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He just refuses to give in

To talk about facing up to a challenge is easy.

It is when faced with a setback that the real heroes come to the fore.

Former swimmer of the SA Students team, Ruan Ras, who graduated in architecture at the University of Pretoria last year, is someone who seems not to know the meaning of the words "giving up".

In 2011 he was diagnosed with cancer.

At the time, he was considered a talented swimmer. It is one of the reasons why he was never going to allow the "Big C" to get the better of him.

His faith was another crucial attributing factor.

According to Ras, he never worried about dying when being told he had cancer. It was more a case of him being upset because he was not able to swim while undergoing chemotherapy.

"I had set myself goals, and suddenly it seemed that I would not be able to achieve it. That was frustrating," said Ras, who could not swim for six months.

Ruan Ras is seriously training in the swimming pool again after his setback a few years ago. **Photo: Reg Caldecott.**

He was full of praise for how the teachers at TuksSport High School went out of their way to ensure that he kept up with his studies. They came to the hospital to tutor him.

In 2012, Ras was told that his cancer was in remission and that he was allowed to resume his training in the pool. He matriculated with seven distinctions.

Despite his arduous study regime, he is not given up on his dream of representing South Africa at the Olympic Games.

He is so serious about it that he has made a particular arrangement with his bosses at the Boogterman and Partners Architecture Firm to be able to train and work.

"I work an hour less than my colleagues each day to be able to train. It means I had to take a cut in salary, but it is worth it," said Ras, who trains about four hours a day.

A highlight was representing SA at the World Student Games in Taipei last year.