

"It feels amazing. My first Olympic Games didn't go well for me (he didn't make the final at Rio 2016) but this one here, I'm cherishing this moment. Olympic champion," Gardiner said. "When the gun went off I stumbled a bit coming out, but I recovered, I kept it moving, and with 200m to go, I started to push a little bit. And 100m to go, I gave it all I've got.

"I came across the line and saw my name on the big screen and I was in first place. I'm just happy."

TOKYO – Steven Gardiner of the Bahamas added an Olympic gold medal to the World Championship gold he won in 2019, pulling away from the pack with 50 meters to go and winning in 43.85 seconds.

Colombia's Anthony Jose Zambrano took silver in 44.08 seconds, and Grenada's Kirani James earned the bronze (44.19), becoming the first male to win three Olympic 400m medals. Gardiner appeared to get out a little slow over the first 100 meters and then turned things up. The Bahamas could have the winner in both the men's and women's 400m – Shaunae Miller-Uibo, the defending gold medalist from Rio, is one of the top contenders in her race again this year.

American Michael Norman got off to a very fast start, and was in the lead with about 150 meters to go. But he was unable to hold on and finished fifth (44.31). Teammate Michael Cherry was fourth in a lifetime best 44.21.

This marks the first time in Olympic history the U.S. men didn't win a single gold medal in the short sprints (100, 200, 400) and the hurdles, per NBC Sports' Nick Zaccardi.

Norman ran 44.07 seconds at the U.S. Trials but his 44.52 in the semis here was just the fifth-best time. Norman's mother was born in Japan, and he had discussed what it meant that his first Olympics was in her homeland.

James, the pride of Grenada who won Olympic gold in 2012, has been consistent for a decade and came into the final with the fastest time in the semis. It is his third straight Olympics with a medal.

South Africa's Wayde Van Niekerk, who broke the world record in the 2016 Olympics final, did not advance to the medal race in Tokyo. Playing in a celebrity tag rugby match in 2017, Van Niekerk tore his ACL and hasn't returned to form since.

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Gardiner added the Olympic gold medal to the world title in the one-lap sprint event. Colombia's Anthony Zambrano won silver with former champion Kirani James of Grenada taking bronze.

Reigning world champion Steven Gardiner added the Olympic title to his growing list of accolades winning the men's 400m gold medal in a time of 43.85 seconds at the Tokyo National Stadium.

The 25-year-old Gardiner had to work hard for his maiden Olympic title against a quality field that included former champion Kirani James and rising U.S. star Michael Norman.

Colombia's Jose Zambrano finished second in 44.08 for the silver medal, with James adding the full set over three Olympics bagging bronze in 44.19.

Gardiner got this nose in front and had to fight off a strong challenge from James and Zambrano in the final stretch of the race, with Norman slipping after a fast start.

But the Gardiner banked on his experience from the last four years to produce the best run of this career, becoming the first Olympic gold medallist in an individual men's event for the Bahamas.

Gardiner has emerged as the leading one-lap sprinter over the last two years, stepping into the void left by Rio 2016 champion and world record holder Wayde van Niekerk of South Africa. Van Niekerk failed to qualify for the final in Tokyo 2020, leaving his title open for the taking.

Gardiner auditioned for the position in 2017 when he finished second behind Van Niekerk at the world championships. He again proved his credentials as a championship racer, becoming the world champion in 2019 in Doha.