

## **Piontek win bronze at African Games**

Zack Piontek, South Africa's Commonwealth Games judo champion and hpc sponsored athlete, added another medal to his ever-growing collection by winning a bronze medal at the African Games in Brazzaville.

Piontek has become South Africa's most consistent judoka. He seems to be able to lift his performance every time he competes at a major championship. Earlier this year he won a silver medal at the African Championships in Libreville, Gabon.

The Tuks/HPC judoka says he is satisfied with his bronze medal.

"However my coach, Nikola Filipov, is not too happy. He reckons I could have done better at the African Games. I totally understand his viewpoint.

"Unfortunately, when you compete in sport at the highest level, you are on a rollercoaster ride with many ups and downs. My goal was to be at my best at the World Championships in Astana. Because it is normal for an athlete's form to slightly decline after being at a peak, I am happy to take the bronze medal at the Games," Piontek said.

He had four fights at the Games of which he won three. In his first encounter he beat Zambia's Edward Kamwandi and in his second fight he threw Ghana's Victor Ahiavor for an ippon.

(An ippon is awarded for a technique which is judged as decisive. This is usually a move which connects cleanly, with good form and with little opportunity for the opponent to defend against it).

According to Piontek his semi-final encounter against Mahmoud Snoussi from Tunisia was a closely contested affair.

“I scored two yuko’s and he scored a waza-ari, which meant that he won.

“When I think back, it was certainly not a case of ‘what could have been’. I gave as good as I got, but he was just better on the day.”

Snoussi went on to win the silver medal. Piontek won his fourth fight against Ahmed Lahmadi (Tunisia) to win bronze.

If everything goes according to plan Piontek hopes to compete in tournaments in Mauritius, Korea and Japan in November and early December.

Piontek is currently ranked 27<sup>th</sup> in the world in the under-90kg category. To be able to qualify for next year’s Olympic Games in Rio he needs to be among the top 22 judokas in his weight category. It is, therefore, important for him to compete internationally on a regular basis to keep on gaining ranking points.

But Piontek can be forgiven for not being totally obsessed with judo over the next three weeks. He is getting married to Cherise Horn on 2 October.

“Getting married to Cherise is the best thing that has ever happened to me. We have been dating since we were 15 years old and to make our relationship official at long last will be the beginning of an exciting new chapter in our lives.”