

Lightning Bolt out to strike Olympics twice

Usain Bolt will open his European track season today, Friday full of confidence, in top shape and eyeing the ultimate prize – more Olympic medals.

The talk in athletics in any Olympic year is of the revered Games themselves, when track and field take centre stage at the world's largest sporting event.

Bolt revolutionised sprinting, and indeed athletics, four years ago in Beijing, setting world records when winning the 100 and 200m titles, and also starring in a record-breaking Jamaican quartet in the 4x100m relay. The 25-year-old Jamaican left the Chinese capital as one of the most recognisable figures in world sport, unbelievably going on to beat both his individual sprint marks with new times (9.58 and 19.19sec) in the Berlin worlds in 2009. He takes to the track in this eastern Czech city for the sixth time on Friday, seemingly brimming with confidence that he will be unbeatable come the London Games (and before) given his recent injury-free run and impressive form. "I'm definitely on the good path, the right track. I've been injury free and I'm looking to doing extremely well at the Olympics," Bolt said. The Jamaican will be up against, among others, Dwain Chambers, the Briton having served a drugs ban and now cleared to race in the Olympics after the Court for Arbitration in Sport (CAS) overturned a British Olympic Association bylaw that banned doping cheats for life. "For me, rules are rules," said Bolt, a one-time training partner of Chambers, albeit for a very short period. "If the rules say it's okay for him to compete, who am I to say otherwise?" Bolt's 200m meeting record of 19.83sec, set before his Beijing heroics in 2008, could come under threat from American duo Walter Dix and Wallace Spearmon. "I'm really looking forward to running for the first time in Ostrava," said Dix, the reigning double world sprint silver medallist whose personal best is 19.53sec. "I look to try and continue as the season progresses towards London. Hopefully I can lower the meet record." Other mouth-watering duels in Ostrava include that between Olympic winner and newly-crowned world indoor champion Pamela Jelimo against 2009 world champion and Daegu silver medallist Caster Semenya, of South Africa, in the 800m. Czech world record holder Jarmila Kratochvilova will be present in the stadium to watch the showdown, something not lost on Semenya, currently coached by former Mozambique track star Maria Mutola, herself the meet record holder with 1:57.72 from 2004. "Good to compete in the country of the world record holder, I'm looking forward to meet her," said Semenya, whose career was put on hold after her Berlin exploits because of doubts over her sexuality. Semenya's compatriot Oscar Pistorius will also be in competition, seeking another Olympic qualifying time in the men's 400m, in which American LaShawn Merritt, current Olympic champion and world silver medallist, also runs. Pistorius, the 25-year-old "Blade Runner" who uses carbon fibre prosthetic running blades, bettered the Olympics qualifying mark of 45.30sec this year with a time of 45.20 at a meet in Pretoria. He must run 45.25 again at an international event before June 30 to realise his dream of becoming the first amputee to compete against able-bodied athletes at the quadrennial multi-sport showcase.