, Dejanae Oakley of Clarendon College edged White’s teammate Oneika McAnnuff, 52.51 to 52.54, in a thrilling race for gold.

Speaking on May 16, Myles asserted, “it’s a team that maybe possibly can go 3:26, a fast 4x400 metres relay that can maybe actually challenge for the gold medal”, he calculated. A performance like that would surpass the championship record of 3:27.60 established by the United States in 2004.

Jamaica last won the event in 1998 when Patricia Hall, Peta-Gaye Gayle, Keasha Downer and Allison Beckford raced to victory. Overall, the island has taken home 10 medals in the event, with one gold, 5 silver and 4 bronze.

The United States took the last two titles in 3:29.11 seconds in 2016 and 3:28.74 in 2018. Jamaica was third in that last renewal, held in Tampere, Finland, in part because Calisha Taylor suffered an injury while challenging for the lead on the anchor leg. Taylor held on bravely to finish the race.

According to Myles, a victory for Jamaica at the 2021 World Under 20 Championships in Nairobi, Kenya would be a landmark. “That would be historic”, he claimed.

This year’s extended local high school season does, however, present a challenge. Francis, the winner of the class 1 200 as well, fancies the shorter event for the Nairobi meet after she admitted to weariness at Champs. However, she has assured coach Myles that she will do the relay if she is selected. “I said to her, so what if you run the 200 and the team wants you to run on the 4x4, she turns to me and said, sir, that wouldn’t be a problem”, he related from a recent talk between coach and athlete. “That’s one of the things I asked her and she give me her word that wouldn’t be a problem”, he added.

The World Under 20 Championships was originally set for last year but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will now be held from July 23 to August 1.

HL