



NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 12+13 - MARCH-APRIL 2026

Introduction – Closing Nod and Looking Ahead

And just like that, another season touches the wall.

March and April brought us everything we love about South African aquatics: the roar of finals at SA National, Youth, SANJ and Regional Champs, the quiet focus of lactate tests in the HP lane, the grace of divers twisting toward the water, the endurance and freedom of open water swimming, the grit of water polo battles, and the pure joy of artistic swimmers finding harmony in the pool.

This double issue is a celebration of seasons ending and beginning, of PB's and podiums, and of the people who make the pool a second home.

So whether you're reading this poolside in Cape Town, on a bus to a winter gala in Gauteng, drying off in Gqeberha, or dreaming of open water in Jeffreys Bay: welcome. This one's for you.

Close the season strong. Open the next one braver.



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- Instagram: [@swimsouthafrica](#)
- Website: www.swimsa.org



Message from Swimming South Africa

Dear Aquatics Family,

Welcome to this **Special Edition** of the SSA Newsletter.

We're covering *a lot* in these pages: SA Regional and National Championships, from Level 1 to Youth, SANJ, Nationals – Artistic Swimming, Diving, Swimming, Open Water Swimming, and Water Polo. This is a special edition not just because of the volume of action, but because of what it represents: the close of one season and the threshold of the next.

So before we dive into the results, the records, and the stories, we want to pause and say something simple but important:

Thank you.

To the entire aquatic fraternity – athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, parents, and fans... Your continued support is the current that carries our sport forward.



We see the early mornings, the late-night drives, the quiet sacrifices, the cheers from the stands, and the hand on a shoulder after a tough race. We see *you*.

And to our sponsors, thank you. You are vital to our mission. Your belief in South African swimming makes the blocks higher, the pools warmer, and the dreams bigger.

One season ends. Another begins. We look forward to going *into* and *through* the new season with all of you.

Yours in sport
Swimming South Africa

High Performance (HP) – South Africa's Road to Glory

Comprehensive Report on Physiological and Lactate Monitoring

Gauteng Province Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation

Knowledge is the first step toward faster times.

The SA Junior National Swimming Championships in Gqeberha (21-25 March 2026) weren't just about medals and podiums. They were also a living laboratory.

For the first time at a junior level, Gauteng Province implemented an integrated sport science and medical support system – monitoring how young swimmers' bodies respond to the unique demands of a multi-day competition. Thirty Gauteng swimmers participated in a comprehensive process that included lactate testing, heart rate monitoring, blood pressure measurement, oxygen saturation tracking, and post-race recovery support.

The findings? They offer both **encouragement** and a **clear challenge** for South African swimming.



What the Data Tells Us

The Good: Our junior swimmers are capable of generating the high-intensity, anaerobic effort required for short-distance racing. Lactate levels during competition reached appropriate physiological peaks, meaning athletes are pushing themselves at the right intensity.

The Area for Growth: Recovery is the missing piece. Across a five-day meet, many swimmers showed delayed metabolic recovery, with elevated heart rates and lactate levels persisting longer than ideal. This suggests that while we excel at *explosive* performance,



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our endurance base and recovery systems need attention.

In simpler terms: **South African swimming currently leans toward short-distance strength.** Developing our long-distance capacity, both physical and metabolic, is the next frontier.

How Coaches Can Use This Information

The report isn't just data for data's sake. It's a practical tool.

Coaches can now:

- **Identify swimmers who cope well** with multi-day demands versus those who accumulate fatigue
- **Spot swimmers who may not be reaching race intensity** – lower lactate values combined with moderate heart rate responses could indicate pacing or technical issues
- **Tailor recovery strategies** between races based on individual physiological profiles

One clear recommendation from the science team: **structured, 1,000-metre active recovery** (alternating easy, moderate, and hard intensities) is significantly more effective than self-managed "easy" swims or even massage for clearing accumulated lactate.

The Support Team Behind the Data

This initiative was delivered through a collaboration

between sport science and medical personnel:

Sport Science Team: Courtney Foster, Andre Borman, Bhavik Hardeo, and Dumisani Mqolomba – responsible for lactate testing, performance data collection, and interpretation.

Medical Support: Phumelele Zulu (physiotherapist) providing post-race sports massage, and Dr. Lee Christopher (medical doctor) attending to athlete care and collecting cardiovascular data.

Their multidisciplinary approach ensures that both the mechanical and metabolic aspects of fatigue are addressed, critical when cumulative fatigue from early days can diminish a swimmer's taper by the final events.

Looking Ahead: Recommendations for Future Testing

To build on this foundation, the team recommends:

1. **Standardised protocols** – clear testing procedures communicated to swimmers and coaches in advance
2. **Pre-competition baseline measurements** – taken *before* warm-up, not after
3. **Priority on post-recovery lactate** – measuring how well swimmers clear lactate after swim-downs may be more valuable than peak values
4. **Early access to event programmes** – so sport science staff can schedule testing without disrupting warm-ups or races

A Final Thought from the HP Desk

This report doesn't say South African swimming is *behind*. It says we're *learning* and that's what high-performance nations do. They measure, they analyse, they adjust.

