

## **Whitebooi wins gold at African Junior Championships**

“This gold medal is to thank my mom and my coach for all their support.”

Although it was hours after she had won her first title at the African Junior Judo Championships in Sharm Elsheikh, Egypt, Gernonay Whitebooi was still quite emotional.

“While I was listening to music to psyche myself up before the final, the only two people in my mind were my mom, Minnie, and my coach, Nikola Filipov. I realized that I owe them both so much because it was their belief in my abilities that put me on the verge of making one of my goals a reality.”

Before the Championships Whitebooi explained that for her judo is not only a means to improve her own life but also that of her mom.

“When my dad passed away my mom had to take over the roles of both parents. It was a challenge to her then and it still is. She always does her best to provide for us. In spite of not having a proper job, she finds a way to put food on the table and manages to push through even when times are tough. I love judo but with this love comes a responsibility to work hard to get somewhere,” the Tuks/HPC judoka said.

Whitebooi beat Fatima El Qorachi in the final. According to her the Moroccan was a tough opponent.

“She was very aggressive throughout the fight and I had to keep my wits about me. I think it helped that I was not quite as nervous as I usually am before a fight. I still find it hard to describe my feelings the moment I knew that I had won. When I realized that all my hard work and sacrifices had at long last paid off, I couldn’t hold back my tears. Even when I was on the podium to receive my medal, the tears of joy just kept flowing. To be the best in Africa is definitely a dream come true.”

Filipov was quick to praise Whitebooi on Facebook.

“Well done to the most dedicated judo player I know. Your gold medal and Africa title make us so proud. After so many ‘fights’ with you, often out of the judo hall, I just want to say I am sorry...you are the champ ‘Boss’,” is what Filipov wrote.

Courtney Read from Tuks Sport High School won a bronze medal in the under-70kg in Sharm Elsheikh.

Filipov, who is coaching at Tuks/HPC, is truly making a difference in South African judo.

At the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow last year, Zack Piontek won a gold medal in the under-90kg category, Jacques van Zyl won bronze in the under-73kg category and Ruan Snyman silver in the under-100kg category. This year Piontek won a silver medal at the African senior championships.