

BEST OF THE REST

JUDO

South African judoka at the African Junior and Cadet Championships in Burundi returned home with a haul of 10 medals.

Most encouraging was the fact that for the first time in many a year, the junior age group won a medal in the team competition.

Until now, the cadets have often managed to pull it off but the juniors and seniors have surprisingly battled to come through.

The cadets were coached by Tania D'Aguiar, and Theresa Mihalik did managerial duties for the cadets and juniors. Katja Bruwer was the junior coach.

The team returned home in high spirits with every member winning at least one medal.

Medal winners were:

CADETS (BOYS)

■ Thomas Breytenbach (73kg) – silver

(GIRLS)

■ Marli Meiring (63kg) – silver

■ Katja Lang (70kg) – silver

■ Donne Breytenbach (52kg) – bronze

■ Tonet Tallie (57kg) – bronze

JUNIORS (BOYS)

■ Harm Venter (73kg) – bronze

■ Devan Stemmet (73kg) – bronze

(GIRLS)

■ Donne Breytenbach (52kg) – bronze

■ Charne Griesel (57kg) – bronze

■ Katja Lang (70kg) – bronze

HOCKEY

Just moments after Tuks had beaten Maties in the Varsity hockey final, coach Guy Elliott would have been celebrating a plan coming together.

Tuks' 5-0 victory didn't just happen – it was two years in the making.

Peabo Lembethe (Tuks captain) said after Tuks lost against the University of Johannesburg in the 2016 Varsity final that Elliott started planning as to how Tuks were going to win the next tournament.

'Nothing was left to chance. We started working harder during training, focusing on getting stronger and fitter in the gym. Guy kept on reminding us over the past two years that if we take care of the small stuff, the bigger picture will take care of itself,' said Lembethe. 'We've reaped the dividends of our commitment. All credit must go to our coaching staff.'

According to Lembethe, the plan was to put Maties under pressure from the start.

'In our previous games, we tended to be reactive in our play. When we scored, we settled down to see what our opponents were going to do, or we only upped our game after conceding a goal. This time we took the game to Maties for the duration of the match.'

Steven Paulo, who scored seven goals for Tuks during the tournament, said that he and his teammates were 'super stoked' about winning the Varsity tournament. 'We have worked hard for this. Strategy was key to our success. Guy gave us the plan, and we worked hard to stick to it.

'We are a team, and everyone puts the team first, naturally. I think that is why we have been successful.'



SURFSKI

South African surfski paddlers hit the headlines in Hawaii as Hayley Nixon won the women's race of the Maui Jim Molokai Challenge, while Hank McGregor and Jasper Mocke raced on to the men's podium in second and third respectively.

Nixon (Shaw and Partner/Euro Steel/Carbonology), racing in her first start at the 53km crossing of the fabled Channel of Bones, broke the women's course record in the process.

The reigning world women's surfski champion, she clocked 3hr 52min 02sec, just over a minute ahead of classky Kiwi Rachel Clarke, with Australian Jordan Mercer another two minutes back.

'The race was cut-throat from start to finish. I realised that Rachel and Jordan were going quite hard early on,' said Nixon. 'I wasn't sure it was the best thing to do at that stage and I tried to be conservative. I'd done some really good paddles with Oscar Chalupsky earlier in the week, and his main advice was to be as conservative as possible.

'With about 35km gone I knew I needed to pin my ears back to close the gap, and I caught the two girls with about 10km to go, even though we were all racing on different lines.

'I felt good and confident, and I hadn't spent myself yet. We hit China Wall and took a very conservative line, while the other two girls bombed straight down the wave. We had bumps and waves to ride through the last three kilometres but every time I looked over my shoulder I couldn't see them.'

McGregor (Fenn/Euro Steel) was locked in a fierce duel with Australian star Corey Hill, which he lost by 30 seconds, with fellow South African Mocké (Euro Steel/Epic Kayaks) taking the last spot on the podium.

The 55-year-old Chalupsky finished ninth overall, just seven weeks after major shoulder surgery. ■

