



Tuks star runs into 4-year ban

ATHLETICS

By DAVID ISAACSON

SOUTH African 110m hurdles champion Tiaan Smit has been banned for four years after testing positive for the banned anabolic agent Clenbuterol.

The Tuks athlete was tested on April 22, the day he won the national crown in Potchefstroom, clocking a 13.42sec personal best as he upstaged the favourite, Olympian Antonio Alkana, by seven hundredths of a second.

Alkana had been technically poor on the day, hitting too many hurdles.

In a recent disciplinary hearing 22-year-old Smit said he "wanted to lose two to three kilograms at the time and asked a friend - who is also an athlete, a javelin thrower - what he can use".

"The friend suggested Clenbuterol, for which he paid R500 and had to go and collect it from another person (not his friend)."

According to the hearing report, as signed off by panel chairman Marius Hurter, Smit said he had competed in two other events while on the anabolic agent, adding "it did not make any difference on the times he was running".

But the Tilastopaja athletics data website lists his six fastest career times as being posted between March 11 and April 22 this year.

Smit, a former Paul Roos pupil, stopped taking the Clenbuterol about 10 days before the national championships because of "severe side-effects", such as sleeplessness, shaking, irritability and sweating.

He did not declare it on the anti-doping form at the competition because it had asked only what he had used in the last seven days.

Smit admitted he was on anti-depressant medication "to help with the trauma he is currently experiencing of being tested positive and not being able to compete anymore".

Mitigating against him was the fact that he was an experienced athlete with contracts with Athletics Gauteng North and the High Performance Centre.

He had a professional coach in Hennie Kriel and a personal doctor.

"He did not consult any of these two persons close to him as to what he should or can use that's legal to help him lose more weight.

"Instead he asked his friend the javelin thrower for some advice."

A simple Google search lists Clenbuterol as a steroid.

Smit's ban is backdated to May 25 when he was initially suspended after being informed of the adverse finding. — *DDC*