Noor Zahi sets new national record in Tokyo

KABUL: Afghan Sprinter Shah Mahmood Noor Zahi competed in the men's 100 meters race in Tokyo Olympics on Saturday, setting a new national record, the National Olympics Committee said.

He ran the distance in 11.4 seconds and stood in the seventh position in the preliminary heats, the National Olympic Committee said. He was the last Afghan athlete to compete in this year's Olympics games.

On Friday, Kimia Yousofi from Afghanistan competed in the women's 100 meters race in Tokyo Olympics, setting a new national record, the committee said.

She ran the distance in 13.29 seconds and stood in the seventh position in the preliminary heats, the committee said.

Kimia's previous record was 13.33 seconds, according to the Olympics committee. It was Yousofi's second Olympics.

Five Afghan athletes entered the Tokyo Olympics.

On Sunday, Mahdi Yovari, an Afghan in Tokyo competing in the shooting category, was eliminated. His score was 601.4 points, and he did not qualify for the next round.

Yovari came in 47th place in the competition, Afghanistan's National Olympic Committee confirmed on Sunday.

On Tuesday, Farzad Mansouri, an Afghan taekwondo athlete also lost to his South Korean rival in the competition.

Mahmood Noor Zahi, an Afghan competitor in the athletics competition has not yet competed in the Olympic Games.

The Kabul Times

Tokyo 2020 Olympics: Dina Asher-Smith ready to thrive on greatest stage of all in Tokyo

"I'm always confident that in that moment, I'm going to be okay because it's what I love and live for. More than anything, I just can't wait to race".

Dina Asher-Smith beams when she speaks about competing. It's not just sprinting that makes her smile from ear to ear, it's the art of competition that drives her.

The thought of standing on the start line next to the best in the world and racing against them isn't daunting for Asher-Smith, it's exhilarating. She's excited by the prospect of all eyes being on her and that years of work will come down to a matter of seconds.

Asher-Smith is the fastest British woman in history. She's the reigning world 200m champion and a 100m world silver medallist. At 25-years-old, she is Team GB's athletics captain and when Asher-Smith is on the start line of a major final, there's no other place she would rather be.

It's fortunate then, that Asher-Smith's parents were always trying to find ways to expend the energy of their bubbly child and that a friend asked her for a favour at a young age.

"I was always running around and causing mischief," Asher-Smith told Judy Murray on Sky Sports' Driving Force.

"They [my parents] always had me taking part in loads of different clubs and sporting activities.

"When they set up a running club at primary school, my friend asked me to go with her because she really wanted to go. I just thought that running didn't really appeal to me; I thought that you were just running around and you weren't getting points or anything like that!

"Then, she said if I went with her, she'd get me an ice cream from the van after school. That clinched it, but I just thought that I'd go with her for the first time because she was a bit nervous."

In signing up for that first session, Asher-Smith had inadvertently put her name forwards to represent her school at their local cross-country competition. It was at Crystal Palace and it would turn out to become the first competition of an illustrious athletics career.

On that day, Asher-Smith came fifth out of around 400 children. She went home with a certificate, a trophy, a new game that her mum had promised her and the feeling that she might just do it again.

Her performance, and also you suspect her personality, meant that she was spotted by some athletics coaches and invited to go to a track. Indeed, the track that Asher-Smith started to train at - Norman Park Athletics Track - is the one where she still trains at now.

Not only did Asher-Smith find her track at an early age, but she also found her coach, John Blackie.

"When she came along it was very evident, immediately, that she had some talent," Blackie said. "It was very much untapped talent at that stage, though.

"We knew that she would be a very good athlete, but what we didn't know was how she would turn out and what her events would be. She was pretty good at pretty much everything she did."

Blackie, who Asher-Smith says she just knew as 'the boss' in the early days, set about looking after this young athlete in the right way. He knew the importance of making things fun, involving her parents, and ensuring that she didn't take on anything too soon.

"With all youngsters you don't want to push them into things that they might not stay in," he said. "So, you do everything. Dina did everything all of the time." Asher-Smith's progression through the ranks was a natural one, and as expected with Blackie's philosophy, it was one that wasn't forced or pressured. She started to work more with Blackie and moved into representative athletics.