The Gauteng monitoring project at Junior Nationals is a template. The question now is: how do we use what we've learned to make every swimmer, from age-group to senior, more durable, more recoverable, and ready for whatever distance the race demands? *That's the conversation we're starting here.*



WOODVILLE

Competitions – Thrills in the Pool & Open Water

A Season for the Record Books

March and April 2026 wasn't just a competition window; it was a *statement*. From the youngest Level 1 swimmers finding their courage to senior national champions booking tickets to Glasgow, South African aquatics fired on every cylinder.

Let's dive in.



SA Provincial Level 1 Championships – Inter-Provincial

28 February-1 March 2026 | Various venues

Where champions take their first breath.

Level 1 is where the journey begins and across the country, future stars announced themselves.

Highlights from socials:

Somerset West Primary School saw Taymar Samuels and Tatum Haas smash personal bests, while young Moteo Mark claimed two gold and two silver medals, achieving Level 2 qualifying times in the 50m Fly, 50m Free, and 100m Free.

Waterberg Academy's Leo delivered one of the most eye-catching performances of the weekend, dropping his 100m IM time by a staggering **15 seconds** and claiming first place in the event, plus a win in the 25m Backstroke.



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And in a bittersweet moment, **Tygerberg Aquatics** said goodbye to one of their own – Andy swimming her very last competition for the club, walking away with four silver and one gold medal.

Level 1 done. Level 2 next.



SA Regional Level 2 Championships

6-8 March (Oudtshoorn) | 30 March-2 April (Germiston, Potchefstroom, Durban)

Total athletes: 2,054 (EGA: 821, KZN: 207, NWS: 249, WCA: 777)



RESULTS

Highlights from socials:

Curro Sport's Ethan Parfitt was unstoppable: 9 finals from 9 events, collecting gold in the 100m Free, 50m Back, 200m IM, 200m Free, 100m Back, 100m Fly, and 200m Back, plus relay medals. Daniël de Wit reached five finals, while Tiahann Slabber and William Scholtz also represented with pride.

Northcliff High School brought home a medal haul: Chloe Lew (gold 50/100 Back, silver 100 Free), Erin Theron (gold 200IM and 100 Free, silver 50 Free), Quade Kingsley-Wilkins (silver 50/100 Breast, bronze 200 Breast, silver 100 Fly), and Robert Chaplin (gold 100/200 Breast).





SA LEVEL 2 REGIONAL AGE GROUP CHAMPS 2026

6-8 MARCH 2026
N.A. SMIT SWIMMING POOL
OUTDSHOORN



Tygerberg Aquatics brought the energy to Oudtshoorn – the team spirit and support was the real highlight, with swimmers cheering each other on, celebrating every race, and growing stronger together.

[Level 2 Results \(Search by Event\)](#)



SA Regional Level 3 Championships

26-29 March (Pretoria, Bloemfontein) | 9-12 April (Buffalo City)

Total athletes: 1,168 (ECA: 340, FSA: 221, NTS: 607)



Highlights from socials:
Curro Sport dominated in East London: 20 gold, 16 silver, and 23 bronze medals, and combined points champions. An awesome team performance.

One team captured the spirit of Level 3 perfectly: finishing 10th overall in a fiercely contested competition, bringing home 13 medals, countless PBs, and a special shout out to **Luca Kneubuhler** for achieving SANJ qualifying times in both the 100m and 200m Backstroke.

"Your dedication, discipline, and hard work continue to shine."

[Level 3 Results \(Search by Event\)](#)



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Bombela SA National Open Water Championships
6-8 March 2026 | Marina Martinique, Jeffreys Bay

Total athletes: 215

Sun, sea, and South African grit.

The open water season reached its peak at Marina Martinique in Jeffreys Bay, where 215 athletes braved the elements and each other for national honours. Across five days of racing, from the sprint 3km knockout to the endurance test of 10km, South Africa's open water community delivered drama, dominance, and deep fields.

Athlete Spotlight: Callan Lötter

Callan Lötter was unstoppable. The women's 10km, the 3km knockout sprint, and the 5km – three gold medals across the week. Absolute domination.



Women's 7.5km: Leah Markgraaff took first place, with Caitlin Evans claiming second. Leah also claimed sixth in the 10km, an absolute powerhouse performance.

Women's 10km: Callan Lötter, Hannah Neilson, and Carli Antonopoulos swept the podium, first, second, and third.

Women's 3km Knockout Sprint: Callan Lötter first,

Sasha-Lee Hemmens second.

Women's 5km: Callan Lötter added her third gold of the week.

Men's 7.5km: Wian Bartleman and Kellen Jones went one-two.



Men's 10km: Henre Louw, Byron Kimber, and Connor Albertyn swept the podium, first, second, third.

Men's 5km: Connor Albertyn took gold.

4x1km Relay winners: Aquatics Gauteng - Tshwane A, Aquatics Gauteng - Tshwane B, and KwaZulu-Natal A – all clocking identical times of 00:46:25.

Video interviews:

[Kellen Jones](#) | [Wian Bartleman](#) | [Leah Markgraaff](#) | [Caitlin Evans](#) | [Henre Louw](#) | [Byron Kimber](#) | [Connor Albertyn \(10km\)](#) | [Callan Lötter \(10km\)](#) | [Hannah Neilson](#) | [Carli Antonopoulos](#) | [Callan Lötter \(3km sprint\)](#) | [Sasha-Lee Hemmens](#) | [Connor Albertyn \(5km\)](#) | [Callan Lötter \(5km\)](#)

Press coverage:

- [Kouga News reel](#)
- **Press Release:** "[National open water swimming honours on the line in Jeffreys Bay](#)"
- **Press Release:** "[Lötter makes it three from three at SA open water champs](#)"

[Full Set of Results](#)

With national titles decided, Jeffreys Bay proved once again that open water is where heart meets horizon.



