



REKORDMOOT REKORD FRIDAY FEBRUARY 16, 2018

# Tuks triathlete is 'all fired up'

**A recent traumatic personal experience had a huge influence on the way triathlete Wian Sullwald approaches his sport these days.**

Making the most of second chances in life would be Wian Sullwald's main motivation when he lines up to race at the Commonwealth Games in Australia.

He is one of five triathletes who have been selected to compete at the Games. Richard Murray, Henri Schoeman, Gillian Sanders and Simone Ackermann are also in the team.

During the December holidays, there was a brief moment when Sullwald thought his life was about to come to an abrupt end.

He, his training partner Dylan Nortje and a German triathlete, Jonas Schomberg, were overwhelmed by five armed robbers at his parent's farmhouse outside Bela-Bela.

After Sullwald took the robbers to the family safe, he was again tied up and made to lie on the floor.

One of the robbers got quite agitated as he thought that there must be another safe.

"I could hear the gun pointed at the back of my head being cocked back and expected him to pull the trigger at any moment. He did threaten to do so. He wanted me to look

down, but I told him that if he wanted to shoot me, he would have to look me in the eyes," said the Tuks/HPC-triathlete.

"I had made peace with what was about to happen. It saddened me when I realised how much there still was what I wanted to do.

"I had only achieved about five percent of the goals I set myself. My biggest concern was not for my own life, but for that of my parents.

"I was scared that they would walk in at any moment and who knows what would have happened then," continued the young athlete.

No shot was to be fired. It was as if Sullwald's prayers had been answered as his uncle arrived in the nick of time. The moment the robbers became aware of his presence, they fled.

At the same time, Sullwald's dad arrived and started to give chase in his car. He managed to catch up with the robbers and force them off the road. They fired several shots at Sullwald's unarmed dad. Luckily, he was not hit. Most of the robbers were apprehended.

Sullwald says the close shave has changed his perception of life and the way he thinks

about things.

"I still often have nightmares. At times, I tend to get agitated and aggressive. Small things trigger these emotions. The positive, if one can take anything positive from what happened, is that my perception of life has changed. I realise how lucky I am. I want to live each day to the fullest. There must never be any regrets again," the Tuks/HPC-triathlete said.

"My perception about racing has also changed. In the past, during some races, I tended to panic. I do not think that will happen again because whatever happens can never be as traumatic as what I have been through in December.

Wian Sullwald believes he is mentally stronger as a triathlete after a recent traumatic experience.

**Photo: Reg Caldecott.**

