



Left: The Nemato rowing team passing the Nelson Mandela Township.

Above: Minister of Sport & Recreation SA, Rev. Makankhesi Stofile, opened the Nemato rowing club.

Photos: Tsepo Djakala and Jan Blom, Nemato Rowing Club.

You do not need multimillion rand sponsorship deals to develop your sport and offer disadvantaged communities a healthy alternative to crime and despair. There are many development initiatives that use sport to better society with limited resources — and every year SASCOC honours the best of them. CAREL MULDER asked some of the past winners what is required to start an award-winning project

Sport development projects that WORK

Wrestling, hockey and rowing are not exactly massive commercial attractions when it comes to sponsorships and related interest nowadays. But these activities have something else in common, something far more important than the glamour and glitz of commercial interest. Besides the fact that they have all won the prestigious Murray & Roberts Jack Cheetham Memorial Awards over the past three years, these sporting codes have also proven to be excellent — and highly successful — breeding grounds for sports development in the country.

Take a few poor kids from the streets of Welkom and the impoverished townships of Thabong and Bronville, kids with no hope of survival, and turn them into wrestlers. This is what Jan Bezuidenhout, a former Spring-

bok wrestler and farmer did.

In 1992, using his own funds, he started training children from the streets of Welkom to be wrestlers. He had hoped that wrestling would give the children — many of them orphans — a sense of self-worth and purpose, and firmly believed in the sport as a vehicle for personal and community empowerment.

Welkom Wrestling

His efforts were awarded in 2008 when the Welkom Wrestling Club development programme received the Murray & Roberts Jack Cheetham Memorial Award. In partnership with the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC) and Sowetan newspaper, Murray & Roberts selected the Welkom-based

development programme in recognition of its excellence and significant community impact.

Today, Jan Bezuidenhout's vision has provided hope and dignity for many children, with about 75 young boys and girls from as young as four years old training for two hours, four days a week in a hall at Welkom's showgrounds. He has given a generation of young people something to live for.

Talented wrestlers and those who develop a track record of strong performance compete at provincial and national tournaments and the Bezuidenhout family provides educational support and employment opportunities to club members whose families are in dire need.

The development programme has built a



Jan Bezuidenhout (centre) of the Welkom Wrestling club receives the Jack Cheetham Memorial trophy for his development work at the Welkom Wrestling club (right).
Photo: courtesy Jan Bezuidenhout



The hockey players have revived the once dormant Kwanobuhle multipurpose sports facility into a thriving hub of sports development and community participation.

Left: Player Mduyana Melikhaya with coach Jeremy Mambalu.

Photos: courtesy of SA Hockey.

track record that is nothing short of phenomenal, producing the likes of Hilton Arends, Denver Jansen and Piet Olivier — all South African junior and senior wrestling champions who have earned Protea colours.

Sylvester Williams, at the age of eight, became the first black South African wrestler to achieve South African colours after 1994.

Former SASCOC president, Moss Mashishi said: "It is very encouraging to see that so many young athletes have shown an interest in participating and learning about the sport of wrestling. Wrestling is an Olympic sport, so we will watch with keen interest to see the progress of development amongst these young athletes. It will be truly outstanding if our future Olympians come from this group of athletes."

"The Welkom Wrestling Club development programme is achieving excellence in the sport of wrestling and is also using the sport as a vehicle to transform the lives of many young people in the community. With additional resources, we believe that the programme will have an even greater impact," said Sean Flanagan, executive director of Murray & Roberts and convener of the panel of judges.

The Awards

Although South Africa is blessed with various institutions that teach and support a wide variety of sporting codes, poorer communities do not always benefit from this, in particular due to a lack of facilities and programmes in these impoverished areas.

Sport participation in South Africa is also

quite low with only around 30% of citizens participating in sport. It is in these areas that the Murray & Roberts Jack Cheetham Memorial Awards are having a massive impact and improving the lives of many people.

The Award was initiated by Murray & Roberts 28 years ago in recognition of the special qualities of Jack Cheetham, a former director of the company and the inspirational captain of the South African cricket team in the 1950s who was able to instill in young people the belief that they could win. The award targets sports development projects, focusing on individuals or teams that have the potential to be champions.

The award includes a floating trophy and prize money of R500 000 over a period of five years.

"To ensure sustainability, the award →

will not be made as a one-off contribution. Rather, we intend to have a series of interventions in the designated sport with the possibility of ongoing support through our corporate social involvement programmes," said Brian Bruce, group chief executive of Murray & Roberts.

Kwanobuhle hockey

In a community where unemployment is estimated to be 50% and with a high incidence of HIV/Aids, daily survival in Kwanobuhle in the Eastern Cape is a battle.

