

VC Does the Double - 2000 World Juniors



After holding her own at the Sydney Olympics, 18 year-old Veronica Campbell went to the 2000 World Junior Championships in Santiago, Chile as one to watch and she did not disappoint. Campbell delivered the first sprint double by a girl at the World Juniors, with meet records in both the 100 and 200 metres.

At the Olympics a few weeks earlier, the 1999 World Youth 100 metres champion was entrusted with the second leg of the 4x100 metres relay and she came through with flying colours. In spite of her inexperience, she did her fair share to secure the silver medal for Jamaica. In Chile, the Trelawny native blitzed her rivals in the first of

her two individual events, zooming to a national junior record of 11.12 seconds. At the finish, she was well clear of Katachi Habel of Germany and Fana Ashby of Trinidad and Tobago on October 18.

While the young sprinter rested on the 19th, Germaine Mason made high jump history. He cleared 2.24 metres, the same height as the towering winner, Jacques Freitag of South Africa. Mason's silver was the first medal for Jamaica in the event at the World Juniors.

After comfortably qualifying for the 200 metres final, Campbell stretched away from the field to win in 22.87 seconds. Her reward was Jamaica's first ever World Junior gold medal in the 200 metres. Fittingly, she would become 2004 and 2008 Olympic and 2011 World Champion in this discipline.

VC held those meet records for more than a decade. Leggy Bahamian Anthonique Strachan moved the 200 metres record down to 22.53 seconds as part of an impressive sprint double in 2012. Four years later, Candace Hills pegged the 100 metres mark down to 11.07 seconds.

Brandon Simpson peaked perfectly with a personal best of 45.73 seconds to take the runner-up spot in the 400 metres and Melaine Walker took bronze in the 400 metre hurdles.

As is often the case for Jamaica, the relays brought more medals. Campbell, 100 metres finalist Nadine Palmer, Kerron Stewart and long jumper/sprinter Noelle Graham placed second to Habel's German team in the 4x100 metres relay. In the 4x400 metres relay, Sheryl Morgan, 400 metres finalist Karen Gayle, Anneisha McLaughlin and Walker lost a close battle for the gold to Great Britain.

That set the stage for the boys' 4x400 metres relay final. Despite a famous history stretching back to the 1952 Olympics, Jamaica had never won this event. Sekou Clarke, Aldwyn Sappleton, Pete Coley put Simpson within striking distance after the first three legs and Simpson did the rest. Timing his final burst perfectly, he took the lead as the contenders entered the home straight and covered the anchor leg in 45.3 seconds. His masterful effort capped a world leading time of 3 minutes 06.06 seconds.

"I know we all put in the work and it came out great in the end", Simpson said afterwards.

Jamaica took 5th on the medal table after that memorable win, with 8 medals - 3 gold, 4 silver and 1 bronze. Moreover, Campbell's individual performance placed her on every sprint fan's radar. A great career lay ahead.

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