

Basson Engelbrecht won the Le Morne ATU Sprint Triathlon African Cup in Mauritius on Sunday.

The South African was involved in a titanic battle with Tomas Svoboda (Czech Republic) in the 750m swim, 20km cycle and 5km run.

Engelbrecht had a one-second lead after the swim which he increased by another 8 seconds on the bike. Both Engelbrecht and Svoboda finished the run in 15 minutes and 49 seconds but, unfortunately for the Czech, he lost time during the transitions.

Engelbrecht won in 57:14, with Svoboda second in 57:31 and South Africa's Eddie van Heerden third in 58:38.

Engelbrecht, who is a Tuks/HPC athlete, is relatively new to the sport.

“I participated in my first triathlon when I was 12 years old, but I was never properly coached and had to participate in various other school sports as well. It was only in my matric year that I realized how big the triathlon scene is outside South Africa and how many opportunities there are,” said Engelbrecht, who represented Western Province at school level in hockey, athletics and swimming.

“The turning point in my triathlon career came about when I met Lindsey Parry from the High Performance Centre (hpc) while I was competing in Europe. I was not happy with the way I was performing and when I told Lindsey about my frustrations he suggested that I should join the TuksTriathlon Academy after matric. I followed his advice and I have never regretted the move.

“My initial plan was to study and train at Tuks, but I soon realized that it was almost impossible to compete successfully in international triathlons and study successfully as well. It is like trying to sit on two chairs at the same time. You are bound to end up falling between the chairs. I then came to an agreement with my parents that I would focus only on

triathlon and try to reap some rewards. I have won gold at the South African Junior Championships, as well as at the African Junior Championships, and I also managed to get a few top-ten finishes in Junior European Cup races.

“My worst disappointment was certainly the World Junior Championships in Edmonton. Because I injured my knee badly eight weeks before the championships I could not do any running. The week before I was due to compete I managed to do two short runs. In spite of this I had a good start. I was third to finish the swim and first on the bike, but I just did not have the legs to be competitive on the run. I ended up finishing 20th, which certainly was not what I had hoped for.”

When asked about his strengths and weaknesses Engelbrecht said: “I think my swimming and cycling are good enough to compete against the world’s best at the moment, but a lot of hard work still needs to be done as far as my running is concerned. In triathlon running is where a race is won or lost and I am still not comfortable when I run against the top athletes.”

