

# Gatlin out to dethrone Bolt in China face-off

American wants to show Jamaican who's boss when both at their best

**C**ONTROVERSIAL sprinter Justin Gatlin does not understand why people insist on calling him a two-time drug cheat and want him kicked out of the sport.

The American, who has served two doping bans, also expects future generations to look at him less judgementally, he told Reuters in an interview ahead of the US world championships trials where he will run only the 200 metres.

"Last time I checked, someone who takes medication for a disorder is not a doper," said Gatlin of his first drugs violation when he tested positive in 2001 for an amphetamine contained in attention deficit disorder medication (ADD) he had taken since a youth.

"Other people in the sport have taken the same medication I had for ADD and only got warnings," he added of the two-year ban that was later reduced to one.

"I didn't." Talk of that suspension might eventually have faded or been downplayed until the 2004 Olympic gold medallist and 2005 world champion failed a test for the banned steroid testosterone in 2006.

He was banned for four years, though many thought that would be the end of his career. To the ire of many he has become even better since becoming eligible to run again in 2010. No one has beaten him at either 100 or 200 metres since 2013, while this year, aged 33, he has set or equalled lifetime bests in both and become a serious threat to dethrone Usain Bolt at August's world championships in Beijing.

"If I felt like I did anything that I was trying to take away from the sport of track and field, then I would stand up and say 'Yes, I am guilty and I did this. Please have mercy on me,'" Gatlin said. He has never admitted to doping and continued to insist his 2006 test came from a massage therapist rubbing testosterone cream onto his legs, a contention the therapist has denied. "I have stuck to my story so far, and I have been honest with that," Gatlin said. His four years off have given his legs new shelf life, he claimed.

"I feel like 26 or 27 years old," he said. With Bolt having difficulty regaining his top form, many expect Gatlin to defeat the Jamaican in the 100 metres at the world championships, though the American will not go that far. "I think that I am a serious threat to anybody out there who is trying to get that medal," he said.

"But I think those guys are a threat as well." He and Bolt have not raced since 2013, and despite the Jamaican's lack of form this year, Gatlin thinks his rival will be ready come August. "He's done that in 2012," Gatlin



YOUTHFUL: Justin Gatlin, 33, says he feels 26 or 27 as a result of his four years out with a ban.

AP PHOTO

## Mystery over Usain's trials withdrawal

USAIN BOLT was not listed to run the 100 metres at Jamaica's national senior trials yesterday, sparking concerns about his fitness ahead of defending his sprint titles at this year's world championships in Beijing. The 100m and 200m world record-holder has struggled for form this year with modest best times of 10.12 seconds in Brazil and 20.13 in Ostrava.

Bolt had been entered along with Yohan

said. "He was beaten by his own teammate at Olympic trials, in the 100 and 200, and he seemed like he was going to lose the

Blake, Asafa Powell and Nesta Carter in the preliminary list published by the JAAA on Sunday.

The six-times Olympic gold medallist has wildcard entries for the 100m and 200m at the world championships in Beijing from August 22-30 as defending champion. Bolt's coach Glen Mills and agent Ricky Simms have yet to respond to questions about what Bolt's next move will be.

Olympics in 2012. "But he woke up in the semi-finals and pulled it off." The pair will meet again in August and Gatlin is relishing

the challenge in Beijing where he wants to take Bolt's mantle as the world's premier sprinter. "I want it all again," he said.

"I want to be able to run the table. I want to be able to say that I have all those things once again."

Athletics fans have been keen on the pair meeting before Beijing and while Gatlin accepts it would have been a tempting showdown, he was more interested in facing the Jamaican in China, when he expects him to be back at his best. "What is it really going to amount to if I go out there and run against Usain when he is not at his best?" Gatlin pondered.

"That is not a great storyline. It is not a race I would like to go out and win.

"I want Usain at his best, and I think he wants me at my best. That's what people want to see." - Reuters

