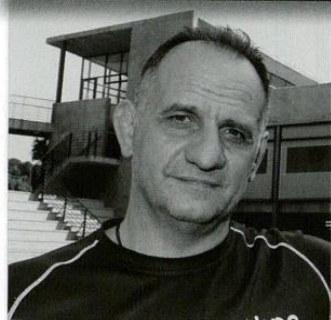


COACH'S CORNER

Tuks coach **NIKOLA FILIPOV** was Team SA's judo manager-coach at the Rio Olympics



Background

'I was born in Bulgaria and have been either participating in or coaching judo for the past 44 years. At the 1992 Olympics I ended ninth. I was also the Bulgarian sambo champion from 1988 to 1995 without losing a fight. I coached the Bulgarian national team from 1994 to 1996 and have been coaching in SA since 2001. I will always be a student of the sport and there'll never be a day when I sit back thinking I know everything there is to know about judo.'

What it takes to succeed in judo

'You need total dedication and a true fighting spirit. Judo will never be about how perfectly you execute a technique, or how strong and fit you are. Everybody is strong and fit. To become a champion you have to be able to push yourself to the edge of your limits every day. In terms of training, top judokas need to do at least 12 hours of specific judo training during the week, as well as 15 hours of gym work. Also, in the gym judokas should differentiate between doing power training and cardiovascular training.'

Biggest problem facing the code

'In South Africa there is a lack of quality training partners. I can advise judokas on how to train in the gym, help them to execute the various judo techniques to perfection and give them tips on what to do and what

not to do during a fight, but unfortunately that is not enough. The only way any judoka can truly become competitive is by training with quality partners. That is when judokas really learn how to fight. Funding is also an issue – Rio Olympian Zack Piontek was lucky in that he had the means and support to go and train internationally, but not every South African judoka can do so, because they need financial assistance.'

The way forward

'From a Tuks perspective I think we have four judokas [DJ le Grange, Michaela Whitebooi, Dale Whittaker and Devan Stemmet] who have got the potential to qualify for the Olympic Games in Tokyo. As it's the first year in a new Olympic cycle, I'm looking to see who really has the hunger to take it to the next level. At the moment DJ shows real earnestness. The other three still have to make important decisions sometime this year. One of the most important things in the buildup

to the Games is going to be complete trust between coach and student. When I tell a judoka to do something, they should not try to second-guess me. The moment they do, the trust is broken and then failure becomes a reality.'

A TYPICAL TRAINING DAY

