

High school boys are sure world beaters

Koos Venter

Two world champions and two world record holders.

There are not many high schools in the world that can boast with such an achievement. TuksSport High School can.

The IAAF Youth World Championships in Nairobi was a definite highlight for South African athletics with the athletes winning 11 medals (five gold, three silver and three bronze).

Sokwakhana Zazini who won the 400m-hurdles and Tshenolo Lemao winner of the 100m and silver medallist in the 200m were two of the TuksSport High School stars.

Zazini and Clarence Munyai hold the distinction of being the only two South African athletes who can claim to have done what the legendary Wayde van Niekerk had done, and that is to run world records this season.

The 17-year-old Zazini set a new world youth record in the 400m-hurdles running 48.84s at the Gauteng North Championships at Tuks. His time is 0.17s faster than the time ran by William Wynne (USA) in 2007. The American clocked 49.01s.

Munyai along with Van Niekerk made athletics history at the Golden Spike Meeting in Ostrava by becoming the first athletes of the same country to set new world bests in different categories but in the same race.

Van Niekerk "blitzed" to victory over the rarely-run 300m distance in a time of 30.81s that took down Michael Johnson's



Sokwakhana Zazini. Photo: Reg Caldecott

world best of 30.85 which had stood since 2000. Isaac Makwala of Botswana was second in 31.44s with Munyai third in 31.61s. The TuksSport High School grade

12-learner's time is the fastest ever by a junior athlete.

The previous world best time over 300 metres held by Mark Richardson who clocked 32.53s in 1991.

The performances of these four athletes prove that the Tuks Athletics Academy is succeeding in its mission statement to become one of the world's leading High Performance Centres in athletics through individual development and educational programmes. The goal is also to develop in the athlete a mindset of a champion.

Zazini and Munyai credits Hennie Kriel, head coach at Tuks/HPC, as the common denominator in their success. According to them, he made them believe in their abilities, and they are full of praise as to how he is constantly able to motivate them to push their boundaries.

Kriel's is hesitant to claim any of his athlete's success as his own. He is constantly emphasising that he is only trying to guide them. According to him, in the end, everything boils down to how hungry they make their dreams become a reality.

"I would say I am one of the luckiest men in South Africa because I get to work with young people and help them to fulfil their goals.

There is nothing more rewarding than to see an athlete's reaction when they get to achieve what they set out to do because I know how much they sacrifice to do so," said Kriel.

Thabo Matebedi who is an assistant coach in Kriel's training squad coaches Lemao.