SA National Water Polo Championships

13-15 March 2026 | Durban Girls' College & Clifton School, Durban

Young guns take centre stage.

The future of South African water polo was on full display in Durban. U16 and U18 tournaments ran alongside a High-Performance camp, with Lucky Letshabo (SSA WP TC Member) providing insights into the intensity and talent on show.

Links to click:

- [Lucky Letshabo insights](#)
- [Official Bulletin](#)
- **Press Release:** "[Young guns take centre stage at SA National Water Polo Championships](#)"



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SA Masters Swimming Championships
 11-14 March 2026 | George, Western Cape

Age is just a number and so is 100, when you're having this much fun.

The Masters descended on George for four days of racing that proved competitive fire doesn't dim with age, it just gets more interesting. From sprint battles to distance grinders, the atmosphere was electric, the camaraderie unmatched, and the medals plentiful.

Highlights from socials:

"Our Awesome Masters are participating in the South African Masters Championships being held in George from 11-14 March 2026. They are having so much fun and the medals just keep rolling in."

Huge congratulations to our Masters team on the shared **Spirit Award with Fish Eagles Masters**. You guys are always the spirit of the party and we love your "GEES".



Local coverage from the George Herald:

The championships, hosted at the George Swimming Pool, attracted competitors from across the country, with age categories ranging from 25-29 all the way to 90+. According to meet organisers, participation numbers were up significantly from 2025, a sign that Masters swimming in South Africa is not just surviving, but thriving.

Several national records fell over the four days, though the true highlight was the inter-provincial relay finals on the final evening, where six teams traded leads in a finish that had the stands on their feet.

"It's not just about the times anymore," one long-time Masters competitor told the George Herald. "It's about still being in the water, still racing, still feeling that thrill when the buzzer goes. That never gets old."

- [News coverage](#)



Well done to every Masters athlete who stepped onto the blocks. You showed that swimming is a sport for life, and what a beautiful life it is.





SA National Youth Championships (17–25 years) 18-20 March 2026 | Newton Park, Gqeberha

Total athletes: 516



HISTORY MADE.

Athlete Spotlight: Jessica Thompson

Jessica Thompson, 18 years old, rewrote the African record books. In the women's 50m backstroke final, she clocked **27.67 seconds**, a new African and SA National Record. She dropped 0.37 seconds from her prelim time of 28.04. With this swim, Thompson now holds both the Long Course and Short Course African records in the 50m backstroke, and moves into the top 10 of the world seasonal rankings.

[Full Set of Results](#) | [Results \(PDF\)](#)



SA National Junior Age Group Championships (SANJ) 21-25 March 2026 | Newton Park, Gqeberha

Total athletes: 876

The future, racing now.



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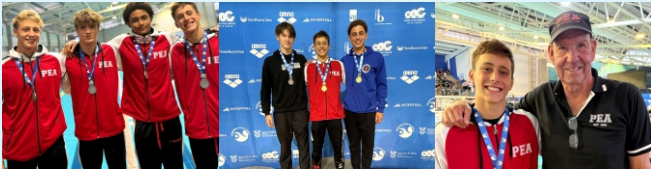
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Highlights from socials:

Team PEA delivered across the board: Carl Andrews, Jack Berry, Hendro de Beer, Mikayla Frosler, Jett Heine (who qualified for SA Nationals), Kate-Lynn Kruger, Isabel Kuhn, Bellame Mostert, Nicholas Pretorius, and Ava Strong all contributed to a medal-laden meet.

"We're just so proud of each and every swimmer who were part of Team PEA at SANJ 2026. You gave your absolute all, every time you were called upon, and we could ask no more."



Nicholas Pretorius delivered a masterclass:

1st 100m Freestyle – 51.78 (EP Domestic Record), 1st 50m Fly – 24.61 (EP Domestic Record), 1st 50m Backstroke – 27.11 (EP Domestic Record), 1st 100m Fly – 54.44 (EP Domestic Record), 2nd 100m Backstroke – 58.82, 3rd 50m Freestyle – 23.73
 Relays: 1st Boys 15/16 4x100m Freestyle Relay, 2nd Boys 15/16 4x100m Medley Relay, 2nd Boys 15/16 4x50m Freestyle Relay

"Dreams don't just happen, they are built with hard work every single day."



Athlete Spotlight: Ella Johnson (Cape Town Otters)
 The story of the week belonged to **Ella Johnson**, the "Pocket Rocket" from Cape Town Otters.

Thanks to a BackaBuddy campaign powered by community donations, Ella (12 years old) made it to SANJ after her mom, raising twins alone following the heart-breaking loss of their dad, needed help to get her there.

And Ella delivered: **three Gold, three Silver, and two Bronze medals.**

"Because of YOUR generosity, belief, and support – this incredible young swimmer got her moment... and WOW did she deliver."

This is what community looks like. This is what happens when people come together.

