

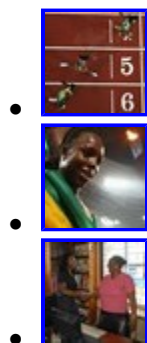
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There is no stopping Miss VCB



Veronica Campbell-Brown wins the Olympic 200m title as four women run 22.01 or faster (Getty Images)

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With a stunning performance in Beijing's Birds' nest, 25-year-old Veronica Campbell Brown confirmed her status as one of the best female sprinters of all time. Now the tenth fastest woman of all time, the Jamaican is set to build on her steady progress

Extract from IAAF Yearbook 2008

On August 21, 2008 Veronica Campbell-Brown became a member of a very special sorority – a select group of athletes who had not just won an Olympic title, but who had repeated the feat.

On that day in front of a packed Bird's Nest Stadium in Beijing and in the 80th anniversary year of women in athletics at the Olympics, Veronica Campbell-Brown joined East Germany's Barbel Wockel as the only women to successfully defend the Olympic 200m.

She joined the ranks of Wyomia Tyus, Gwen Torrence, Tatyana Kazinkina, Marie José Pécé, Derartu Tulu, and Gail Devers as the only women in the century-plus old Games to win the same event twice.

It was a moment more special to those watching in Jamaica where Campbell-Brown grew up.

Only weeks, days earlier, Jamaican track & field fans had been locked in heated debate about whether the reigning 100m World champion should race in the 100m in Beijing despite not qualifying for the event at the country's national championships.

Campbell-Brown's story didn't start there, however.

It began 26 years earlier on May 15, 1982 in the small community of Clarks Town in the western-Jamaica parish of Trelawny and in a period spanning less than ten years she would take the sport of athletics by storm and stamp her name in its history books.

At age 25, Campbell-Brown became the only athlete to win 100m titles at all IAAF World Championships series.

Her international dominance began at the 1999 World Youth Championships in Bydgoszcz, Poland where she won gold medals in the 100m and 4x100m.

The following year she became the first female to win the sprint double at the World Junior Championships in Santiago, Chile winning the 100m in a record 11.12 and the 200m in 22.87.

Later that summer she won her first Olympic medal in Sydney as an 18-year-old running the second leg of Jamaica's 4x100m silver medal winning relay alongside her childhood idol Merlene Ottey.

By then she was already something of a Jamaican household name having dominated at the local high school championships.

Mother, Pamela Bailey, said she recognised her daughter's talent when she was nine years old.

"One holiday we went to sell yam and I bought her a pack of Cheese Trix and I rested it on top of the hamper and a dog was there and climbed on top of the hamper and took down the Cheese Trix," Bailey shared of her fourth child.

"I heard her say 'Mommy the dog gone with the Cheese Trix', and before I knew it, she ran past the dog."

"I said to her 'Veronica you are an athlete or what?' and she said she didn't know. I said 'you have to run more because it looks like that is your future.'"

Her daughter was reserved as a child, she said: "She was so quiet, even now she is quiet."

Jamaicans like to joke that it is yam that makes the country's athletes run so fast and Bailey said that the food was indeed a staple of her daughter's diet.

From her initial childhood success Campbell was recruited to Vere Technical in Clarendon, miles away from her birth place.

While there she met former Jamaican athlete Neville Myton and his wife with whom she stayed during the school year.

It was during this period she met her future husband, fellow athlete Omar Brown, also a native of Trelawny.

Campbell and Brown remained friends throughout high school and college and eventually married in

2007.

After high school Campbell went to Barton College in Kansas and continued to set records and capture titles both indoors and outdoors in the 60m, 100m, and 200m.

She graduated from Barton in 2002, moving on to the University of Arkansas and a lucrative deal with sport gear manufacturers, Adidas.

Campbell's banner year was just around the corner.

In 2004, she won the sprint double at the Jamaica Championships to select the Athens Olympic Games team. She beat rising star Sherone Simpson but the promise of what could happen in Greece with the combined force of Campbell, Simpson, and the well-grounded Aleen Bailey had many Jamaicans waiting with baited breath.