Asher-Smith competed throughout her teenage years and said that the fact that Blackie was a father of girls, helped them both to navigate that time. No topics were off-limits, instead physical changes, menstrual cycles, moods and more, were all discussed and addressed.

"Lots of people shy away from it but John never did that," Asher-Smith said. "I can have so many open discussions with John and if I say to him that I'm having cramps, he'll often say that if you're in that much pain let's just adjust the session, the week etc.

"I shouldn't say it's a breath of fresh air, because it's said that it is, but, for a male coach [to have that understanding and openness] it is.

There are some that do, but not all. Obviously, it's a huge factor in high-performance sport."

It's so important to have someone who has got your back, who knows you inside out. It's important that you have someone who knows when to not say anything, when to talk and they just know you.

That's such a comforting feeling to have that around you. It's just great, it's truly great.

"It's massively important [their partnership]," Colin Jackson told Sky Sports about Blackie and Asher-Smith.

"As the athlete, you have the confidence of knowing that there's somebody who has got your back. A person who will do everything they can to make your life easier.

"I used to tell people that Malcolm [Arnold] was my second dad. In reality, he saw me more than my dad did because I spent so much time with him.

"Like Dina and John, we were together throughout my teenage years and beyond. He saw me at my grumpiest to then growing into a champion athlete." I trust John 100 per cent. I also know that he cares about me as Dina the person, as well as Dina the athlete. So, I also know that he would never put me in a position for something that I wasn't ready for, he wouldn't falsely build up confidence or lie to me.

In 2019, Asher-Smith had a World Championships to remember. She won the 200m world title in 21.88 seconds, took silver in the 100m and then another silver in the 4x100m relay.

As a result, the 25-year-old became the first British athlete to win three medals at one world championships and the lead into an Olympic Games the following year looked promising.

The news of the Games' postponement and the arrival of a global pandemic could have derailed Asher-Smith and Blackie. Instead, they both looked at it as an opportunity.

"In track and field, you're often pushing towards the next championships and the next goal, and because we work in such rigid training blocks, there's often very little room for change. "So I thought, being in this pandemic and with an extra year before the games, let's add in all of the stuff that we didn't add in after the World Championships."

An element Asher-Smith added to her life was seeing a sports psychologist, and she's keen to be open about her reasons why.

"Seeing a psychologist doesn't have to be because there's a problem," Asher-Smith said to Gary Neville on Sky Sports' The Overlap.

Joe Joyce will risk his unbreakable aura against Anthony Joshua - and doesn't care if you doubt him

Joe Joyce is ready to risk his unbreakable aura against Anthony Joshua - and doesn't care if you question his brutal methods for heavyweight domination.

Savage hooks from Carlos Takam had jolted Joyce in the most alarming few rounds of his career, but he enticed his opponent into a ferocious flurry of punches.

Joyce could withstand everything that Takam threw at him, but the Cameroon-born contender was unable to do the same.

"Everything was like bouncing off. I wasn't, 'Oh my god, his power,' I was quite happy to time him and get into his rhythm and make exchanges. But I wasn't worried too much about what was coming back.

"I'm putting shots together, landing in the meantime, but it depends who is paying attention to what.

"If you're paying attention to the shots coming at me, yeah I get hit with some shots, but while that is happening, I'm peppering him with loads more shots."

What about the doubters?

What if Joshua, a potential future opponent was ripping punches through his defence with regularity?

"People are not reactive when I'm landing. 'Joe Joyce throws a lot of punches' - and he's landing a lot of shots!

"But then you just expect it.

"I don't care. It's effective and it works and I get the wins.

"I'm not too bothered."

Joyce was equally unconcerned about the commotion on social media after he entered Wembley Arena like a comic book character, rather than an imposing heavyweight threat.

Oleksandr Usyk, the eccentric Ukrainian who challenges Joshua on September 25, live on Sky Sports Box Office, would perhaps even draw the line at adopting the same persona as a character from 'The X-Men.'

Joyce briefly pondered the prospect of an extravagant pre-fight face-off with Usyk.

"Usyk in costume design?

"If he could do, it might encourage him to do so!"

Joyce is 'edging with Joshua' in the upcoming clash with Usyk, and for good reason, a battle with his fellow Team GB medallist would be more lucrative and more to his liking.

