

Usain Bolt and Sanya Richards win IAAF world athletes of year

Jamaican Usain Bolt and American Sanya Richards were named world athletes of the year on Sunday November 22, 2009 by the IAAF. Over the past year, Bolt has become a household name and Richards took home the gold for America at the world championships in August.

The title of top athlete of the world--as dubbed by the IAAF--has been owned by Bolt for two years now. Bolt reset his own 100 meter and 200 meter world records and even set the 4x100 meter world record with his Jamaican sprint team. He raced his way to 9.58 seconds for the 100 and 19.19 for the 200. He even suffered injuries from a car crash in April, but still performed at a level well above his top competitors, including nominee and 100 meter American record holder Tyson Gay and fellow-Jamaican Asafa Powell.

Sanya Richards--who also won the title in 2006-- currently holds the American 400 meter record in a blazing 48.70 seconds. Her world championship win in August served as her first global title and now has her eyes on setting the 400 meter world record. Richards claimed that Bolt was a big part of her success this past year via his relaxed attitude and focus on the inherent fun of the sport.

See pictures from the IAAF world athlete of the year ceremony

What's next for both Bolt and Richards? Bolt is set to faced Gay and Powell at least three times in the coming year-- a sure-fire formula for speed. Bolt was undefeated in finals in 2009 and is intent on defending both his Olympic and world championship titles. Besides her world record goals, Richards will marry her fiancée, New York Giants football player Aaron Ross, in February 2010.