

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUBJECT: TUKSPORT HIGH SCHOOL SOD TURNING

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“It’s a dream come true.”

Hettie de Villiers, principal, does not hesitate to use these words when she describes her feelings about the fact that, for the first time since its inception 13 years ago, the **TuksSport High School** will become a proper school next year with its own buildings and own ethos.

“I know it is a cliché to say that ‘it’s a dream come true’, but for all of us who are involved with the school, these words say it all. For the past ten years we have been scheming, trying to find out how to go about building a proper school, but it was to no avail because we were unable to get the necessary funding to go ahead. Now, at long last, we have a donor who shares our vision and passion about making a difference in the lives of talented children, not only in sports but on an academic level as well,” De Villiers said.

If everything goes according to plan, TuksSport High School will move from the Groenkloof Campus to the LC de Villiers sports grounds in August next year.

“One of the plus points of this move will be that the school will be able to develop its own character for the first time. In other words, it will become a school with which both the pupils and teachers can associate themselves. This is very important, because we want the children to feel proud of their school and its achievements.”

The TuksSport High School started off in the rugby clubhouse, after which it was moved to an office in the hpc headquarters. From there it was moved to the offices that are currently used by the hpc physiotherapists, before being moved to Groenkloof.

It is interesting to note that during the 13 years of its existence the school has achieved a 100% matric pass rate for all but one year.

De Villiers is adamant that to achieve good academic results is as important for the learners as it is to excel on the different sports fields.

“For me personally, it is even more important to achieve good academic results. I always place much emphasis on the fact that any sports career, no matter how good the athlete is, can last only a few years. There are never any guarantees in sports, because the career of a sports star could be ended abruptly because of an injury - and then what? That is when it is important to have a good academic qualification to fall back on.”

De Villiers’s message did not fall on deaf ears, as many of the past Grade 12 learners achieved between five to seven distinctions in their final exams and a number of athletes who went on to play for Banyana Banyana took time off from playing to first get a degree before resuming their soccer careers.

The list of former pupils who went on to excel in the South African sports arena as well as internationally is quite impressive.

Wian Sullwald (triathlon), Andile Jali, George Maluleka, Portia Modise and just recently named Nompumelelo Nyandeni, Thembi Kgatlana, Norma Ntsibande, Nothando Vilikazi, Simphiwe Dlodlu, Gloria Thato, Mamelo Makabane and Janine van Wyk (all soccer) are names that immediately come to mind.

This year Brandon Gildenhuis, Dylan Naidoo, Burt Gildenhuis and Marco Steyn caused quite a stir when they won the South African High School Golf Tournament. They are also the Gauteng-North High School Champions.

According to Sullwald, who became the junior world triathlon champion the year after he matriculated, he is not so sure whether he would have been able to do so if he had been in any other school.

“One of the best decisions I ever made was to come to the TuksSport High School, because it enabled me to train longer and harder without neglecting my schoolwork.

“The support I received from the teachers at the TuksSport High School made it possible for me to compete internationally for long periods of time without falling behind in my schoolwork.

“One teacher even allowed me to go to her house over a weekend so that she could help me to catch up with my school work. This is certainly not something that happens often. It also helped that our classes were quite small so the teacher could spend quality time with each of us.

Sullwald admits that it was difficult for him to be taught in English at first.

“I now realize that it was all for the best. When you compete internationally everything is in English, whether you like it or not. When you are being interviewed it is important to speak English fluently because you don’t want to embarrass your sponsors or your country. It is true that you never get a second opportunity to make a first impression”.

With the opening of the new school building TuksSport High Schools vision of *“the will to do, the heart to win”* has become so much more attainable.