[Full Set of Results](#) | [Results \(PDF\)](#)



China Swimming Open – Shenzhen *19-22 March 2026*

South African stars' shine on international waters.

While domestic championships were in full swing, two of South Africa's finest were making statements on the other side of the world.

Athlete Spotlight: Pieter Coetzé

Pieter Coetzé went to China and conquered.

- **50m Backstroke:** 24.83 – Gold, Commonwealth qualifier (beat World Record holder Thomas Ceccon and Russian star Kliment Kolesnikov)
- **100m Backstroke:** 52.73 – Gold (held off Olympic champion Thomas Ceccon)
- **200m Backstroke:** 1:55.57 – Gold (completed the backstroke triple crown)

Athlete Spotlight: Kaylene Corbett

Kaylene Corbett added two bronze medals to South Africa's tally:

- **50m Breaststroke:** 31.59 – Bronze (out-touched American star Alex Walsh by just 0.03 seconds)
- **200m Breaststroke:** 2:25.07 – Bronze (behind only Kate Douglass and Lu Jingyao)

Video highlights:

[Pieter Coetzé 50m Back Gold](#) | [Pieter Coetzé 100m Back Gold](#)

Three golds for Coetzé. Two bronzes for Corbett. A massive statement from the South African contingent.



Bombela SA National Artistic Swimming Championships 29 March-1 April 2026 | Cape Town

Grace, strength, and artistry.

Cape Town played host to the nation's best artistic swimmers, and the performances did not disappoint. From solo routines that held audiences breathless to team free routines that combined power and precision, the championships showcased just how far South African artistic swimming has come.



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Highlights from socials:

Xera Vegter Maharajh captivated with her solo routines, eyes firmly on a comeback gold. **Rebecca Schenk** delivered elegance and power. The **WCA Senior Free Routine** lit up the pool.

Athlete Spotlight: AJ and Mbali

Meet **AJ and Mbali**, South Africa's youngest Mixed Duet partners. Representing Western Cape Aquatics, this talented duo is making history. (More on them in our Athlete Spotlight later in this issue!)

Video highlights:

[Meet AJ & Mbali](#) | [Eastern Cape Junior Technical Team](#) | [Xera Vegter Maharajh Solo](#) | [Xera Vegter Maharajh Pre-Trial](#) | [Rebecca Schenk Solo](#) | [WCA Senior Free Routine](#)

- **Press Release:** "[Vegter Maharajh eyes comeback gold at national artistic swimming champs](#)"
- **Press Release:** "[Western Cape dominates at artistic swimming national champs](#)"

Western Cape dominated overall, but the real winner was the sport itself, with new duets, rising juniors, and a clear path forward for artistic swimming in South Africa.



Bombela SA National & Youth Diving Championships
11-15 April 2026 | St. Dominic's School for Girls, Boksburg

Top divers converge.

The action was electric in Boksburg. **Methula** returned to the national stage, while **Brammer and Heydra** shared the spotlight in a top-class showdown.



Press coverage:

- **Press Release:** "[Methula returns as SA's top divers converge on Boksburg for National Championships](#)"
- **Press Release:** "[Brammer and Heydra share spoils in top-class SA diving champs showdown](#)"

[Full Set of Results](#)





Bombela SA National Swimming Championships
 14-18 April 2026 | Newton Park, Gqeberha

Total athletes: 318

Stars aligned in the Eastern Cape.

The biggest domestic meet of the season delivered on every promise. Commonwealth Games qualification was the prize, and 13 swimmers punched their tickets to Glasgow.



Athlete Spotlight: Pieter Coetzé

Pieter Coetzé was simply unplayable – **five events, five golds**, and Commonwealth qualification in all five. The 21-year-old backstroke king dominated across two disciplines:

- **50m Backstroke** – 24.54 (Gold + Commonwealth qualifier)
- **100m Backstroke** – 52.40 (Gold + Commonwealth qualifier)
- **200m Backstroke** – 1:55.26 (Gold + Commonwealth qualifier)
- **50m Freestyle** – 22.29 (Gold + Commonwealth qualifier)
- **100m Freestyle** – 48.18 (Gold + Commonwealth qualifier)

"This is only my second meet in about nine months. So I think it's a great base, and I've got about two months now to go back to work and make sure I put in a good performance at Commonwealth."



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Athlete Spotlight: Aimee Canny

Aimee Canny stole the show in Gqeberha – **four gold medals, four Commonwealth qualifiers**, and an African record to her name. The 22-year-old proved she's no longer just a freestyle specialist, but one of South Africa's most versatile swimmers ever:

- **200m Freestyle** – 1:56.64 (Gold, **African Record**, Commonwealth qualifier)
- **100m Breaststroke** – 1:06.57 (Gold, Personal Best, Commonwealth qualifier)
- **200m Individual Medley** – 2:10.90 (Gold, Commonwealth qualifier)
- **200m Breaststroke** – 2:23.61 (Gold, Commonwealth qualifier – edged Kaylene Corbett by 0.11s)



"I definitely didn't think I couldn't do it, but I hadn't really thought much about how much I'd improve at this meet. Training's been going really well, so I'm super happy that it's kind of paying off in the pool."

Commonwealth Games qualifiers – Team SA 2026: Aimee Canny, Calvyn Justus, Erin Gallagher, Becky Meder, Ruard van Renen, Jessica Thompson, Caitlin de Lange, Michael Houlie, Chris Smith, Lara van Niekerk, Hannah Pearse, Pieter Coetzé, and Kaylene Corbett.



