



# DOMINANT FORCE

TUKKIES TOOK THE BULK OF SPORTING HONOURS IN 2017. BY WILHELM DE SWARDT

**T**he University of Pretoria raised the standard of university sport in 2017, winning six of the national varsity competitions and nine of the University Sports South Africa (USSA) tournaments. Topping it all was the fact two Tuks athletes became world champions in their Olympic sports codes - Luvo Manyonga (athletics) and Kirsten McCann (rowing).

There can be no arguing that the year was not a celebration of fabulous sporting feats. Some of the highlights will be remembered for years to come, proving that the coaches, athletes and administrators at TuksSport are at the forefront of sporting excellence.

TuksSport is proving that nothing is impossible if a sportsperson is

prepared to put their mind to a specific goal and work towards it.

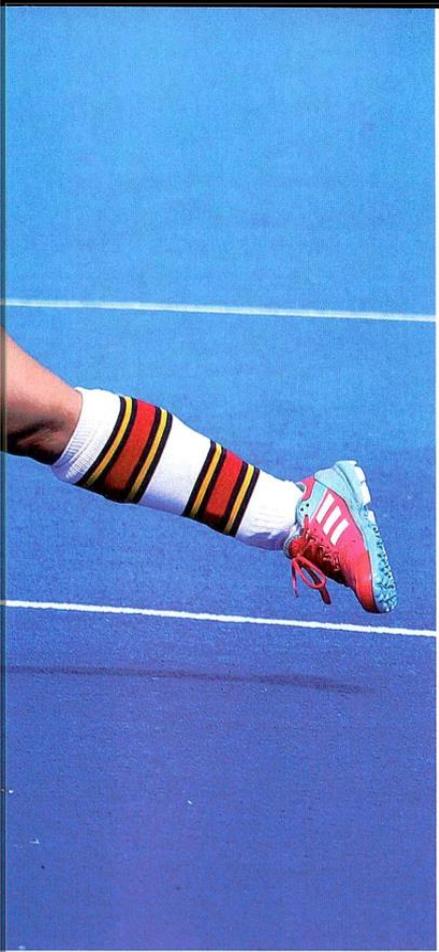
Toby Sutcliffe (*right*), TuksSport acting director, explains: 'Many wonder how we get it right. The answer is quite simple: we leave no stone unturned when it comes to performance management in sport. We're conscious of the fact talent is not enough unless it is driven by an unrelenting desire to be the best and this desire is further supported by an uncompromising commitment to

excellence in all aspects of preparation and participation.

'Everyone works together to ensure we fulfil our mission, which is to provide optimal opportunities and experiences that promote and enhance participation from recreational participants, student athletes and club members, up to elite performers.'

In 2017, women's sport at the University of Pretoria came of age, with the hockey and netball teams

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winning their varsity tournaments for the first time.

The Tuks women's hockey team earned bragging rights by becoming the first female side in the history of the sport at the University of Pretoria to win Varsity Hockey when they beat Maties 1-0 in the final. The team also won the USSA tournament.

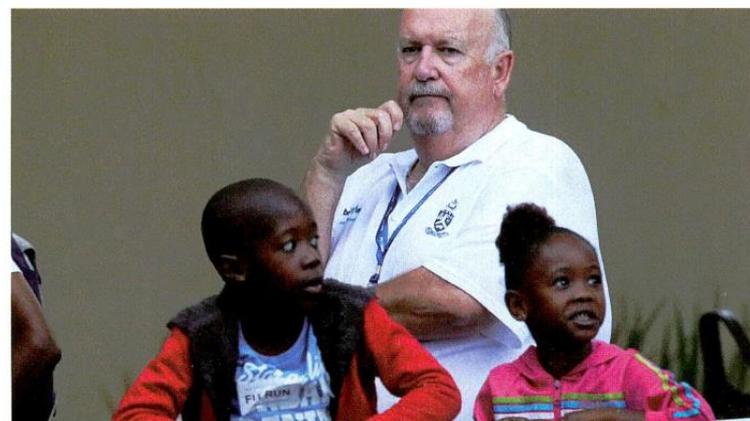
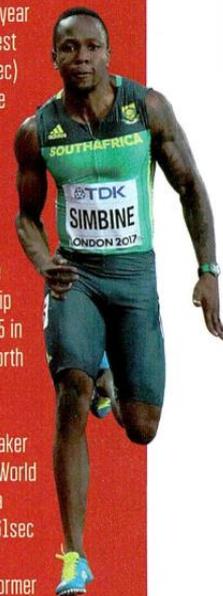
Tuks also outplayed Northwest Pukke in the Varsity Netball final, winning 43-41.

