

STEPPING UP AT ALL-COMERS



If you only go to big meets like the Gibson McCook Relays, Boys & Girls Champs, the Jamaica Invitational and then Racers Grand Prix, you'll see exciting international and local performances. However, in the last few years, regular staging of local All-Comers Meets has given hard core fans extra clues about emerging stars. Among those who gave used All-Comers Meets as stepping stones are Kemar Bailey-Cole, Elaine Thompson-Herah, Christania Williams, and Demish Gaye.

Bailey-Cole came into the 2014 season with a 5th place finish in the 100 metres at the 2013 World Championships. Niggling injuries bothered but a neat effort at a May 31 All-Comers Meet showed he was on his way. He clocked 10.16 seconds and kept going to the top of the podium at the Commonwealth Games in two events, the 100 metres and the 4x100 metres relay.

In the 100 metres, he won in 10 seconds flat despite cool temperatures and joined the likes of Donald Quarrie, Asafa Powell and Lerone Clarke as a holder of that title.

Only the keenest observers had even heard her name before when Thompson burst into the scene in 2015 and a 100 metres clocking of 10.92 seconds at the UTECH Classic had put her on the map. Weeks later, she showed her exciting potential at 200 metres in an All-Comers Meet at the National Stadium. The slim, sleek University of Technology student cruised to a personal best of 22.37 seconds.

It looked easy and suggested there was more to come and there was. Thompson led until the last step of the World Championship final in Beijing and took the silver in 21.66 seconds, making her the fourth fastest woman in history.

Before the 2015 season started, her personal best was 23.23!

A year after Thompson-Herah's breakthrough All-Comers 200 metres race, Williams reached for the stars in the 100 metres. Known as a champion schoolgirl sprinter at Edwin Allen High, she trimmed her personal best from 11.11 to 11.07 seconds in another All-Comers Meet at the Stadium. Though only a handful of hard-core fans were present, the run was a launching pad as Williams accelerated to 10.96 seconds and third place at the National Senior Championships, a place in the Olympic 100 metres final and a 4 x 100 metres relay silver.

In the same meet, Shanieka Ricketts, the 2015 World Championship triple jump finalist, exercised with a winning leap of 14.16 metres. Now she has a World Championships silver medal.

Gaye made his breakthrough on May 6, 2017, with his first trip through a time honoured barrier. He won the 400 metres with a winning run of 44.85 seconds and broke through the 45 second barrier for the first time. The time lowered his personal best from 45.24 seconds. "That gives me a lot of confidence," he said of his performance. As is often the case with All-Comers Meets, the Stadium was virtually empty when Gaye outraced the 400 metres final but once again, it showed the value of competition for those who aren't yet on the international circuit.

Like Bailey-Cole, Thompson-Herah, Ricketts and Williams, Gaye has stepped up to world class. He lowered his personal best to 44.46 seconds and has raced his way to the finals at the 2017 and 2019 World Championships. Along the way, he has become a key member of the Jamaica 4 x 400 metres until that has won medals at the 2018 Commonwealth Games and the 2019 World Champs.

The message from these performances is simple - the next time you hear about an All-Comers Meet, put it on your must-see list.