

## Francis' courageous run uproots unlikely silver

It was a race of courage and heart, one that turned back the hands of time.

With an anchor leg that greats Arthur Wint, George Rhoden, Herb McKenley, and Lel Laing would have been proud of, 18-year-old Calabar High schoolboy, Javon 'Donkey Man' Francis, looked nothing like a boy among men, as he led Jamaica to an impressive and hard-fought silver medal in the 4x400m final at the IAAF World Championships in Athletics at the Luzhniki Stadium on Friday. Given his nickname, because of his incredible stamina, Francis showed the world what the excitement about Jamaica's young quarter-milers was all about, with a run for the ages. "Last night I told my teammates that I really need a medal to take home," Francis told The Gleaner. "I told them that anywhere they bring the baton in, they should ensure that it's in the pack. I told them once I get it there I will do my work because I know that I can." He did. In a display of maturity way beyond his tender years, the Jamaican stopped the clock in an impressive 2:59.88 behind winners USA, 2:58.71, and ahead of Russia 2:59.90. "Me and my coach discussed it and he told me that I can do it because I already did it at the Penn Relays and Carifta Games, so I should not fear anyone and that I should run my own race," added Francis of the advice given to him by his coach at Calabar, Michael Clarke, who is also here as head coach of the Jamaica team. "I told him I would do it for him and let him feel proud and I am glad that he was able to take me from nothing to something and I wanted to pay him off with this run," Francis added. Jamaica's gem It's a run of which his teammates are also appreciative, and as Edino Steele puts it, Jamaica has a real gem. "I'm gonna call him 'Super Donkey Man' now, this boy is fantastic," exclaimed second-leg runner Steele. "He is going to be someone to reckon with in the years to come and I hope he stays healthy and keep his head on his shoulder and do what he does best. "We feel good. In Daegu, we got a bronze medal and here we got the silver, so hopefully the next one we can get the gold. "I know that Jamaica is looking for this great quarter-miler to pop up, but we have to be patient and everyone has their time and I think our time is coming up soon," added Steele, who at 26 is the oldest member of the relay quartet. "I can't talk about that run, that was an amazing running from Javon. I know he could do it because I know he is a very strong guy," added third-leg man, Omar Johnson, who was expected to have been replaced by the injured Javere Bell, the national 400m champion. "I am really happy for this medal. I think 'Donkey Man' ran a great leg, words can't explain," said Rusheen McDonald, who ran the lead-off leg for Jamaica. Up to press time, official World Championships timekeepers SEIKO had not provided the official splits, but technical leader Maurice Wilson didn't need those statistics to confirm what he had seen. "That was one of the greatest runs I have ever seen by a Jamaican on a relay. For him to make up ground and continue to go and then to increase on the persons behind him and hold on for the medal the way he did was just amazing. We have so much talent and this is a reflection of that," said Wilson. Source: Jamaica Gleaner