Tuks hockey team's success led to Inky Zondi receiving the Team Coach

## UNIVERSITY SPORT

### SUPER 2017

- UP-Tuks won a third Varsity Football title by outplaying Tshwane University of Technology and winning 2-0 in the final. UP-Tuks were also victorious in 2013 and 2014.
- Tuks Athletics were overall winners of the Varsity Athletics Series for the second time. Of the 13 Varsity Athletics meetings held in the past four years, Tuks have won 11.
- The Tuks Young Guns are one of the University of Pretoria's most successful sports teams ever. The U20 rugby team won the Varsity Cup Young Guns competition for a record fifth time in six years, beating Maties 42-37 in the final.
- Tuks won the golf, beach volleyball, cricket, chess, women's hockey, judo, cross country, swimming and rowing USSA tournaments.
- Kirsten McCann made South African rowing history by winning the lightweight women's single sculls at the World Rowing Championships in Florida, US, becoming the first South African female rower to win a gold medal at a senior World Championship.
- Rower Kyle Schoonbee won a silver medal at the U23 Championships and Nicole van Wyk bronze. At the World Junior Championships, Megan Hancock won silver and Thabelo Masuthu bronze.
- Luvo Manyonga became the first black male athlete at Tuks Athletics to win a world title when he won the long jump at the London world champs. He did more than win a title; he revived international long jump by becoming the first athlete since 2010 to go past the 8.50m mark. His best effort of 8.65m is an African and South African record.
- Akani Simbine confirmed his status as one of the world's best sprinters with a fifth-place finish at the world champs. Another highlight was becoming the first SA sprinter to win the 100m at a Diamond League meeting, in Doha. Simbine finished the year as the world's fourth-fastest sprinter in the 100m (9.92sec) and was fifth fastest in the 200m (19.95).
- Thando Roto won a silver medal in the 100m at the World Student Games in Taipei, Taiwan, and became the fifth South African to dip under 10sec by running 9.95 in the 100m at the Gauteng North Championships.
- Swimmer Tatjana Schoenmaker won a silver medal at the World Student Games by setting a new best time of 2min 24.61sec in the 200m breaststroke. Graham Hill, Chad le Clos' former coach, believed the Tuks/HPC swimmer's performance could be a breakthrough for South African women's swimming. 'Female swimmers in South Africa will now start to believe they are good enough to be competitive internationally.'



of the Year award at the university's awards function.

'I cannot explain what Inky has as a coach, but he can get people to believe in him and play for him,' says captain Natalie Esteves (main picture). 'It's just the way he is; he has charisma. He's also innovative as a coach, always looking to bring something new to the game.'

'Inky's not one to panic. When things weren't going our way on the field, he knew what to say and how to say it. I enjoy it when we spend hours working

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### CRITERIA FOR SPORTS BURSARIES

- Prioritising of funds per sporting code, as per the TuksSport club prioritisation.
- The scarcity of athletes in the club for specific events or playing positions.
- Potential performances at the annual South African Student Championships, along with participation at the Varsity Sport SA competitions in a specific sporting code.
- Position on international rankings and ability to qualify for international competitions.
- Position on sport-specific SA senior rankings.
- Position on sport-specific SA junior rankings.

on some aspect of the game and get to reap the rewards. People who don't do sport cannot understand how addictive winning can be.

'That's why we punish our bodies by getting up at 5am to go to the gym to work towards a specific goal. That feeling of satisfaction, once you have achieved it, is indescribable.'

Mission accomplished was the first thought that must have crossed the mind of everybody involved with UP-Tuks netball the moment the final whistle blew, and they officially became Varsity Netball champions for the first time. For the past five years, it's been a case of UP-Tuks netball not being able to finish what they started.

Jenny van Dyk (*right*) ascribes her success as a coach to a mindset change she had to make three years ago. 'I had the privilege of working as a video analyst for the Proteas, who were coached by an Australian, Norma Plummer.

'During team discussion at one of the games I expected Norma to tell each player exactly what they did right and wrong, but she hardly spoke. The only thing she did was ask questions which the players had to answer. None of the coaches was allowed to say anything.

'Norma says one of the most significant problems in South African netball is that

our players are "spoon-fed" into not learning to think for themselves on court. That led to me changing my whole coaching strategy.

'Over the past three years, I've expected my players to talk to me about what happened on the court, what they think they did right and where they erred,' says Van Dyk, who becomes the first coach to win the Brutal Fruit Netball Premier League (BFNPL), National Championship and Varsity Netball all in the same year.

Another reason for TuksSport's success is their holistic approach. It's never just about being the fastest or

winning on a rugby or hockey field for the respective coaches.

Pote Human, who coached Tuks Rugby to their historic third Varsity Cup title, is a firm believer in developing a complete individual through rugby and feels the academic programme, coupled with the pressure to win, creates an ideal training ground for real life.

'I want the players to complete their studies, so we adapt our training to fit in with their academics, not the other way around.' ■

De Swardt is communications officer at the High Performance Centre.



REG CALDECOTT