

Any swimmer who won three gold and one silver medal at the South African Senior Swimming Championships in Durban should be well satisfied with his/her performance.

It is not as if Tatjana Schoenmaker (TuksSport High School) is unhappy with her performance, but she is disappointed that she was not able to qualify for the Fina Worldchampionships in Kazan, Russia.

“My winning times were basically the same as the times I swam last year. I really would have loved to have swum faster times this time.”

The closest Schoenmaker came to qualifying was in the 100m breaststroke where her winning time of 1:08.85 was merely a second slower than the expected qualification time of 1:07.88. It should be mentioned that Swimming South Africa has set their own qualification standards according to which swimmers are expected to swim faster times than the qualifying standards set by Fina.

Schoenmaker won the 200m breaststroke in 2:29.23 and was second in the 50m breaststroke in 32.45s. She was also part of the team that won the 4x100 relay in 4:12.04.

The fact that only five swimmers, namely Myles Brown, Cameron van der Burgh, Ayrton Sweeney, Chad le Clos and Sebastien Rousseau (all male), were able to meet the standards set by Swimming South Africa is slightly worrisome.

According to Schoenmaker, the water in the pool felt slightly cooler than in previous years.

“I am not sure whether the cold water could have influenced the times we swam.”

Schoenmaker is hoping that she will still be selected for the South Swimming team that will compete at the Junior World Championships and the Junior Commonwealth Games.

Rocco Meiring, who coached Schoenmaker last year when she broke the South African junior records in the 100m and 200m breaststroke, emphasized that a young swimmer like her should be allowed to reach her full potential as a swimmer in her own time.

“South African swimming has a sad history of trying to fast track talented young female swimmers to enable them to compete at the Olympic Games or a senior World Championships. Unfortunately this has led to a number of swimmers quitting before they fulfilled their potential.”

Meiring predicts that Schoenmaker will be at her best at the 2020 Games.

When asked if she has any role models Schoenmaker said no.

“I don’t strive to be like any other swimmer. I am my own person and I want to make my own way into the international swimming arena.”