Para Records tumbled:

- **Kat Swanepoel (Senior):** SB4 50m Breast from 1:03.45 to **1:00.25**; S5 50m Back from 48.69 to **47.76** (heats to final)
- **Tiaan Terblanche (U18):** SB13 50m Breast from 34.86 to **34.77**
- **Danika Vyncke (U18):** SB13 50m Breast from 37.81 to **37.42**; S13 100m Free from 1:05.04 to **1:04.18**
- **Elyne Potgieter (U14):** S10 100m Free from 1:17.06 to **1:16.37**; S10 400m Free from 6:05.79 to **5:46.44**

Nathan Hendricks came close in the 200m Individual Medley S13, missing the record by just one second (2:15.65 vs Charl Boucher's 2:14.50 from 2012).





Thank you to aQuellé for keeping our athletes hydrated and performing at their peak.



Press coverage:

- Press Release: "[Stars align in Gqeberha as SA swimmers target Commonwealth Games qualification](#)"
- Press Release: "[Canny, Coetzé and Van Renen secure Commonwealth qualifiers at SA swimming champs](#)"
- Press Release: "[Canny leads IM thriller as six swimmers book Commonwealth spots in Gqeberha](#)"
- Press Release: "[Canny and Coetzé continue Commonwealth charge at SA swimming champs](#)"
- Press Release: "[Comebacks and qualifiers light up penultimate day of SA swimming champs in Gqeberha](#)"
- Press Release: "[Classy Coetzé delivers five from five as Pearse secures Commonwealth Games qualifier](#)"

[Full Set of Results](#) | [Results \(PDF with Splits\)](#)



SA Schools Swimming Championships
24-27 April 2026 | University of Western Cape, Cape Town

Total athletes: 577
The next generation, centre stage.



Final team standings:

- 1st: Western Cape – 54 gold, 37 silver, 37 bronze
- 2nd: Gauteng – 47 gold, 54 silver, 39 bronze
- 3rd: KwaZulu-Natal – 46 gold, 39 silver, 38 bronze
- 4th: Eastern Cape – 12 gold, 13 silver, 11 bronze
- 5th: Free State – 10 gold, 17 silver, 29 bronze
- 6th: Limpopo – 7 gold, 10 silver, 7 bronze
- 7th: Mpumalanga – 7 gold, 3 silver, 8 bronze
- 8th: North-West – 4 gold, 3 silver, 6 bronze
- 9th: Northern Cape – 1 gold, 3 silver, 1 bronze

Spirit Award: Northern Cape



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Individual awards:

- **Junior Victor Ludorum:** Pieter van Deventer (Gauteng)
- **Junior Victrix Ludorum:** Olivia Geldart (Eastern Cape)
- **Senior Victor Ludorum:** Dewet Gous (Northern Cape)
- **Senior Victrix Ludorum:** Isabeau Coetsee (Western Cape)
- **Para Top Performer (Male):** Leon Coetzer (KZN)
- **Para Top Performer (Female):** Naseerah du Toit (Western Cape)
- **Top Performer (Male):** Michael vd Linde (KZN)
- **Top Performer (Female):** Cassidy Burgess (Western Cape)



Athlete Spotlight: Gemma Spies (14, Eastern Cape)
Remember the name.

Gemma Spies left the Cape Town pool on fire:

- 50m Freestyle – Gold with a **new Schools Record**
- 50m Butterfly – Gold with a **new Schools Record**
- 100m Freestyle – Gold with a **new Schools Record**
- 50m Backstroke – Gold
- 100m Backstroke – Gold

Five gold medals. Three South African Schools records.

This isn't Gemma's first time making waves, back in 2022, at just 10 years old, she broke a 20-year-old national record. Between December 2025 and May 2026, she has broken six records across lifesaving, provincial open, and school's competitions.

"Gemma continues to stamp her name into South African History books. This amazing achievement is made possible due to Gemma's consistency at training and at competitions, her family's support that makes her push for greatness, her coaches' belief in her at Infinity Swimming Academy that fuels her performance, and Swimming South Africa for betting on her during National Team Call Ups."

We are definitely keeping our eyes on the lanes for this one!

[Full Set of Results, Records, Individual and WA Points](#)



World Aquatics Water Polo World Cup 2026 (Division 2) – Malta

Men's tournament (7-13 April) – Final position: 22nd out of 24 nations

A tough campaign opened with matches against Portugal (25-7), Romania (28-5), and Neutral Athletes B (31-11). But the team showed heart and growth, ending with a first victory against Hong Kong (23-22) before falling to Great Britain (18-8) in the final play-off.

"The boys fought hard, grew with every match, and represented South Africa with pride. This is just the beginning."



Women's tournament (21-26 April)

HISTORY MADE.

After tough losses to Kazakhstan (11-8), Croatia (23-11), Russia (27-5), and hosts Malta (14-8), the team rallied for something special.

First came a nail-biting win against Singapore: 12-11, with Georgia Eccles icing it with a 10-metre rocket at 15 seconds remaining.

Then, back-to-back glory: a 10-9 victory over Slovakia.

"Our senior ladies team has done what no SA senior ladies side has ever done before: Back-to-back wins at a World Aquatics Championship."

