

Tatjana's breakthrough but it's studies before worlds



OCKERT DE VILLIERS

DURBAN: Striking a blow for women's swimming, Tatjana Schoenmaker became the first woman since 2013 to qualify for the Fina World Championships when she posted a qualifying time in the 200m breaststroke during the national champs in the King's Park pool last night.

After two major championships without female representation – the 2015 world championships and the 2016 Rio Olympics – Schoenmaker, pictured, wanted to give SA women's swimming something to cheer about.

"I am very happy because now I proved to everyone that there are girls out there who can swim the times, and it is not only me – the young girls are coming," Schoenmaker said after clocking 2min 25.23sec.

"I'm tired of everyone asking what is the problem with women's swimming. There is nothing wrong, so I proved

that we are still coming and they must just wait."

Schoenmaker has been on the radar over the last year, first posting an Olympic qualifying time in early 2016, but she missed the mark by 0.01 seconds at the trials.

She reached the mark at the SSA Grand Prix Series in Stellenbosch in February, posting a new personal best of 2min 24.93sec and taking a second-and-a-half off her previous top time.

There may be a kink in the cable as the Financial Science student at the University of Pretoria is likely to miss the world championships due to her study commitments.

"I don't want to miss too much of varsity, I really want to focus on my studies as well, but there is another opportunity at World University Games (in Taipei) which is just outside of my exam times," Schoenmaker said.

"It will fit perfectly into my schedule but otherwise the main goal is the Com-

monwealth Games trials in December."

Earlier, Chad le Clos declared "the king is back" when he posted his fastest time ever in South Africa in his 100m butterfly semi-final, cementing him in second place on the world rankings list.

It was a night of renewal as Le Clos showed his best form in years, while rising star Zane Waddell clocked the eighth fastest 100m freestyle ever by a South African with his time of 49.09sec.

Le Clos touched the wall in 51.56sec, improving his season's best by almost three quarters of a second, which is the second fastest time in the world so far this year.

Dominating proceedings here, Le Clos posted his fourth world champs qualifying time by adding the 100m butterfly to the 200m freestyle and butterfly and the 100m freestyle from earlier in the week.

"I didn't expect to go that fast, honestly. I was just hoping to break 52 seconds. I went all out and I didn't hold

back so I am very happy with that," Le Clos said.

"This is by far the fastest time at nationals; it is one second off my best unshaven, which is not too bad so I am ready to improve on that."

The 19-year-old Waddell was left to fight a lonely battle after Douglas Erasmus and Brad Tandy, who posted world qualifying times in the 50m freestyle during the morning heats, scratched from the final and semi-finals respectively.

Tandy set another qualifying time during the semi-finals, clocking 21.99sec, with Erasmus doing the same when winning his race in 22.39.

Teenage sensation Rebecca Meder claimed her fourth title here when she touched first in the women's 800m freestyle in 8:49.49.

The 14-year-old has already won gold in the 200 and 1500m freestyle and the 200 individual medley. She completes her campaign in today's 400m IM.