

# Disney-Based Sprinter LaShawn Merritt Begins Rio 2016 Experience Friday

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (Aug. 8, 2016) – US Olympic Team sprinter LaShawn Merritt, who prepared for the Rio 2016 Games at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex, will begin competition on Friday when he participates in the first round of the men’s 400-meter qualifiers.

Merritt, who regularly trains at Disney with other world-class sprinters under former US Olympic track coach Brooks Johnson, qualified for this year’s Olympic team in the 200-meter and 400-meter races after having missed London Olympic Games in 2012 due to injury. At the 2008 Beijing Games, the veteran sprinter won the gold medal in the 400-meter and 4×400-meter relay.

This year, Merritt, who has run the fastest 400-meters in the world so far this year, is not only going after another Olympic medal in Rio, but also is chasing the 400-meter world record (43.18 seconds) set by Michael Johnson in 1999. Merritt could also become the first male sprinter since Johnson to win gold in the 400-meter and 200-meter races in the same Olympics.

If Merritt qualifies, he will go on to the 400-meter semifinals on Saturday, followed by the finals on Sunday. The men’s 200-meter qualifying races begin on Tuesday, Aug. 16.

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