



# Best rowers fire up the Buffalo River

By ROSS ROCHE

## ROWING

THE South African rowing championships lit up the Buffalo River over the weekend as the country's best rowers battled it out over two days of competitive rowing action.

Some thrilling races took place, showcasing the best the country has to offer in the sport, with the University of Johannesburg (UJ), the University of Pretoria (Tuks) and Victoria Lake Rowing Club (VLC) claiming the main trophies up for grabs.

"We had six Olympians racing over the weekend and they didn't disappoint, while quite a few spectators from Gauteng came down for the event and they were certainly not disappointed," said SA Rowing president Sean Kerr.

"Despite the weather, we had a large entry and great racing.

"The locals organised a very good regatta and we would like to thank the ELBA [East London Boating Association] and the EC department of sport for their support."

In the men's sculls race, all top five finishers were from Tuks, with Kyle Schoonbee in the end powering away to claim the win, six seconds ahead of Thabelo Masutha, while Nicholas Oberholzer finished third, five seconds further back.

Tuks also won the men's coxless four, featuring a powerful team consisting of Leo Davis, David Hunt, Lawrence Brittain and Jake Green, while UJ came out tops in the men's eight.

On the women's front, Kirsten McCann triumphed in the eagerly anticipated women's sculls, beating Nicole van Wyk by five seconds, before they paired up to win the doubles.

Other top results were had across the various divisions.

"Newcomer Kyle Schoonbee is showing a lot of talent as we build a team for Tokyo, while Kirsten McCann and Nicole van Wyk in the lightweight women's doubles dominated the field," said Kerr.

"Rhodes were the best performing university in the men's section, with a great race in the 8+ [men's eight] and the University of Johannesburg in the women's section.

"Lawrence Brittain [a Rio silver medallist] and David Hunt [fourth at the Olympics] won the pair and showed just why these two are among the best in the world."

The rowers who impressed at this past weekend's SA champs will now move on to the national trials, where the various South African teams will be picked.

"The national trials are on May 13 and 14 and that will see us pick the junior, U23 and senior elite teams," said Kerr.

"These trials are held at Roodeplaat Dam in Pretoria, which is the national rowing centre."

A number of big international events then await the selected teams later this year, with some top rowing action on the cards.

"This weekend concluded the local season in South Africa," said Kerr.

"The international season however, kicks off with the northern hemisphere's summer and the national team will compete at Henley and the World Cup in Lucerne, Switzerland, before going to the world championships in the USA.

"The junior and U23 world champs are then in Lithuania and Poland respectively."

