

## THE CONVERSATION

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Jono Searle/AAP

# 'Pressure makes diamonds': how Australian sprint sensation Gout Gout can get even faster

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At just 16 years of age, Gout Gout captured the world's attention with his record-breaking performance at the Australian National All-Schools Championships.

He ran an extraordinary 20.04 seconds for the 200m, breaking a 56-year-old Australian record.


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Watch 16-year-old Gout Gout 🇦🇺 break Usain Bolt's Age 16 Group World Record over 200m, clocking 20.04s (+1.5)!  
🔥🔥




At 16, Usain Bolt covered the distance in 20.13s.

He also breaks the Australian National Record set in 1968 by Peter Norman.

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Equally impressive was his 10.04 seconds for the 100m – unfortunately it was wind-assisted and ineligible for records, but reinforced his incredible potential.

For a moment, let's reflect on the significance of his performance:

- breaks Australia's oldest athletics record set by Peter Norman in 1968.
- sets Australian records at Open, under-20 and under-18 levels
- is ranked second all-time (under-18) and sixth (under-20) globally in the 200m
- currently the fastest in the world for the 200m at under-18 and under-20 levels
- has qualified for the 2025 World Championships for the 200m.

So, what comes next for this exciting Queenslander?

## Looking ahead to the LA and Brisbane Olympics

With an eye on the 2028 Los Angeles and 2032 Brisbane Olympics, it is important to remember that Gout is still classified a junior athlete.

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Remarkably, he is uniquely positioned to compete concurrently at both the junior and senior World Championships.

These competitions alternate every two years, providing invaluable experience in learning to manage international travel, new environments and intense world-class competition.

Gout Gout has been compared to sprint king Usain Bolt.

### **Training approach: what does it take?**

Elite sprinters typically peak at around 25-27, so Gout's progression *should* lead perfectly into the 2032 Brisbane Olympics.

His training revolves around sprint-specific drills, gym sessions for strength and power, and recovery.

Under coach Dianne Sheppard, his training will evolve with his age and maturity.

To an outsider, it may not seem so obvious, but what will change is the complexity and specificity of the training sessions.

As he grows stronger naturally, his gym work will help refine that strength to explode out of the blocks and hold his sprinting technique.

Sprint-specific exercises will become increasingly tailored to enhance his acceleration and top-end speed.

Recovery will also become more important as his body adjusts to greater physical demands.

This is where the role of his coach is crucial.

Not only does Sheppard provide the technical guidance in the gym and on the track, she will also need to navigate the multitude of internal and external factors necessary for Gout to perform on the world stage and harness his ability.

## **Performing under pressure**

Rising to fame at 16 can bring enormous pressure.

How an athlete perceives this pressure – as a threat or a challenge – can be the difference between success and failure.

Athletes with high self-efficacy, a strong sense of control, and an approach-oriented mindset are more likely to experience a challenge state, where they view pressure as an opportunity to perform their best.

In the case of Gout, a key consideration is whether he has the cognitive maturity to cope with the pressures of his rapid rise to stardom and truly understand what it takes to be the best in the world.

Even Usain Bolt, widely regarded as the greatest sprinter of all time, acknowledged this understanding didn't come naturally:

*You can't get to the top with talent alone. You need work, you need sacrifice, you have to be dedicated. It took me time, but I learned [...] when I was young, I didn't understand the concept of "being great".*

Like many athletes, Gout will continue to develop his mental resilience and "athletic mindset".

Techniques such as mindfulness, anchoring, and the "quiet eye" method are tools that sports psychologists use to help athletes enter a state of flow during competitions.

Managing the expectations placed on him will be essential for his long-term success.

**Michael Johnson** 

@MJGold · [Follow](#)



Great performances! Fun to think about his potential. But even with such great potential, realizing it is a whole different thing. The greater the potential, the higher the risk. He'll need a solid team around him to help him navigate the journey.

**World Athletics**  @WorldAthletics

"These are adult times, and me – just a kid – I'm running them. It's going to be a great future for sure", said 's Gout Gout after breaking @usainbolt's world age-16 best and Peter Norman's Oceanian Record.

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2:19 AM · Dec 10, 2024



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## **Pressure ‘makes diamonds’**

With the second fastest 200 metre under-18 time in history, Gout has drawn comparisons to the eight-time Olympic champion Bolt.

For some, the pressures of such comparisons would be overwhelming, however when asked about his performance, Gout responded confidently:

*You know what they say – pressure makes diamonds and I guess I’m better than a diamond right now.*

This statement should not be perceived as cockiness, but confidence and a display of his athletic mindset.

## **To infinity and beyond**

Gout’s performance at the recent Australian all-schools event was out of this world.

With his technical, tactical, physical, and psychological skills on display for the world to see, he possesses all the tools to not only be Australia’s next sprint sensation but the world’s next sprint king.

And with the Brisbane 2032 Olympic Games just seven years away, he has the ideal timeframe to reach his full athletic potential.

In the meantime, as a nation we must be patient and allow him to develop as a person and an athlete.

*As part of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic Legacy, the University of Southern Queensland has developed the Student-Athlete Empowerment Project “2 WIN” to enhance student-athlete health, wellbeing and performance.*