

WAC's best season of sprinting ever

Despite COVID cancelling the entire 2020 school season (except for the NSW All Schools) the Westfields Athletics Club Sprinters finished the 20-21 season with the best results ever. Here are some highlights.

Shola Adeniran was named as one of Australia's three World Junior qualifiers with her sensational personal best performance of 11.80 seconds; the second fastest ever by a Westfields female of any age. Only three time International sprinter Hayley (Cameron) Butler has clocked a faster time. In 2020 this time elevated Shola to number 12 in the World U17 and number 10 in the Commonwealth for all of 2020. It was a remarkable

performance considering it was Shola's second race after the Covid lockdown, Then early in 2021 albeit still early and the Northern Hemisphere is in Winter out of season, Shola held onto the number 2 ranking in the World in U18 throughout January and February. This a remarkable achievement considering Shola regularly suffers from shin splints and Achilles tendonitis. More often than not she only makes it half way through a training session, stopping short because of the pain. Shola went on to successfully defend her NSW 100m title at NSW Juniors and finished the season with National silver behind a non Australian athlete; Shola not being declared the Australian Champion due to a ridiculous rule whereby International who win become the title holders providing they join an Australian Club.

One year younger than Shola is training partner **Aleksandra Stoilova**. The two girls are only separated in speed by hundredths of a second over the 100m sprint event. Aleks finished 2020 with her crowning achievement at the NSW All Schools by setting a new meet record of 11.81 seconds. Albeit wind assisted by 2.2m/s (just 0.2) over the legal limit, nevertheless the record stands due to the fact in previous years wind gauges were not used. Her best legal time in 2020 was 11.90 and this gave her a World U16 ranking of number 11 and a Commonwealth ranking of number 9. Aleksandra would gain World U20 selection when she ran up three age groups and took the silver medal position at the Australian U20 Championships/World U20 selection trials and once again the wind was 2.2m/s. Like Shola her U17 World Ranking is number 2 and Commonwealth ranking is also number 2 during January and February of 2021. Aleks would take Silver at NSW Juniors (U17), Silver at Australian Juniors (U17 & U20). With the cancellation of the World U20's due to Covid, Aleks as part of the Australian team would travel to Gold Coast for two Oceania Invitation meets. Aleks was hospitalised days before the first meet with a severe bout of tonsillitis. She still managed to compete at the first meet quite competitively considering the illness. By the second meet Aleks had recovered and ran the race of her life recording 11.72 in 100m with the wind gauge once again 0.1 over the legal limit (2.1)

The ever impressive **Rashid Kabba** continues to gain attention in athletics circles. At the 2020 NSW All Schools he became the youngest ever WAC athlete (just turned 15 years) to join the 10 second club with a sizzling 10.98 seconds to take the Bronze medal in a very closely contested 100m final. He also took Silver in the 200m with a P.B. of 22.33. A gold medal followed in long Jump with a modest 6.50m. Then came his crowning glory when he equalled the meet record in 100m hurdles of 12.94 (previously set 20 years ago by Westfields athlete Paul Stickler). It had been a goal all year to break the 13 second barrier and Rashid finished 2020 with that incredible achievement. Nationally, Rashid was ranked number 1 in 60m, number 1 in 100m hurdles, number 3 in 100, number 2 in 200m and number 2 in long jump. In the World as a 15 year old Rashid was ranked number 10 in 200m and number 18 in 100m. Rashid in January 2021 (at the same meet where Rowan Browning became the second Aussie in history to run under 10 seconds) ran a wind assisted 10.82 (2.5) which elevated him to number 2 in the World U18



Above: Our World ranked 100m athletes February 2021. From left; Aleks Stoilova number 2 U18, Malikye Kessie number 7 U18, Rashid Kabba number 3 U18 (all conditions), Shola Adeniran number 1 U18. And the proud coach in the middle.



Rashid and Bryse prizemoney winners at the Jack Giddy 120m gift.

under all conditions and notably Rashid doesn't turn 16 until October. Rashid's first ever attempt at the higher and further spaced 110m hurdles had already become the fastest time in Australia (albeit wind assisted). Then Rashid entered the Jack Giddy professional foot race and missed the \$900 first prize by mere hundredths to take the second place prize money. Running on grass as the second back marker off 4 metres he had to catch the front runner off 11 metres. With all but last years winner in front of him on handicap Rashid Kabba passed all but the front runner and narrowly missed first prize. A brilliant performance however in his first ever professional race. Then came the NSW Juniors where Rashid not only successfully defended his title in the 110m hurdles in World number 2 time, but he also won the 100m in a sizzling 10.72 to take the World number 1 position which he held onto for several months. At the Australian Juniors Rashid had a career peak, with Gold in 110m hurdles, Gold in 200m and Silver in U17 100m, Silver in 4x100m and Bronze in U20 100m. The Bronze in U20 gave him selection in the World U20 team where competed with Aleks on the Gold Coast attaining a second best ever time of 10.81. Even though Rashid was expected regain his National title in hurdles, it was no-one's guess that he would win the 200m as well. At the Nationals, the 200m was on the 9th day of competition and Rashid had already competed in 8 races. He was fatigued, had a sore back and was fasting on no-competition days. Thinking of pulling out of the final, Rashid decided to run and won in 21.81 which was .03 seconds off the meet record and half a second better than his previous P.B.

Late in 2020 at the testing day for students trialling to be accepted into the Westfields Athletics program we came across two incredible talents. The first was **Bryse Besters** (16 and trialling for year 11). This unassuming young man was tested over 40m in a time that was only (0.01) seconds slower than Rashid's best and in the standing long jump bettered Rashid's p.b. Successful in his application he joined the Westfields sprint squad and started training right away. What became apparent was that he had never competed in athletics; not little A's, not Seniors and in fact had only ever run at his School, Zone and Regional Carnivals. Completely raw he had never used blocks or been registered as an athlete. After just 2 weeks of training we took him to Illawong high velocity meet in November 2020. In his first race ever as an athlete he ran 11.20 and qualified for the 2021 Australian Juniors. During my 46 years of experience in Athletics this has never been done before. Shortly after he broke the WAC Open 60m record with 7.03 seconds. Then in February he contested the prestigious Jack Giddy professional foot race. Having to run heat and semi final he qualified for the final and won prizemoney finishing creditably in 4th place. A silver medal at the ACT Championships was followed with the narrowest of Margins which separated him from Bronze to 4th at the NSW Junior Championships. He failed to make the final at the Australian juniors however finished the season with a legal P.B of 11.06 and a magnificent windy 10.94 (2.4). The 10.94 gave Bryse a World top 50 in U18 under windy conditions.

Also trialling for 2021 was **Malikye Kessie**. Malikye had moved from Maroubra to Campbelltown. As a 16 year old he had a p.b. of 11.44 over 100m. After joining our sprints squad he ran his first race in 11.06 and then his second race joining the 10 second club in 10.95 and picking up a number 3 World ranking for U18 early in 2021. Malikye went onto winning the NSW U18 title in 100m with a sensational 10.80. Set for a big season finish at the Australian Junior Championships, Malikye unfortunately suffered hamstring tightness and did not make the final.

Other Westfields athletes making World rankings in Sprints are **Destiny McGoon** and **Alexandra Alizart**, both making the top 300 in the World with 58.18 and 57.94 in the 400m respectively. Destiny went onto become a National finalist at her first ever Australian Championships. Also gaining personal bests during the 20-21 season were **Cameron Banovich** 11.59 (11.43 w) and 23.67 in 100m and 200m respectively. Year 8 student **Joshua Jones** also made National Rankings in 60m and 100m U14.