

## Within Reach – Zimbabwe's Athletes vs Africa's Finest

Zimbabwe's athletics story is now about closing the gap with Africa's elite. Across the 2026 Interprovincial Championships, a clear category has emerged:

*"Within Reach"* Athletes – One Step from Continental Breakthrough

These are athletes who are not yet at qualifying standards but are dangerously close, and with the right support, could break into Africa's top tier within 12-24 months.

The sprint corridor now shows:

*MEN - Chasing Africa's Sprint Kings*

*Zimbabwe's Contenders*

- Takudzwa Manhanga – consistent podium finishes (100m & 200m)
- Derrick Matutu – 400m strength (46.51s)
- Munashe Kwambana – junior consistency across sprint events

Africa's Current Standard Bearers

- Akani Simbine – Africa's sprint king (sub-10 consistently in 100m)
- Ferdinand Omanyala – explosive 100m runner (9.7-9.8 range)
- Letsile Tebogo – world-class 100m/200m prodigy
- Muzala Samukonga – 400m global contender



### Gap Analysis (Men)

- Zimbabwe athletes are:

*0.3 – 0.8 seconds behind Africa's best in sprints*

1 – 1.5 seconds behind in 400m

That gap is bridgeable with:

- International race exposure
- Strength & conditioning
- Professional coaching cycles

WOMEN – Building Towards Africa's Elite  
Zimbabwe's Rising Force

- Delight Maravanyika – sprint double contender
- PraiseGod Nyamulepa – explosive junior sprinter
- Shalom Sendi – junior 100m champion
- Thembelihle Ncube – 400m strength and control

### *Africa's Leading Women Athletes*

- (Africa-based training competitor circuits influence)
- Tobi Amusan – world record holder (100m hurdles)
- Marie-Josée Ta Lou – sprint legend (100m/200m)
- Christine Mboma – Olympic 200m silver medalist
- Beatrice Masilingi – rising sprint force

### Gap Analysis (Women)

- Zimbabwe women are:

2–4 seconds behind world elite (sprints & 400m)

But here is the opportunity:

- Their rate of improvement is significantly higher
- Their age profile is younger
- Their depth is increasing rapidly

### *NAAZ Secretary General, Madam Cynthia Phiri*

*"What we are witnessing is a powerful shift in Zimbabwean athletics. Our athletes are no longer far from Africa's best – they are now within touching distance. With the continued support of our coaches, corporate partners, and the entire athletics family, we are confident that these performances will soon translate into continental and global qualification. This is the beginning of a very exciting era for Zimbabwe athletics."*

Final Insight

*Africa's elite are no longer out of reach, the difference now is not talent – it is preparation, exposure, and belief.*

