



Oscar thrills at Worlds

Pistorius sweeps past able-bodied runners to finish third in 400 metres heats and qualify for semis at World C'ships

With a strong finishing kick on his carbon-fiber blades, double-amputee sprinter Oscar Pistorius swept past several able-bodied runners in the 400 metres Sunday to qualify for the semifinals at the world championships.

It also claimed another historic breakthrough for Paralympic athletes.

Pistorius recovered from his traditional slow start to pounce with power through the final bend and finishing straight to take third place in the final heat of the event and qualify for the next round. His time of 45.39 seconds was the 14th best of all competitors.

"I have worked extremely hard to be here," Pistorius said. "And it has been phenomenal to run."

Despite his fame, the South African was never destined to win his heat — just getting through had been a cliffhanger in itself.

Running in the tough outside lane, he had to count on a big move in the second half of the race and with 50 metres to go, five runners were still in it for the four automatic semifinal places. Pistorius, though, was not to be denied. He dipped at the tape for his third-place finish behind Bahamian winner Chris Brown.

He immediately slapped hands with runner-up Martyn Rooney, embraced several others and then formally bowed to the South Korean crowd of about 10,000 for their cheers and support.

"He ran the time to get here," said



Olympic champion LaShawn Merritt, who also advanced. "A great heart. I wish all the best to him."

Others suddenly see him as the direct rival he has become and the competitive threat he has become.

"With him being inside the race, automatically everybody steps up," Brown said. "No one wants to get beat by him. Me, definitely, I don't want to get beat him. "Everybody is going to come out and run their A-plus game."

The International Association of Athletics Federations had banned the multiple Paralympic gold medalist from able-bodied competition, saying the blades he wears gave him an unfair advantage.

But in 2008, Pistorius was cleared to compete by the Court of Arbitration for Sport — even though he failed to qualify for that year's Beijing Olympics and the 2009 worlds in Berlin. He did win three gold medals at the Beijing Paralympic Games.

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