

Usain Bolt has Set a New Gold Standard on Track

On Sunday Usain Bolt will be presented with an original piece of the Berlin Wall, that divided the capital until 1989 by Berlin's mayor, a fitting gift to take back to his home in Jamaica.

Has any athlete united this sport in such a manner?

This unique souvenir weighs 2.7 tons, is 3.60 metres high and 1.20 metres wide.

"I don't know yet what I am going to do with it. I thought it was a small piece. I did not know it was going to be so big," said a smiling Bolt.

Even when he is not competing, his presence becomes the centre of attention. Take Friday evening, a piece of world championship history in the women's 200 metres, 24 hours after Bolt's astonishing world record victory at the distance. Now even great champions are starting to believe that the impossible is possible because of the Jamaican's achievements during this past week. To eclipse those individual times again was a feat in itself but to take them to almost unimaginable levels is leaving even the best in other events, reassessing their own limits.

Before Berlin, Bolt talked about his desire to be remembered as the man who "saved" athletics after so many dark days have passed, in the shadow of the drugs shame that was threatening to destroy the sport. He could never have expected to have succeeded so quickly. People watch athletics now because of him.

In 1936, Jesse Owens defied Hitler with his four gold medals at the Olympic Games at this same stadium. His legend has lasted 73 years but will the sport ever see an athlete like Bolt again? No other sprinter has held world titles in the 100m and 200m at the same time. No man is bypassing times like Bolt did on Thursday when he took the 200m from 19.30 to 19.19. What happened to the 19.20s?

Bolt believes he can take the 100m to 9.4. "I could go to that but I think the world stops at 9.4," he said. When that will be, who knows? It is possible every time he runs because nothing seems beyond his limits. Yet he is making people in the sport think like never before.

Bolt's next 100m is planned for Friday week at the IAAF's Golden League meeting in Brussels. He is due to race America's Tyson Gay, a deal agreed by promoter Wilfried Meert before Berlin. But as Meert said, meetings with smaller budgets might have to think differently if they want Bolt because of what would be left to spend on the rest.

But Bolt has the ability to lift more than just his own sport. The Commonwealth Games will be held in New Delhi in October next year and there has never been a world record in either the men's 100m or 200m in that championship. Bolt has still to confirm whether he will be there or not but him against Asafa Powell, who won the 100m bronze medal in Berlin, would transform what is known as the Friendly Games into something special.

But Bolt does that wherever he goes and whenever he runs. As Jamaican teammate Veronica Campbell-Brown, the Olympic 200m champion, said: "I have no idea how many years it will be for someone to challenge him. He is at another level right now. He is a great inspiration to everyone."