Captain **Shakira January**, Vice-Captain **Boati Motau**, Head Coach **Dean Whyte**, Assistant Coach **Masi Namba**, and Manager **Kagi Musi** have built something truly special.

SA women's water polo is writing a new chapter. Watch this space.

- [Meet the South African Women's team](#)



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Bombela SA National Open Water Championships 2026

Marina Martinique, Jeffreys Bay | 6-8 March 2026

The picturesque Marina Martinique in Jeffreys Bay played host to the 2026 Bombela SA National Open Water Championships for the **10th consecutive year** – a testament to this venue's status as South Africa's premier open water swimming destination.

With Team SA places on the line for the 2026 Pan Pacific Games (Irvine, California) and the 2026 World Aquatics Open Water Junior World Championships (Santa Fe, Argentina), the nation's best, along with the visiting Namibian national team, assembled for a memorable three days of racing.

A new addition to the program this year was the **3km Knock Out Series**, an exciting format featuring elimination rounds that has gained traction since its debut at the 2024 World Junior Championships in Alghero.



Day 1 – Friday, 6 March (10km & 7.5km)

Men's 10km – A tight photo finish saw Hanré Louw (AGC-TSH) edge Byron Kimber (AGA-EK) in a thrilling tussle, with Connor Albertyn (AGC-TSH) claiming bronze.

Women's 10km – Callan Lötter (AGC-TSH) dominated emphatically, finishing well ahead of Hannah Neilson (WCA-WC) and Carli Antonopoulos (AGC-TSH).

Boys 7.5km – Wiaan Bartleman (AGC-TSH) out-touched Kellen Jones (ECA-NM) in a "ding dong" battle, with Hiendrich Schoeman (AGC-TSH) taking bronze.

Girls 7.5km – Rising star Leah Markgraaff (AGC-TSH) produced a stellar performance for gold, ahead of Caitlin Evans (WCA-WC) and Sienna Gous (ECA-NM).

4x1km Mixed Relay – A revised format introduced separate Junior and Senior categories. Senior winners: AGC-TSH A edged AGC-TSH B and KZNA-ETH. Junior winners: ECA-NM claimed victory over WCA-WC and AGB-JHB.

Day 2 – Saturday, 7 March (3km Knock Out Series & Age Group 3km)

Gusty winds and intermittent showers greeted swimmers, but the 3km Knock Out Series delivered drama.

Women's Knock Out – Callan Lötter (AGC-TSH) claimed another comprehensive victory, ahead of Sasha-Lee Hemmings (KZNA-ETH) and Kaitlyne Horne (ECA-NM).

Men's Knock Out – Matthew Caldwell (AGA-EK) edged Byron Kimber (AGA-EK) in an exciting finish, while Wiaan Bartleman (AGC-TSH) out-touched Kellen Jones (ECA-NM) for bronze.

Age Group 3km – The "gateway" event for junior swimmers saw gold medals go to Shalea Hamilton (Girls 13-14), Kerryn Kotze (Women 15-16), Leah Markgraaff (Women 17-18), Megan Shepard (Women 19+), Noah Nice (Boys 13-14), Carter Markgraaff (Men 15-16), Heindrich Schoeman (Men 17-18), Matthew Caldwell (Men's Open), and Aaron Putz (Men's Disability).

Day 3 – Sunday, 8 March (5km)

Sunny and humid conditions greeted the final day's racing.

Men's 5km – A scintillating affair saw the top 11 finishers within 35 seconds of each other. Connor Albertyn (AGC-TSH) claimed victory ahead of Matthew Caldwell (AGA-EK) and Byron Kimber (AGA-EK).

Women's 5km – The duo of Callan Lötter (AGC-TSH) and Hannah Neilson (WCA-WC) dominated again, with Lötter pulling away in the finish chute for gold.

Men's 5km Disability – Aaron Putz (KZNA-ETH) took the win.

A Word of Thanks

A BIG SHOUT OUT to the ECA/NMBA LOC for presenting a world-class championship despite numerous challenges, and to our sponsors, **Bombela Concession Company** (title sponsor) and the **Kouga Municipality** for their generous contribution.

Marina Martinique has cemented its mark as the premier open water swimming venue in South Africa. Here's to year 11.

Neville Smith





Bombela SA National Diving Championships 2026
St. Dominic's School for Girls, Boksburg | 11-15 April 2026

The 2026 SA Diving Nationals will be remembered as a championship defined by **razor-thin margins, shifting momentum, and outstanding performances** across both junior and senior events. From established champions to rising stars, the standard of diving reflected not only technical growth but also a competitive resilience that bodes exceptionally well for the future of the sport.

Senior Nationals: Rivalries That Raised the Bar
Women's Springboard – Brammer and Heydra Push Each Other to New Heights

The spotlight fell on the gripping rivalry between **Grace Brammer** and **Bailey Heydra** in both the 1m and 3m springboard events.

In the 1m event, the two traded the lead repeatedly, with each round bringing a fresh swing in momentum. Brammer's precision was matched dive-for-dive by Heydra's dynamic execution, producing one of the closest finishes of the championships.

The intensity carried into the 3m springboard, where the rivalry elevated even further. Every dive appeared capable of deciding the title, and the final standings once again reflected just how evenly matched the pair had become.

