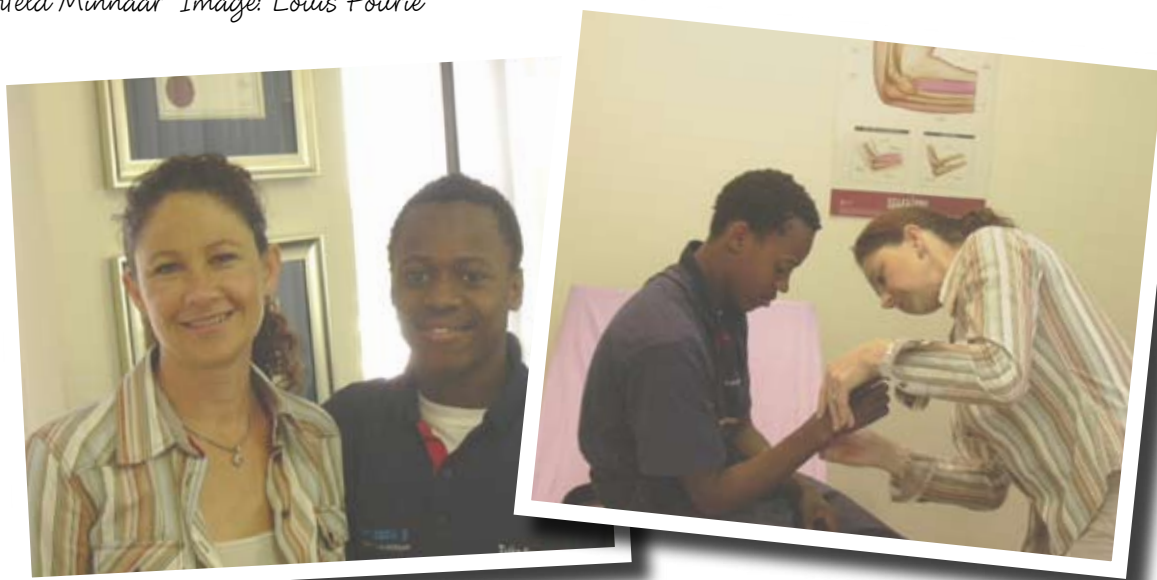


# Injury

## will not stump Thabo on his way up

*Text: Machteld Minnaar Image: Louis Fourie*



**T**hanks to the kind and generous intervention of four individuals, a nagging injury that caused a young gymnast a lot of pain and discomfort, will not derail a promising and potentially great career.

The story of Thabo Mkwandawire (18), originally from Nelspruit, began some four years ago when he was spotted by Louis Fourie, head of Gymnastics at the University of Pretoria and hardened talent scout. With Louis as his mentor, Thabo earned a place at the TuksSport High School and was awarded SA Protea colours for the vault and floor. In January this year, the Grade 12-pupil competed in the African Championships in Egypt, where he walked away with two bronze medals.

Some time ago Thabo fractured a small bone in his wrist, which failed to heal properly. Louis contacted orthopaedic surgeon Dr Nikki van der Walt, a former UP and National trampolinist and a very able gymnast herself, for assistance with Thabo's injury.

"We felt that Thabo needed an operation sooner rather than later. As he doesn't belong to a medical aid, it would have taken months for him to have the necessary corrective surgery at a state hospital. I approached Dr Esti du Plessis, also an alumnus and anaesthetist, and Craig Williamson, a medical representative, for help. Dr du Plessis offered her services free of charge and Craig sponsored the screw we needed," explains Dr van der Walt, who operated on Thabo for free. Only the hospital bill had to be footed.

Thabo has had his operation and is currently wearing a splint before an intensive rehabilitation process of six weeks is to follow. Dr van der Walt is confident that if the bone grows back fully, he will regain full functionality and be able to compete competitively in no time 🏆