

New Generation: Rajay Hamilton Finds His Calling - The 800 Metres



After rocketing up the Jamaica all-time indoor 800 metres performance list, Rajay Hamilton says that he has found his calling. On February 21, he chopped his personal best to 1:47.57 to become the fourth fastest Jamaican in history. The fast time has called him back to an event he had not run in three years.

A winner of the Class 1 800 and 1500 metres at Boys and Girls Championships for Calabar High School in 2014, Hamilton had dropped down to shorter events until this indoor season. With his collegiate years at Wiley College complete, Hamilton was working with Clemson University's sprint and hurdles coach Lennox Graham to lower his 400 metres best of 46.07 seconds. Early in the season, he served as a pacemaker for a 800 metres race. "After I was finished, I said, coach, you know what, I felt good during the race. I felt like I could finish", the Tollgate native recounted.

That led him into an indoor 800 metres on Clemson's South Carolina facility where he ran 1:49.02, which slashed his lifetime best from the mark that won him the silver medal at the 2014 Carifta Games, 1:51.04.

"Coach called me and said you get invited to do a meet in Arkansas", he continued. He placed fourth in that meet, the fourth and last in the American Track League series. He compiled splits of 51.4 and 56.1 seconds and confessed, "I never expected to go that fast."

Alex Morgan who holds the national indoor record at 1.46.70, 1995 World Indoor Champion Clive Terrelonge and Mario Vernon-Watson are the only Jamaicans to have gone faster.

Hamilton, who attended Lennon High before his move to Calabar, is changing lanes and events. "There is always a saying, you know, you cannot run from your calling as I guess the 800 was always my calling and I try to run away from it because it's two laps and that's two quick laps and you know the pain that comes with it and stuff like that", he said on February 23 of the move that will see him changing coaches to Graham's colleague Mark Elliot, whose top middle distance pupil is Commonwealth 800 metres bronze medallist Natoya Goule. Elliot, the director of Track and Field at Clemson, has coached 800 metres Olympians from Kenya, Grenada and Guyana.

"It feels good to go back but the 800 work, that's where it's not going to be nice", the 26 year-old runner said with a smile.

Asked if his 400 metres speed will be an asset in his new venture, he projected, "I think so, yes the first 400 it has to be real quick to go sub 1:45, maybe 49, 48, even 50 point. You could do 50 point but you've got to be strong. 800, you've got to have some speed."

Hamilton clocked times of 34.01 and 47.28 seconds for 300 and 400 metres during the indoor season.

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