



# Rocco Meiring honoured for bringing the belief back

“The luckiest man in the world to be doing a job I love” is how Rocco Meiring, a swimming coach at Tuks, describes himself.

His passion is undoubtedly beneficial to South African swimming.

It could be argued that Meiring, who coaches Commonwealth Games champion Tatjana Schoenmaker, is instrumental in putting back the self-belief in South African women’s swimming.

Not that Meiring, who received the award as Tuks’s best coach in individual sports, will ever admit to it.

He will argue that he is just one of many coaches putting in the long hours and lots of research to get the women’s swimmers to perform to the best of their ability at an international level.

But the results speak for itself. Last year in Taipei, Schoenmaker became the first South African female swimmer to medal at the World Student Games when she won a silver medal in the 200m breaststroke.

After that Schoenmaker grew in confidence. Her performances during the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games are proof of this.



Rocco Meiring (left) receive his award as Tuks Sports coach of the year. Photo: Reg Caldecott.

She won the 100m and 200m breaststroke in record times as well as setting a new African record in the 50m breaststroke.

Meiring is quick to let all the praise go to Schoenmaker, saying his only role in her success was to “unlock” her full potential.

“If I have to be honest, I have to

admit not really rating myself as a coach. My best quality as a coach is to identify young talented swimmers and get them to believe in their abilities,” he said.

“People do not realise how difficult it can be to find ways to get the swimmers you coach to keep on improving. I am on a constant quest to

find new information.

“The better Tatjana, the bigger my challenge becomes.”

Former Springbok swimmer Laura Postma is one of Meiring’s big fans and was one of the first people to congratulate him on his award.

He is also in regular contact the renowned Australian coach Scott Volkner, who has previously coached the likes of former world record holders Susie O’Neill, an eight-time Olympic medallist, and Samantha Riley, a multiple world breaststroke champion.

Rugby is Meiring’s other big passion. At school, he represented the Blue Bulls at the high school and primary school’s Craven Weeks playing hooker.

He went on to coach the Tuks under-19 team to win the Lucas Strachan Shield, but that was before 1995.

At the time there was no money to be made from coaching rugby, while he got the opportunity to become a full time swimming coach.

Meiring was for nine years Swim South Africa’s national coaching director and coached for two years in Canada.