The Kwanobuhle Hockey development programme, operating from the impoverished area of Kwanobuhle near Port Elizabeth, has provided a vehicle to transform the lives of hundreds of young people in the community and provide people with a sense of hope again, and in the process also achieving excellence in hockey.

Under the leadership of SA Hockey's youth development coordinator Gary Dolley and a team of dedicated volunteers, it has revived the once dormant Kwanobuhle multipurpose sports facility into a thriving hub of sports development and community participation.

The programme has developed partnerships with 25 primary schools in the area, enabling 750 children to receive professional hockey coaching and to participate in regional leagues. High schools have also been targeted for inclusion.

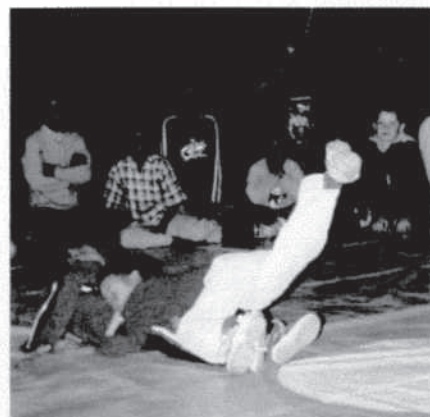
The boys and girls who participate in the programme also receive emotional, academic and social support, and the programme has developed partnerships between participating schools and various life skills organisations in this regard.

During 2007 the Kwanobuhle Hockey development programme received the Murray & Roberts Jack Cheetham Memorial Award for its sustainable development in this area.

Coaching is provided by Jeremy Mambalu, a product of the programme and an excellent role model and mentor for younger players. To ensure sustainability, the under-16 players coach younger players and provide umpiring services. Former provincial players work as volunteers. Dolley recently returned from a visit to Holland where he studied advanced coaching methods and he has introduced a coaching leadership certificate course for teachers in the community to strengthen their capacity.

Six teams participate in the Eastern Province schools league where they compete against more privileged schools. The girls' under-11 team is presently unbeaten and the boys' under-13 team is unbeaten in the local LoveLife Games. Fifty top performers are in a high-performance programme to receive intensive coaching and mentoring.

The programme is supported by SRSA,



Above left: A Nemato rower practising on a rowing machine.

Left: The then Minister of Sport, Ngconde Balfour, was guest of honour at the opening of the Kwanobuhle hockey club.

Above: Young wrestlers of the Welkom Wrestling club eagerly practice in the hope that they can follow in the footsteps of club members who have won national colours.



SA Hockey, EP Hockey, the VW Community Trust, Murray and Roberts and the Nelson Mandela Municipality.

The grants received from The Murray & Roberts Trust after winning the award have made the operations of the Kwanobuhle project easier to administer and to promote hockey within the community, says Dolley. "The project has highlighted the important role that sport can play in promoting discipline and pride within the participants."

Nemato Rowing Club

Operating from the Nelson Mandela township close to the Kowie River in the Eastern Cape, Nemato Rowing Club teaches young children from disadvantaged communities the highly technical skill of rowing and has established a development programme to produce the first black South African Olympic rower.

Nemato focuses on disadvantaged youth, but accepts some children from the more privileged schools in the community to break down barriers and normalise relationships. It also plans to extend its reach into adaptive rowing for people with disabilities. The young South Africans who participate in this programme are offered an experience that will set their paths in life.

The Murray & Roberts Jack Cheetham Memorial Award was presented to the Nelson Mandela Township (Nemato) Rowing Club in 2006 in recognition of the excellence and inspirational leadership in its development programme.

The programme introduces young male and female rowers to competition in stages,

from provincial to national and ultimately to World Championships and the Olympic Games. Two Nemato rowers, Mbulelo Nelson and Hlumisa Yekani, have already won gold medals in their individual sculls finals during previous junior championships.

Under the inspirational leadership of Jan Blom, who has coached world champions in Holland, the club's *first the child, then the sport* approach ensures that participants experience a bigger world than the impoverished environment many of them are trapped in.

Talented children are selected to participate in an holistic programme of life skills, school monitoring, early intervention and physical development.

A skills development programme undertaken with partners such as Swimming South Africa and Rhodes University, offers swimming lessons, internationally recognised rowing coaching courses, first aid courses, sports management learnerships and on-the-job learning, ensuring a sustainable foundation for the future of each participant, whether they succeed as rowers or not.

It is also supported by SRSA, The National Lottery, Murray & Roberts and J-Pak.

Nemato Rowing Club is a member of Rowing South Africa (ROWSA), which is affiliated to SASCOC and is ROWSA's flagship transformation project. It has since been upgraded to a fully constituted club due to the sustainability it has achieved.

Last year their efforts were further recognised when they were nominated for the prestigious SA Sports Awards. **YS**