

# asafa powell

## Breaking records, staying focused



By Gail Wood

**Before** he would become the world's fastest man ...

Before he would break the world record in the 100 meters ...

And before he would become so famous he couldn't walk the streets of his hometown in Jamaica without being mobbed by autograph seekers ...

Asafa Powell, the youngest of six brothers, would have to make a choice between careers. Between running and engineering. Between training six days a week or studying in college. Between the rigors of an athlete's life or the disciplines of a student.

AP photos

# asafa powell

To the delight of his countrymen, Powell would choose running. At age 21, he left college in Kingston to become the world's fastest man.

"I was wanting to go into engineering," says Powell, 25. "I was going to work on cars. But I was running and training so much, I had to make a choice because I didn't have time for both."

Powell, who has broken the world record in the 100 meters four times, is among the favorites for Olympic gold in China.

When Powell broke the world record for the first time in June 2005 with a time of 9.77, he became only the fourth non-American since 1912 to hold the 100-meter world record. He joined Donovan Bailey of Canada (1996), Armin Harry of West Germany (1960) and Percy Williams of Canada (1930).

In 2006, Powell matched his record twice and broke it again in September 2007, running a 9.74 in Italy. But with a time of 9.72, fellow Jamaican Usain Bolt broke Powell's record in May 2008 in New York.

In his career, Powell has run 100 meters under 10 seconds 33 times. By some accounts, he's Jamaica's most famous son. Yet Powell's friends say the fame and wealth that running has brought him haven't changed Asafa, a friendly, soft-spoken man quick with a smile.

"He's as humble a world record holder as there's ever been," says Paul Doyle, Powell's agent and friend. "He gets pulled in a lot of directions. It's difficult for him at times. But he hasn't let it go to his head."

Raised in a Christian home — both his parents pastor the church he grew up in — Powell

understands the value of humility and the frailty of pride.

As a child he attended church every Sunday and studied the Bible. Plus, he says, he has people who have prayed for him for years.

**In his high school yearbook, Powell wrote that he'd one day be the world's fastest man.**

**"I didn't know what else to write," says Powell. "I was the fastest guy in school."**

"You have to give God thanks," Powell says. "He's the One carrying me day by day. I have to glorify Him."

Unlike many Caribbean athletes, Powell hasn't trained in the United States, choosing instead to remain in Jamaica. His decision was influenced by tragedies.

In 2002, Powell's second-oldest brother was shot and killed while driving a taxi in New York. The following year another brother died of a heart attack while playing soccer in Georgia. His brothers' deaths came at a time when Powell was considering living in America.

Solidifying his decision were his

own feelings that he'd be better off at home and his mother's request to do so.

So, Powell remained in Jamaica, accompanying his church choir on guitar or drums on the Sunday mornings he's not racing

somewhere around the world.

Powell was inspired to run track by his 11th grade P.E. teacher, Mrs. Fraser. Until then, soccer had been his favorite sport.

In his high school yearbook, Powell wrote that he'd one day be the world's fastest man.

"I didn't know what else to write," says Powell. "I was the fastest guy in school."

After high school, Powell wasn't sure of his potential but knew he had running genes. His brother Donovan, who is 10 years older than Asafa, reached the semifinals in the 100 meters at the 1999 world championships.

"He showed me a few ropes,"

Powell says. "He told me what to expect."

Finishing fifth at the 2004 Olympics in Athens and not winning the 2008 world championships when he was favored to win both, Powell has found carrying the banner of world-record holder challenging.

But Powell isn't running just for himself.

"Asafa has 4 million people from his country counting on him," Doyle says. "He doesn't want to let them down."

"I don't know," Powell said when asked to identify his favorite sports moment. But he quickly responded when asked about his

favorite Bible verse.

"Philippians 4:13," he says. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Prayer, Powell says, is to a Christian's life what running is to an athlete — imperative. Though he trains six times a week, beginning with a three-hour morning workout at 6 a.m. and another two hours in the afternoon, prayer and Bible study are daily commitments.

"Prayer is what keeps us going," Powell says. **tpe**

GAIL WOOD is a freelance writer living in the Pacific Northwest.

E-mail your comments to [tpe@ag.org](mailto:tpe@ag.org).

## ABCs OF SALVATION

To know God and be ready for heaven, follow these steps:

**A. Admit you are a sinner.**

"There is no one righteous, not even one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10,23 (See Romans 5:8; 6:23.)

**Ask God's forgiveness and repent of your sins.**

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13 (See Acts 3:19.)

**B. Believe in Jesus (put your trust in Him) as your only hope of salvation.**

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (See John 14:6.)

**Become a child of God by receiving Christ.**

"To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 (See Revelation 3:20.)

**C. Confess that Jesus is your Lord.**

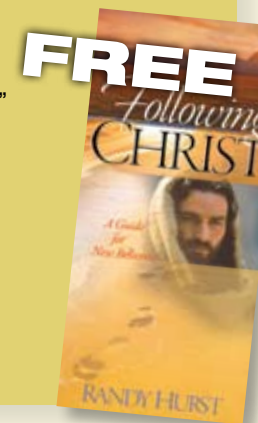
"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9 (See verse 10.)

For further help, contact the Assemblies of God church near you.

If you would like someone to pray with you concerning your decision to follow Jesus Christ, please contact the church indicated on the back cover or call:

**1-800-4PRAYER**

Assemblies of God National Prayer Center



## Their future, your purpose TEACH 101

**Assemblies of God  
faculty positions  
now available**

Assemblies of God Higher Education continues to develop a national database of all interested persons who would like to be considered for faculty positions at endorsed AG colleges and universities.

The greatest area of need is in the non-Bible and theology disciplines, particularly math, science, behavioral science, business, and music. However, all interested persons are encouraged to apply regardless of discipline.

Previous college teaching experience preferred but may not be required in all situations.

**Requirements for database eligibility:**

- Be Pentecostal ●
- Member of Assemblies of God with faithful attendance at an AG church ●
- AG pastor's recommendation ●
- Doctorate preferred, Master's degree minimum ●

Online application available at [www.colleges.ag.org](http://www.colleges.ag.org)

For further information, please contact:

**Christian Higher Education Department**  
 1445 North Boonville Avenue  
 Springfield, MO 65802  
 (417) 862-2781, ext. 3315  
[colleges@ag.org](mailto:colleges@ag.org)  
[www.colleges.ag.org](http://www.colleges.ag.org)