Joshua claimed gold at London 2012, while Joyce settled for silver in Rio four years later after a hotly debated loss to Tony Yoka, but the Brit rivals were evenly matched during punishing sparring in the past.

"He's always been a step ahead anyway. I've always been a stage behind. Now I've worked my way up, so I should be challenging him soon.

"When you're the same weight, you're probably going to fight. You always have that in the back of your mind.

"We had some great spars over the years and it was very competitive, so it would be one hell of a fight, if he wants it?"

Joyce has felt Joshua's concussive power and would not loiter in range for too long, despite what you might think.

The 35-year-old has a scalpel, along with his sledgehammer, and his stinging jab was enough to break down Daniel Dubois last November.

"I've obviously wouldn't go in and trade with him for too long, because he's dangerous when he's swinging those big arms around.

"You don't want to be caught with any of them. I would have to be a lot more tactical. "There's always two halves of the fight. It's a long fight, so I could take him into deep waters and drown him.

"I tend to take a lot of shots and if he's going to land big shots, there will be some risky exchanges on both sides, and I'm sure I could land some heavy ones on him too."

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff says Red Bull's Lewis Hamilton collision criticism went 'step too far'

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff felt criticism of Lewis Hamilton by some members of the Red Bull team was harsh and unfair.

Mercedes chief Toto Wolff believes Red Bull's criticism of Lewis Hamilton went a "step too far" and says there is a need for de-escalation in the row.

Red Bull boss Christian Horner, meanwhile, described a statement issued by Mercedes on Thursday night as a "little antagonistic" - but said his team's remarks about Hamilton over the incident were "nothing personal" against the seven-time world champion or his team.

Both teams have said they want to move on from the events of Silverstone at this weekend's Hungarian GP, although the fallout from the collision between Hamilton and Max Verstappen two weeks ago has inevitably remained the dominant topic on the opening two days of the Budapest event. On Thursday evening, stewards rejected Red Bull's attempt to hold a review into the incident and the Mercedes driver's penalty. Mercedes issued a strongly-worded statement in response to the stewards' decision in which they accused Red Bull's "senior management" of a "concerted attempt…to tarnish the good name and sporting integrity of Lewis Hamilton".

Speaking to Sky Sports F1 after opening practice on Friday, Wolff said of Red Bull: "I think the comments that were made, surely out of emotion, were going directly against a seven-time world champion. "Words like 'amateurish' should have no place and what it triggered was an avalanche of comments in the social media, a lot of controversy and added to further polarisation.

"I think we, as a sport, should do the contrary - we should de-escalate." Mercedes' statement referenced the documents Red Bull submitted to the stewards in their right of review.

"The remarks that were made during and after the Silverstone grand prix were just elaborated further in the document," added Wolff in the later team boss' press conference.

"Not looking at the incident only but giving it a wider paste that was beyond other things. Just a step too far."

Christian Horner says he was surprised by Mercedes' reaction to Red Bull's appeal against Lewis Hamilton's penalty and insists it was not 'personal'.

The Hundred: Southern Brave edge out Birmingham Phoenix in thriller to earn first win

Southern Brave got their first win of The Hundred, at the third time of asking, as they edged out Birmingham Phoenix in a thrilling finish at The Ageas Bowl on Friday night.

Chasing 152 to win, Brave skipper James Vince - who earlier won the toss and inserted the Phoenix - struck a typically classy 60 from 38 balls to seemingly have his side on course for victory, only to then fall to his captaincy counterpart Moeen Ali with 42 balls remaining.

Devon Conway (34 off 27 balls) rallied, but after he was bowled by fellow New Zealander Adam Milne (3-15) with 19 balls left and 32 runs still needed, the Brave chase appeared to be falling away.

But Chris Jordan came in and his unbeaten 17 off nine deliveries got the hosts over the line to earn them this first win.

Earlier, after a circumspect start to the Phoenix innings, the in-form Liam Livingstone struck an unbeaten 68 off 44 balls - smashing five boundaries and four sixes in his innings - to propel the visitors up to a total of 151-3.

Miles Hammond played a useful supporting role with his 44 not out, from 29 deliveries, as the pair put on a century partnership to end the innings. But it wasn't to be enough.