The 100m title was not to be as Belarus' Yuliya Nesterenko would ensure and Campbell ended up with the bronze medal in 10.97 seconds.

Two days later Jamaicans everywhere shed tears along with Campbell as they heard the national anthem being played at an Olympics for the first time since 1996, a day after the athlete pounded away from the field and Allyson Felix to win the 200m in a personal best 22.05 seconds.

She would be the anchor in another historic first a few days later as the team of Campbell, Bailey, Simpson, and Tayna Lawrence gave Jamaica its first Olympic sprint relay gold medal.

The performances earned her the title of Jamaica's Sportswoman of the Year which she won the following year as well following a silver medal win at the Helsinki World Championships.

It was not until 2007 that Campbell-Brown would capture a title that had been seven years in the making - that of 100m World champion.

When the petite sprinter crossed the finish line in Osaka in 11.01 seconds she knew she could definitively say she was the first athlete to win 100m titles at all the IAAF World Championships series.

Days later Campbell-Brown would be captured on film with a look of complete bewilderment on her face as she stooped on the Osaka track after being beaten by a seemingly unstoppable Felix in the 200m.

No one could have thought on the day of the women's 100m final at the 2008 Jamaica trials that the reigning World champion would not make the final cut for the Olympics.

A season best equalling 10.88 seconds relegated Campbell-Brown fourth behind Kerron Stewart (10.80), a little known sprinter named Shelly Ann Fraser (10.85), and Simpson (10.87).

Campbell-Brown's loss stunned the crowd inside the National Stadium who were more hyped that weekend for a much-awaited meeting between Usain Bolt who had a few weeks before smashed the men's 100m World record at the Reebok Grand Prix in New York and the man whose record he broke, Asafa Powell.

The results of that race stirred up much brouhaha in Jamaica from then until the day of the Beijing women's final.

Supporters of VC – as she is affectionately called – felt she should be allowed to run the 100m given her exemplary record on the international stage.

Others felt that in accordance with the JAAA rules the top three race finishers should be named Olympic team.

The following evening, Campbell-Brown ensured there would be no question about her defence of the Olympic 200m title and the relief was clear in her jubilant celebration at the end of the race which she won in a world leading 21.94 seconds.

It was the fourth fastest time ever by a Jamaican woman.

“It was just a shocker to me but it's just a part of life,” she said of the 100m.

“I just had to bounce back and come out here and make sure that I'm on the Olympic team for an individual race,” she said of the 200m.

So on August 21 Campbell-Brown rewrote the Olympic history books again in another personal best, clocking 21.74 seconds to win the 200m.

This time there were no tears, only smiles, as the Jamaica national anthem was played for the fifth time.

The six gold medals won by Jamaica in Beijing sparked uninhibited celebrations in the nation of approximately 2.6 million.

Campbell-Brown and the entire Beijing contingent returned to a heroes welcome.

Back in Trelawny Campbell-Brown officially opened a Heroes Walk at a tourist attraction in the parish.

The Heroes Walk was meant to celebrate Jamaicans who made the country proud internationally and Campbell-Brown was among those inducted.

She remembered her humble beginnings and took time out to present six new computers and three printers to the school she attended when her talent was first discovered, and she announced that she would also be refurbishing a dorm at her former high school.

Her first time home since the feat in Beijing, the athlete made sure to point out that she was in no hurry to get back to the track.

"I am in no rush to get back ... I still have a few weeks off and I'm trying to enjoy the break that I have until I start back at the end of the month."

She says she will run until she feels its time to stop.

"As long as I'm competitive I will run. My body will tell me when it's time to stop and I will obey."

Veronica Campbell-Brown

Born: 15 May 1982 in Trelawny, Jamaica

2008 Olympic champion at 200m

2007 World champion at 100m

World Youth and World Junior champion

PB: 10.85 at 100m; 21.74 at 200m

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