

Omar — Good as Gold!

Published by: The Jamaica Observer on Tuesday, August 8th, 2017

Writer: Howard Walker

LONDON, England — Omar McLeod has brought back that sparkle in the eyes of Jamaicans after he struck gold in the men's 110m hurdles at the London Olympic Stadium after the island spectacularly lost the title as the fastest nation on Earth.



Jamaica's Omar McLeod (right) embraces teammate Hansle Parchment after winning gold in the men's 110m hurdles at the 2017 IAAF World Championships at the London Stadium, yesterday. (Photo: AFP)

McLeod gave Jamaica a much-needed psychological boost after both Usain Bolt and Elaine Thompson lost the coveted 100m crowns.

The sprint hurdling king, who won in 13.04 seconds and became only the second man in history, along with American Allen Johnson, to hold the World Indoor, Olympic and World titles simultaneously.

And, even before collecting the medal, McLeod has selflessly dedicated to others.

“I am overcome with emotions. It was a hard race, probably one of the hardest line-ups in history. But I really wanted to bring that spark back in the Jamaican camp,” said a beaming McLeod.

“It was really daunting, and I think it was up to me to really set that momentum again, especially after what happened to Usain Bolt and Elaine (Thompson) and I specially wanted to dedicate this win to Usain Bolt's retirement,” he added.

“I had to do it the Omar McLeod way in order to win (as) I had to dominate from the start and take control of the race. It was a greatly executed race. I have been struggling with my start the

whole championships, so I really had to have fun with it, let loose and make it happen,” he explained.

Defending champion and Authorised Neutral Athlete (ANA) Sergey Shubenkov was second in 13.14 and he chased McLeod relentlessly, but just failed to match the champion's final burst over the last hurdle.

Balázs Baji of Hungary grabbed bronze in 13.28, while Jamaica's Hansle Parchment was eighth in 13.37 following his usual slow start. He never recovered against a world-class field. Garfield Darien of France was fourth with 13.30, while world record holder Aries Merritt finished fifth in 13.31.

McLeod is the first Jamaican to win the sprint hurdles at the World Championships adding it to his Olympic crown.

“This one is special, honestly. There was a lot of pressure coming in, but I channelled it positively. It's totally different to last year, where we had Usain and Elaine winning, which I used to propel me. I didn't have that this time, so I really wanted to come out and shine my own light,” he noted.

Meanwhile, Stephenie-Ann McPherson continued her return to form and was the quickest of the three Jamaicans that advanced to the final of the women's 400m.

Veteran Novlene Williams-Mills and Olympic bronze medallist Shericka Jackson also made it through, but Chrisann Gordon just missed out.

McPherson, who was once again drawn with Olympic champion Shaunae Miller-Uibo, looked steady throughout and clocked a season's best 50.56 to finish second behind Miller-Uibo, who eased to 50.36. American Quanera Hayes was third in 50.71, but failed to advance.

Williams-Mills and Jackson finished third and fourth in 50.67 and 50.70, respectively, behind surprised winner Salwa Eid Naser from Bahrain who once again lowered her national record to 50.08. Allyson Felix was second in 50.12.

The fourth Jamaican, Gordon, was in semi-final three, but her 50.87 clocking placed her third behind Phyliss Francis of the USA and Kabange Mupopo of Zambia in 50.60. In fact, Gordon was pipped by her teammates, Williams-Mills and Jackson, as the fastest losers.

Jackson, who won bronze two years ago in Beijing, was happy for another final appearance.

“I am happy, because at the Jamaican trials I ran 50.0, but I am still grateful. A medal is not guaranteed every time you come to a championship; you have to work for a medal. No medal has your name before you get here, so you have to work for it and I hope for the best in the final,” said Jackson.