



AS IT IS

The Technology behind Tokyo Games' Fast Track

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Last weekend at the Tokyo Olympics, a runner from Jamaica broke a **record** in the women's 100-meter race that had lasted for 33 years.

Elaine Thompson-Herah went the distance in 10.61 seconds and won the gold **medal**. Her time beat the previous record set by Florence Griffith-Joyner at the 1988 Seoul Olympics.

But Thompson-Herah is not the only competitor in Tokyo going fast. Many other Olympians are running faster than ever too. With all the fast times, some people are thinking the running surface, known as a track, is helping the runners. Others think it could be a new material in their shoes.

The track is made by Mondo, an Italian company that makes running surfaces for sports competitions. The shoes, known as Vaporfly, are made by Nike.

Mondo created its first track for the 1976 Olympics in Montreal. It has supplied tracks to 12 different Olympic Games. The company built the track in Tokyo's Olympic **Stadium** in late 2019. Because the Games were postponed for one year, the surface was not used much before the athletes arrived.

Ronnie Baker is an American 100-meter runner.

He told *The Associated Press* that running on the surface "feels like I'm walking on clouds." He called the track "beautiful" and "smooth."

Mondo says the Olympic track is designed to “**maximize** the speed of athletes and improve their performance.”

The top part of the track is made from extra-hard rubber. Below that are spaces containing air holes. This design aims to take the shock and help runners **bounce** off the track after each step.

Another American runner is Clayton Murphy. He runs the 800 meters -- two times around the track.

“Oh, it’s fast,” Murphy said of the track’s surface. “Might take world records to win.”

Shoe technology

Nike’s high-tech Vaporfly shoe came out a few years ago. It includes a piece of carbon **fiber** that has already helped long-distance runners finish their races minutes faster than before. Runners in Tokyo are permitted to use this same shoe technology on the track.

No one is completely sure why the Olympic runners are going so fast. Of course, the Olympics are a gathering of the best runners in the world who have trained for years to be in their best condition.

Some of the events with fast runners already happened. On Saturday, Lamont Marcell Jacobs of Italy won the men’s 100-meter race. He was the first runner to win the gold medal in the Olympics since the retirement of Usain Bolt, who won the gold three times in a row.

Time will tell if the Tokyo track is faster than most. For example, if runners go faster at future events, we will know that it was not so special.

One reporter asked Thompson-Herah why she thought she ran so fast. After winning her race, she had an easy answer.

“My training,” she said. “Doesn’t matter the track or the shoes.”

I’m Dan Friedell.

Pat Graham wrote this story for the Associated Press. Dan Friedell adapted it for Learning English. Bryan Lynn was the editor.

Why do you think the Olympic runners are going so fast? Tell us in the Comments Section and [visit our Facebook page](#).

Words in This Story

record – *n.* a performance or achievement that is the best of its kind

medal – *n.* a piece of metal with designs and words on it given to honor a special event, a person or a victory in a competition

stadium – *n.* a very large building, often without a roof, that has a large open space for sports and performances

maximize – *v.* to increase something as much as possible

bounce – *v.* to hit a surface and then move quickly away

fiber – *n.* one of the thin threads that form cloth or other substances