Zalika Methula produced a highly commendable performance to secure third place in both women's events, showing consistency, maturity, and steadily improving execution.

Men's Springboard – Mthembu and Shozi Deliver Their Own Thriller

The men's competition proved equally compelling, particularly through the fierce contest between **Anele Mthembu** and **Anathi Shozi** in both the 1m and 3m springboard events.

Mthembu brought power and confidence, while Shozi countered with clean entries and impressive consistency. Neither allowed the other to build a decisive advantage, resulting in dramatic finishes that kept spectators engaged until the final scores.

Their rivalry showcased the growing depth and competitiveness within South African men's diving – technical quality matched by the mental resilience required to compete under national championship pressure.



Junior Nationals: A Talent-Rich Generation Emerges
Group A (17-18 years)

Rachel Meyburgh delivered one of the standout performances in the Group A Girls 3m Springboard event. Entering the later rounds trailing the leaders, she displayed remarkable composure under pressure, producing a series of high-quality dives to claim victory.

Mia Diana, competing despite an ankle injury, showed tremendous courage to secure second place in the Group A 1m event, a performance that spoke volumes about her competitive character.

Maya Rono continued to underline her growing reputation, reaching the podium in both Group A events with assurance, poise, and consistency.

Group B (14-16 years)

The Group B competitions provided the clearest indication yet that South African diving possesses an exciting pipeline of emerging talent.

In the Girls 3m event, a Western Cape diver rose to claim second place behind the impressive **Olona Mbele**, a result reflecting the growing strength of diving programmes



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outside traditional powerhouses.

Olivia Coetzer delivered an outstanding performance to secure first place in the Group B 1m event, showing composure well beyond her years.

The battle for remaining podium places saw **Rebatle Mkhize** and **Rorisang Shole** fighting fiercely for second and third – their determination and competitive spirit illustrating the hunger emerging within the junior ranks.

A Promising Era for South African Diving

Beyond the medals winners, numerous divers

demonstrated improved difficulty, cleaner execution, and greater confidence in competition settings. The championships reflected a generation benefiting from stronger coaching structures, increased exposure to high-level competition, and an evident culture of camaraderie.

With athletes such as Meyburgh, Rono, Diana, Coetzer, Mbele, Mkhize, and Shole leading the way, and senior rivalries between Brammer, Heydra, Mthembu, and Shozi intensifying, the future of South African diving appears exceptionally bright.

Loredana Raccanello

Athletes Spotlight: Mixed Duet Partners (Mbalenthle 'Mbali' Sidaki and Alasdair 'AJ' Fincham)

They started on a holiday clinic in Wynberg on 10 June 2021. Five years later, they're making history.

Mbalenthle (Mbali) Sidaki and **Alasdair (AJ) Fincham** have been mixed duet partners since 2023, and in that time, they've become something rare: South Africa's longest-standing and currently only male artistic swimmer, paired with a partner who brings grace, strength, and homemade baked goods to every competition.

Together, they have represented BSSC at NAG since 2022, at Level 3 since 2024, and represented WCA at SA Youth Nationals this year. They are members of the **SA Youth Talent Squad** (announced March 2026) and hope to be selected to compete internationally later this year, based on final selection at SA Champs.

Although they are currently the only mixed duet in South Africa, with no domestic competition to push them, they consistently strive to better their performance and scores. At Nationals 2026, they achieved a personal best score with local and international judges watching.



AJ Fincham: More Than a Swimmer

AJ is not only a rising star in artistic swimming – he also plays cricket, rugby, and golf. He is an avid fisherman, sings in the school choir, and is an active member of the Rondebosch Primary School outreach programme, Simunye.

In 2025, he was awarded the **Rondebosch Individual Sportsman of the Year**, an award that recognised his participation in a sport not offered at Rondebosch.

"Let your smile affect the world, don't let the world affect your smile."



Mbali Sidaki: Beautiful Flower, Strong Swimmer

Mbali competed in the female duet event before she and AJ started swimming together as mixed duet partners. She is a strong swimmer and one of the captains of the Herschel Prep swimming team.

Another of her passions is ballet – she is entered for the Cecchetti Grade V ballet exam in May 2026. She loves music and has been awarded diplomas for piano at the Kaapse Afrik Eisteddfod. She loves baking (her teammates and coaches are regularly treated to homebaked treats). And she is an avid reader, never far from a book.

Fun fact: Mbalenthle means **"beautiful flower"** in isiZulu.

"Someone could live for 100 years without really living a minute."



A Much-Loved Part of the Family

Artistic swimming is still a female-dominated sport, though numbers are growing internationally. AJ takes his role as the longest-standing and currently the only male artistic swimmer in South Africa very seriously.

Since their introduction to artistic swimming (then known as synchro) on that June day in 2021, AJ and Mbali have become a much-loved and integral part of the BSSC and WCA family. They train at VA in Constantia and have inspired many an aspirant swimmer.

One story says it all:

When Mbali went to visit her Gogo one December holiday, her five-year-old cousin, Ntando, saw her swim, but was scared of going in the water. Mbali encouraged him, and he gradually found the courage to follow her in his armbands. She supported and swam alongside him.

He, too, is now a keen swimmer.



The Road Ahead

The WCA Youth combination routine of which Mbali and AJ are members, won gold at the recent SA National Championships in Cape Town.

