

Asafa to give back through Foundation

Former world 100-metre record holder and World Championship bronze medallist Asafa Powell has vowed to give back to the sport of track and field.

Powell was speaking at the launch of his foundation which will help with the development of athletes, especially students at the primary and secondary levels.

The inauguration of the Asafa Powell Foundation was held Tuesday evening at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel.

Powell, who turns 27 later this month, expressed satisfaction at the launch and said he was inspired to start the foundation by memories of his own hardships in getting equipment, gear and the necessary nutrition before he became an established athlete.

"There were many times in my earlier years when sport gear and the equipment necessary to advance my training was difficult to come by. There are many of our young athletes today who are facing that same difficulty," he lamented.

"I would like... in a structured and organised way to help others, particularly those young people who have the necessary athletic ability but cannot afford the gears, medication, school books...

"This is what has led me to form this foundation," beamed Powell, who holds the record for the most sub-10 second clockings over 100 metres.

Minister of Youth, Sport and Culture, the Honourable Olivia Grange, lauded Powell for his decision to give back to the sport that has brought him worldwide recognition and urged other sportsmen and women to do likewise.

"There are many others who I'm sure will want to do the same thing. I want to encourage all of you... to set up your foundations because that is what is going to be lasting," she said.

World and Olympic champion Usain Bolt was also on hand to contribute an undisclosed sum to the foundation. The world record holder at both 100 and 200 metres praised Powell for his initiative.

"I think it's a great step that Asafa has made with this foundation to really give back to athletes because I understand where he is coming from because I was running barefoot when I was little," said the 23-year-old star.

Powell's mother and father, as well as brother Nigel, were in attendance to endorse the foundation, which its chairman Delano Franklyn said is willing to work alongside any other entity with similar goals.

Powell was also supported by fellow MVP athletes Bridgitte Foster- Hylton, Shelly-Ann Fraser, Melaine Walker, Shericka Williams, Nesta Carter and Michael Frater.