



NEWS RELEASE

May 29, 2009

**OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST LASHAWN MERRITT TO RUN 400M
AT FESTIVAL OF EXCELLENCE**

The world's fastest 400m runner is set to compete at the Festival of Excellence at the University of Toronto's Varsity Centre. LaShawn Merritt leads an impressive pack of six sub-45-second runners in the 400m event on June 11th.

Merritt, who took 400m gold in Beijing and currently boasts the best 200m time in 2009, will be closely challenged by Canada's Tyler Christopher, who took the top 400m spot at the 2008 IAAF world indoor championships. Other competitors boasting PBs under 45 seconds include three-time Olympian Ato Stephens of Trinidad and Tobago, Ricardo Chambers and Jermaine Gonzales of Jamaica, and Andrae Williams of the Bahamas.

For more details on men's 400m athletes, visit www.festivalofexcellence.ca.

Other key events for the Festival of Excellence, featuring a host of world-class athletes, include 800m women (wheelchair), pole vault (triathlon), high jump women, pole vault women, high jump men, 400m women, 110mH (triathlon), mile men, 800m men, mile women, 400m men (triathlon), 100mH women and 100m men.

The Festival of Excellence is part of a series of track and field events celebrating Varsity Centre's IAAF-certified track and the new throws area that makes its debut in June. Other key events include the OFSAA track and field championships, Ontario's biggest high school athletics event, which takes place June 4-6, and the 2009 Canadian senior track and field championships June 25-28.

The breadth of this summer's line-up reflects U of T's playground-to-podium philosophy, which fosters long-term development for all students and athletes, from the elementary school student to the international competitor. The playground-to-podium model extends to the proposed Goldring Centre for High Performance Sport, which when complete will feature a world-class sport medicine clinic, sport science research and teaching labs, and the 2,000-seat Kimel Family Field House for basketball and volleyball. The Goldring Centre will serve as a major nexus for innovation in sports science research, sports medicine and the training of coaches.

Tickets for the Festival of Excellence are available through www.ticketbreak.com. For event details, visit www.festivalofexcellence.ca.

The University of Toronto has three campuses and is one of the world's greatest public research universities, committed to offering its students outstanding academic and non-academic opportunities. The Faculty of Physical Education and Health offers three degree programs – BPHE, MSc and PhD – while providing recreation, instruction, intramural and intercollegiate programs for U of T students. The Faculty also aims to build Ontario's capacity for high performance sport through its plans for the Goldring Centre for High Performance Sport, an integrated research, teaching, training and competition centre of excellence adjacent to Varsity Centre at Bloor St. and Devonshire Place. For more information, visit www.physical.utoronto.ca.

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EVENT INFO:

www.festivalofexcellence.ca

TICKETS:

www.ticketbreak.com