They are enthusiastic, dedicated, hard-working, self-motivated young swimmers and, by all accounts, an absolute pleasure to coach.

AJ and Mbali have a bright future ahead.

Sue Manners-Wood





SSA Water Polo Newsletter (March-April 2026)

Keeping players, coaches, and fans in the loop.

This month, we're proud to bring you the **Water Polo newsletter** in collaboration with the **Water Polo Technical Committee** – your go-to source for everything happening in the pool and beyond.

From national championship recaps to upcoming fixtures, talent development updates to coach and referee pathways, the Water Polo newsletter keeps the community connected.

- **Click [HERE](#) to be directed to the latest edition of the SSA Water Polo Newsletter**

Stay in the game. Stay in the know.

Mass Participation Programme (MPP) – Community Currents

Easter Holiday Program: Making Waves in Shakashead

While Easter clinics ran across the country, something special was happening at Shakashead Swimming Pool.

On **4 April 2026**, the Mass Participation Programme brought swimming skills and water safety to the heart of the Ilembe District, KwaDukuza Municipality.

For many of the children who gathered at Shakashead that weekend, it was their first time in a pool, ever. They learned floating, breathing, basic strokes, and most importantly, **lifesaving water safety**.



Giggles echoed off the walls. High-fives followed every kick. And kids who arrived nervous left with newfound confidence.

"I never knew I could swim. Now I want to come every day."

One child. One pool. One weekend. That's how the Mass Participation Programme builds a safer, stronger South Africa – one stroke at a time.

Empowering communities, one stroke at a time.

#SSA #LearnToSwim #MassParticipationProgramme #EasterHolidayProgram



Education & Training (E&T) – Building Future Leaders

From the E&T Desk

Empowering coaches and instructors to build a stronger tomorrow.

The Education and Training unit is excited to share several upcoming opportunities designed to develop and empower our coaches, instructors, and swimming leaders. Our goal remains clear: enhance learning experiences and provide valuable, accessible resources for every member of the aquatics community.

Updated Documents: Transparency and Standards

All education and training documents have been updated to reflect the latest practices and standards in our programmes. As we strive to move with the times and adhere to evolving education and training benchmarks, the reviewed E&T docs also promote **transparency and accessibility for all**, ensuring that everyone, from rural clubs to city centres, has the same access to quality resources.

Level 2 Swimming Coaching Course – Piloted and Coming Soon

The **Level 2 Swimming Coaching Course** was successfully piloted in Cape Town from **1-3 May 2026**. After a two-month review period, the course will be rolled out to the remaining provinces.

This initiative aims to develop advanced coaching skills and enhance the quality of swimming coaches across South Africa. Level 2 is where good coaches become *great* ones, and we can't wait to see the impact ripple through clubs nationwide.

Ready to take the plunge and unlock your coaching potential?

Register now and embark on an exciting journey.



Get Involved

We encourage everyone to participate actively in these events and take advantage of the fantastic learning opportunities they present. Watch the SSA website and social channels for registration links and dates.

Build knowledge. Lift performance. Lead the future.

The Education & Training Unit

Upcoming Events

"Mark Your Calendars!"

May/June 2026 Preview

- **Africa Aquatics Swimming Championships** – Algeria (Oran), 5-10 May 2026
- **Mare Nostrum** – Monte Carlo, Barcelona & Canet, 23-31 May 2026
- **Africa Aquatics Zone IV Open Water Swimming Championships** – Mont Choisy Beach (Mauritius), 6-7 June 2026
- **Men's U18 Water Polo World Championships** – Rio Maior (Portugal), 27 June-4 July 2026

Stay tuned for details on upcoming events on our official website and social media channels.

General Updates – Poolside Chat

Catch up on the latest news, milestones, and moments from across the South African aquatics community.



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SGM Held Ahead of SA Nationals

The Special General Meeting (SGM) took place on **13 April 2026**, the day before the 2026 Bombela Concession Company SA National Champs kicked off in Gqeberha.

Important conversations. Big decisions. All focused on moving our sport forward.

Ruard van Renen Closes NCAA Career with Silver

South African senior **Ruard van Renen** closed his University of Georgia career in style at the **2026 NCAA Championships in Atlanta**.

Competing in the 100-yard backstroke final at the McAuley Aquatic Center, van Renen claimed **silver** in a time of **43.54**, securing his **third consecutive First Team All-America honour** and recording the **third-fastest time in program history**.

A fitting finish to an outstanding collegiate career. Well swum, Ruard.

Stay up to date with the latest record-breaking performances:

- [SA & African Swimming Records](#)

Want to see where you or your club stack up?

- [SA Rankings](#)



SHARE THE SSA LOVE: Want to see yourself or your club featured? It's easy!

Don't forget to tag us in your posts and stories. That's how you get featured in our official channels, so take advantage and share your aquatic pride!



Your Feedback is
IMPORTANT to US!



Contact Us

We value your feedback and inquiries. Please reach out to us through the following channels:

E-mail: brynwell.kasper@swimsa.org

Phone: +27 11 404 2480

Address: Johannesburg Stadium, North Wing Ground Floor, 124 Van Beek Street, New Doornfontein, Johannesburg, 2094

Follow, Share, Engage! Let's grow swimming together.

Want Your Story Featured?

Submit news, events, or athlete spotlights to brynwell.kasper@swimsa.org!



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