



Tatjana still 'in shock' after her double gold

SA swimming's latest sensation shifts her aim to World Champs

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 enjoy on her arrival from the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games.

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

Schoenmaker arrived back home to a hero's welcome but before she could share her experience with her waiting 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-based Schoenmaker was delighted with her 100-200m breaststroke double gold - setting national records in both events while also lowering the national mark in the 50m event.

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

The 20-year-old first smashed the African 200m breaststroke mark, chopping more than a second off Suzaan van Bijon's continental record set at the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Schoenmaker followed that up with her 100m breaststroke title-winning swim where she shaved 0.1 off 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 ultimately the Olympics.

While it may seem daunting to have the expectations of a nation on your shoulders, 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 goal to be the best. I stand a good chance of winning a medal at the world



RECORD-BREAKER: Tatjana Schoenmaker set new national marks in the 50m, 100m and 200m breaststroke.

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championships," she said. "The big goal still remains the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, this was another stepping stone towards that and 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 months sending messages from friends as she had tried to cut herself off

from the outside world during the competition.

"I will probably spend most of the weekend replying to everybody and say thank you for all the messages," Schoenmaker said.

"I haven't read any articles, I am still in shock as I stand here. I feel that everyone that went did really well and, in my heart, I believe that we are 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 semester test, so I have a lot to do this weekend," Schoenmaker said.

Originally from Johannesburg, Schoenmaker moved to Pretoria enrolling at the TuksSport High School thanks

largely to the potential her coach Rocco Meiring spotted.

She started swimming at the age of five and she had played other sports, but it was soon realised she had a talent in the pool.

"Rocco approached me at a gala and said he wanted me to come to the sports school... it is cool to think he saw the potential in me from a young age when I was just swimming three-times a week," Schoenmaker said.

