

Tatjana longs to splash out on chops with her family

OCKERT DE VILLIERS

A BRAAI with family and friends and some lamb chops to top it off is all newly-crowned queen of the pool Tatjana Schoenmaker wanted to do on her arrival from the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games.

It may seem like an unassuming celebration but for the Commonwealth 100-200m breaststroke double champion it is a function fit for a queen.

Schoenmaker arrived home to a hero's welcome but before she could share her experience with family and friends she politely finished her media obligations.

"You land, you want to be with your family, you want to go home, all I want to do is braai and eat a lamb chop," Schoenmaker said.

The Pretoria swimmer delighted with her 100-200m breaststroke double gold, setting national records in both events while lowering the national mark in the 50m event.

She became the first able-bodied female swimmer since Joan Harrison at the 1954 Vancouver Games to win gold medal at the event.

The 20-year-old first smashed the African 200m breaststroke, chopping more than a second off Suzaan van Bijon's continental



Tatjana Schoenmaker wins gold in the 200m breaststroke at the Gold Coast Aquatic Centre at the 2018 Commonwealth Games in Australia.

PICTURE: WESSEL OOSTHUIZEN/SASPA

record she set at the London 2012 Olympic Games. Schoenmaker followed that up with her 100m breaststroke title-winning swim where she shaved 0.1 off SA legend Penny Heyns' record from 1999, which was a world record at the time.

Her performances in the pool have ignited the hope that South Africa would again see a female swimmer on the podium at world championships and the Olympics.

It may seem daunting to have the expectations of a nation on

your shoulders, but it does not seem to worry Schoenmaker.

"I don't see it as pressure – obviously I have to maintain the same times, but it is a constant motivator and maybe I stand a good chance of winning a medal at the

world championships," she said.

"The big goal still remains the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. This was another stepping stone towards that and the Student Games" – where she won the 200m breaststroke silver medal – "was a good build-up."

The financial science student at the University of Pretoria said she would spend the next few days responding to messages from friends as she had tried to cut herself off from the outside world during the competition.

"I haven't read any articles, I am still in shock as I stand here – I feel everyone who went did really well and they are all superstars."

There seems to be no reprieve for a student, not even a double gold medallist, and Schoenmaker will have to soon climb down from cloud nine to focus on her studies.

"I think I already have an assignment due next week and a semester test, so I have a lot to do this weekend," Schoenmaker said.

Originally from Joburg, Schoenmaker moved to Pretoria enrolling at the TuksSport High School, thanks largely thanks to her coach Rocco Meiring.

She started swimming at the age of 5.