

The drive behind one brilliant shining star

Twinkle toes: Asher-Smith swears by one-arm press-ups. © Getty

Is self-discipline the secret of success? She is one of the world's best athletes, but Dina Asher-Smith is also a writer, model and an academic whizz with a razor wit. How does she do it?

The starting gun has just been fired for the women's 200m race at the World Athletics Championships in **Doha**.

One woman pulls ahead of the group, her legs pelting the tarmac in a blast of speed.

"She's moving away," shouts the commentator over the roars of the crowd. The finish line nears. "Dina Asher-Smith, the best of British, is finally on top of the world!"

At the World Championships in Doha, Asher-Smith has won more than her first world gold. Her silver medals in the 100m sprint and Saturday's 4 x 100m relay make her the first Briton ever to win three medals at a major athletics' tournament.

It was an historic week in a career that began aged eight, when a school friend lured Asher-Smith to the local running club with the promise of **ice cream**.

Aged 17, she won bronze in 4 x 100 metres relay in her first World Championships. Two years later, she became the first British woman to run 100 metres in under 11 seconds.

But while she was breaking records on the track, Asher-Smith was working just as hard at school.

“Her mum was very, very concerned that it might interrupt her learning,” her former teacher Terri Carty said. “I think that gave Dina that push to think ‘I must show Mum or Dad that I can do both’.”

And show them she did. Asher-Smith gained 10 A*s at GCSE, 3 As at A Level and a first class History degree from **King’s College London**.

She has modelled on the catwalk at Paris fashion week, and starred in a music video for Santan Dave’s “Black”. Appearing on **The Jonathan Ross Show**, she won legions of fan with her sharp wit and charm.

“You don’t get invited on chat shows unless you’re good – you’ve got to be entertaining and you’ve got to be able to tell a story that is going to be amusing,” says Nigel Currie, a sports marketing expert. “And she’s got all that.”

How can one person be so talented?

In a **Tedx Talk** last year, Asher-Smith described her overwhelming drive to succeed, built up through years of training.

That habit is rock solid even in hard times. After fracturing her foot in the middle of the 2017 training season, Asher-Smith ran through the pain to compete at the World Championships five months later.

“It’s more like an allergy to me — an itching, nagging feeling deep inside of me that gives me the inability to be **complacent** about anything,” she explained.

Is this unshakeable self-discipline the true secret of success?

Fast attractions

No, say many. That’s too shallow. The deeper truth was revealed 10 years ago in the film *The Secret*. Everything you want or need can be satisfied by believing in an outcome, repeatedly thinking about it, and maintaining positive emotional states to “attract” the desired outcome. Ultimately, everything is about this **Law of Attraction**: positive or negative thoughts bring positive or negative experiences into a person’s life.

Mumbo jumbo, say others. The real secret to success is nothing more nor less than acquiring and practising the self-discipline necessary to help you take full and complete possession of your own mind. Only then can you make the right decisions and take the actions that lead to true success. Dina Asher-Smith is living proof.

YOU DECIDE

1. Is sports the key to success?
2. Who is your sporting role model?

ACTIVITIES

1. What three questions would you like to ask Dina Asher-Smith if you got the chance? Write them down and share them with your friends.
2. What is the key to success in life? Write an answer in one paragraph.

SOME PEOPLE SAY...

“The person who acquires the ability to take full possession of their own mind may take possession of everything else to which they are justly entitled.”

Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919), billionaire and philanthropist
What do you think?

Q & A

What do we know?

Dina Asher-Smith, aged 23, is the fastest British woman in recorded history. She grew up in south-east London, where she joined the Blackheath and Bromley Harriers Athletic Club. At Saturday's 4 x 100m relay at the World Athletics Championships, Jamaica got the gold medal, followed by the UK, while the defending champions, USA, took bronze.

What do we not know?

What sporting feats Asher-Smith might yet accomplish in the future. Her immediate goal is to win a gold medal (or two) at next year's Olympic Games in Tokyo.

WORD WATCH

Doha

The capital city of Qatar, located on the coast of the Persian Gulf in the Middle East.

Ice cream

Asher-Smith's life is peppered with wonderful stories. She once made her mother promise to buy her a handbag if she broke a certain record.

King's College London

A university in London, it is ranked in the top 10 universities in the world in the QS World Rankings 2020.

The Jonathan Ross Show

A late-night talk show in the UK.

Tedx Talk

TED invites inspiring speakers to talk about a subject of their choice. You can find many *TEDx Talks* on YouTube.

Complacent

Being smug and lazy in your attitude to your achievements.

Law of Attraction

In the New Thought philosophy, the Law of Attraction is the belief that positive or negative thoughts bring positive or negative experiences into a person's life.

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