



New SA rowing stars are born in Bulgaria

A new generation of young local rowers are starting to make a name on the international stage.

Two new South African rowing stars were born last week.

Local rowers Kyle Schoonbee and Nicole van Wyk proved they could hold their own against the world's best by winning two medals at the World u.23 Championships in Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

Schoonbee was brilliant with the way he fought back to win the silver medal in the men's single sculls final.

With a third place in the lightweight women's single sculls, it would seem Van Wyk is making a habit of winning medals at the World Rowing Championships.

Last year, she won a silver medal at the same championships.

The next generation of South African rowers can justly feel proud of the way they performed. Six crews competed and four qualified for the A-finals, winning two medals.

Schoonbee was "Mr Consistency" throughout the championships, winning two of the four races he competed in and finishing second in the other two.

He won his quarter and semi-final heats. His best time of 6:50.14 in the quarter-finals is the second fastest in all of the men's single sculls races.

Schoonbee, of Tuks/HPC, described his performance in the final as an incredible experience.

"I stuck to the same race tactics I used in the quarter-finals and the semi-finals. A change in speed is what works for me, but the Canadian used my own medicine against me in the final by putting in real hard acceleration over the last 500m just as I start to think I could win gold," he said.

"In any race, there is a limit to as how long I can push myself deep into the red. Overall I am happy with my

performance."

Van Wyk, who is also involved with Tuks HPC, did not have the best of starts.

After the first 500m, she was languishing in fifth place, but being the fighter she is, she was never going to give up.

Over the next 500m, she moved into fourth place and still gaining speed with each stroke moved into third over the next 500m but she was never able to win back the crucial seconds she lost in the beginning.

Van Wyk was only the fifth fastest rower in the semi-finals. She admits to being slightly rattled afterwards.

"But luckily once I started rowing in the final, I got the better of my nerves and just focussed on what I was able to control. It turned out to be quite a good race," said Van Wyk.

Nicole van Wyk in action on the water. Above Kyle Schoonbee won the silver medal in the men's single sculls final at the World u.23 Championships in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. Photo: Zander Erasmus