

## KENIA - Two Silvers in 12 Days



All Kenia Sinclair wanted to do during her athletics career was make Jamaicans believe they could excel in the middle distances. Her efforts were boosted in two big races twelve days apart in 2006, as she won silver medals over 800 metres at both the World Indoor Championships and the Commonwealth Games.

Her runner-up finish at the World Indoor Championship on March 12 in Moscow gave an unlucky Jamaican team its only medal at the meet and she travelled the 8,975 miles from the Russian capital to Melbourne, Australia in good form. "We were having a lot of mishaps at the Championships and I was so motivated to put Jamaica on that medal tally. So I think it was just the adrenaline from World Indoors going to Commonwealth."

The Jamaican team was stronger in Melbourne and Sinclair, the former St. Jago High and Seton Hall University star, just wanted to chip in. With Olympic medals by Arthur Wint and George Kerr all but forgotten, the world was bewildered by her emergence. "Everytime they said, Oh, your name is Kenia. Are you from Kenya? And they would say Jamaicans don't have distance runners", she related, "so for me, I wanted to show the youngsters in Jamaica that Jamaica is not only built on sprinting. You know, we can be strong at distance running."

She showed her strength at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the venue for athletics during the Games. On March 24, she made a bid to win and to defeat Mozambique's superstar Maria Mutola who had denied her in Moscow and Kenyan prospect Janeth Kipkosgei. "If the truth to be told, I feel like I came off that last 100 metres and I kept watching the big screen because I was leading coming off the turn and I was saying to myself, 'Oh my goodness! I'm finally going to get a gold medal for Jamaica'", she recounted almost 15 years later to the day. "I think when Janeth came on the end, I lost it there but just getting second place and beating Maria Mutola, which she was my idol, it was just glorious. It was just phenomenal. And you know, just to put Jamaica there, put Jamaica on the map for distance running, Oh, she beat Maria Mutola, it was just something spectacular", she celebrated anew.

It was Jamaica's first medal in the 800, male or female, since a triumph by Inez Turner in 1994.

Sinclair had covered the two laps in the national record time of 1:58.16, and done her part to enhance a striking Jamaican team performance. Wins by Asafa Powell and Sheri-Ann Brooks in the 100 metres, Omar Brown and Sherone Simpson in the 200 metres, Maurice Wignall and Brigitte Foster-Hylton in the sprint hurdles and by both 4x100 metres relay teams made those Games almost into Sports Day where 'Yellow House' dominated but Kenia's silver added something special. She provided proof that Jamaica could produce medals in the middle distance events.

By the end of the season, she pressed the point home by lowering the record and by becoming the first Jamaican woman to reach the top ten 800 metres world rankings by the respected US publication, TRACK AND FIELD NEWS. The slim Jamaican appeared at number 7.

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