

# Andre De Grasse still chasing, but shows he's not scared to push Usain Bolt

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By Israel Fehr

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RIO DE JANEIRO – Andre De Grasse has run five races here at his first Olympics. He's come first in two of them. He's finished behind Usain Bolt in the other three.

That was again the case in Wednesday night's 200-metre semifinals, like it was in the 100-metre final and semifinal, and in this case behind meant right behind. De Grasse's time of 19.80 seconds was enough to qualify for Thursday night's final but not enough to beat Bolt, who ran a 19.78, and was a bit surprised that De Grasse was there next to him at the end.

That's not something Bolt is used to. When he began coasting down the stretch, feeling he had the race won like so many times before, De Grasse kept going strong and made up the ground between them. They were well ahead of the field and crossed the finish line with huge, knowing grins splashed across their faces. Bolt turned to De Grasse and waved his finger, as if to say "not yet."

Objects over your shoulder are closer than they appear, Mr. Bolt. It's a smile for now. But it might turn into a frown if De Grasse has anything to say about it.

"I always want to push him and I feel like I have a great shot to get on the podium again," said De Grasse, who earned a bronze in the 100 on Sunday night. "We were just having some fun. I was kind of tentative. Should I try to pass him? Should I try to save it for tomorrow? But I definitely wanted to make him work a little bit and push him. We didn't expect to run that fast."

If this continues to be a theme for De Grasse at these Games, there's no shame in that. Bolt is the best the sport has ever seen. Perhaps the best any sport has ever seen. He routinely trounces his competition when it looks like he's not even trying. He's already won a historic third straight Olympic gold in Rio in the 100 metres and is going for

an equally historic third straight gold in the 200.

But the world records Bolt set in the 100 and 200 both came at the World Championships in 2009, five days and one day, respectively, before his 23rd birthday. Two years prior, at the World Championships in 2007, a soon-to-be 21-year-old Bolt was the silver medallist in the 200 and didn't even run in the 100.

If Bolt's rise is any indication, the 21-year-old De Grasse is still developing. And here, De Grasse believes his youth could be an advantage over the 29-year-old Bolt. It helps explain his approach in the semifinals: part psychological; part physical.

"My coach told me to go out there and make him try to use as much energy as possible in this race because he thinks I'm going to do a better job recovering than [Bolt] is," said De Grasse. "We'll see what happens. You can't count him out."

De Grasse says the 200 is his preferred distance, even [while understanding the 100 is the marquee event of track and field](#), because he has more time to make up for his slow starts. The 19.80 he ran at Olympic Stadium is now the Canadian record, besting the 19.88 seconds he set at the 2015 Pan Am Games in Toronto.

None other than Bolt says that when De Grasse improves out of the blocks the Canadian will be able to take his sprinting to the next level. A level where Bolt has lived for close to a decade.

De Grasse may not beat Bolt here – at the Olympics nobody has when there's been a medal on the line, not here, not in London, not in Beijing – but he showed he's not afraid to push the G.O.A.T. So far Bolt has been able to look back and see De Grasse coming. De Grasse has the 200-metre final Thursday night and more than likely two races in the 4x100 relay, where De Grasse and his Canadian teammates are expected to contend for a medal and Bolt and the Jamaicans are the favourites, to change that.

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