

## Doha Déjà vu - Great Start



Jamaica got off to a great start at the 2019 World Championships in Doha, Qatar. Thanks to newcomer Tajay Gayle, super sprinter Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce and barrier breaker Fedrick Dacres, Jamaica gathered three medals early in the Championships. Moreover, all three made history.

Gayle first jumped 8.00 metres at the 2017 Western Relays but that was just the first sign of things to come from the University of Technology student-athlete. He came to Doha as a medal contender with a Pan-American Games silver safely tucked away and a personal best of 8.32 metres.

He struggled to qualify but in the first round of the final on September 28, Gayle boomed out to 8.46 metres to seize control. The field included the Olympic champion Jeff Henderson and the Pan-Am winner Juan Miguel Echevarria but the undaunted Jamaican blasted them again in round four with a monumental jump of 8.69 metres to secure the gold.

Then just 23, the Papine High School graduate is the 10<sup>th</sup> longest jumper of all time. His big leap surpassed James Beckford's national record of 8.62 metres and matched Trecia Smith's 2005 triple jump victory as the country's supreme field event performance at the global level.

While the first time World Championships participant was raising the flag in the jump pit, the experienced Fraser-Pryce was on the verge of history in the 100. Her first round race - timed in 10.80 seconds - had commentators wondering if the clock was working properly. "Wow-wee!!! Is that a mistake? 10.81 in the heats?", was the comment when the flash time appeared. On September 29, she provided proof with a 10.82 in the semi-final.

The final was classic Shelly-Ann, ignited by a rocket start, assured acceleration and a finish bolstered by some work over 200 metres, she sped to a big win over European champion Dina Asher-Smith and Ivory Coast star Marie-Jose Talou in 10.71 seconds. It was her 15<sup>th</sup> trip under the 10.80 seconds barrier.

As she circled the track with her son Zion, fans saluted a near perfect run. The MVP Track Club star had scared the national record of 10.70 seconds she shares with Elaine Thompson-Herah who was 5<sup>th</sup> in Doha. By adding to her 100 metres victories in 2009, 2013 and 2015, Fraser-Pryce had become the first sprinter, male or female, to win the blue ribbon event four times.

A day later on September 30, Dacres made his way to the podium in the men's discus throw. A solid first effort of 64.97 metres put him in the hunt. The Pan-Am and Commonwealth Games winner hurled his next throw out to 66.94 metres. His silver medal was a landmark - Jamaica's first global medal in the discus.

The Calabar High School and University of the West Indies product, winner of 2011 World Under 18 and 2012 World Under 20 titles, placed second to dominant Swede Daniel Stahl.



Dacres had scarcely stepped out of the circle when Nathan Allen settled into the blocks to start the Jamaican challenge in the first ever senior World Championship mixed 4x400 metres final. Steady running by Allen, Roniehsa McGregor, Tiffany James and Javon Francis nabbed the silver medals in the national record time of 3 minutes 11.78 seconds.

Altogether, the Jamaican team made a brilliant start to its endeavours in Doha. Those three heady days of glory foretold of great things to come.