

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 6 - SEPTEMBER 2025

Introduction

Dive into September with SSA's latest updates, standout triumphs, and a healthy dose of inspiration!

Welcome to the **sixth edition** of the SSA newsletter, your premier source for everything making a splash in **South African aquatics**. From the powerful waves of our elite performers to the vibrant currents in our communities, we're here to bring you the most impactful stories from across the pool.

Whether you're an athlete grinding towards a personal best, a coach building the next generation of champions, an official ensuring fair play, or a fan who lives for the roar of the crowd – this is your home to **stay informed**, **feel inspired**, and **remain connected** to our growing swimming family.

This month, we're riding a huge wave of momentum, featuring:

- An important update from the Water Polo Technical Committee.
- The latest on our High-Performance athletes creating elite waves.
- A comprehensive 'Race Ready' competition roundup.
- How our Mass Participation Programme is driving water safety from uMlazi to Pietermaritzburg.
- Crucial updates from the Education & Training desk, plus more.

The water's fantastic - let's dive in!





















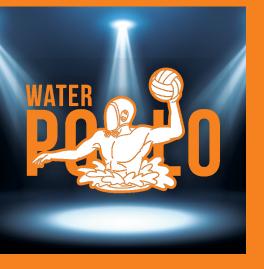
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Message from the SSA Water Polo Technical Committee

by the SSA Water Polo TC

Dear Swimming Community,
Congratulations to Mr. Dion Willis on His Prestigious
International Appointment

We extend our warmest congratulations to Mr. Dion Willis on his appointment as the Chair of the World Aquatics Water Polo Referees and Officials Committee. This esteemed role follows his outstanding service on the World Aquatics Water Polo Technical Committee. His appointment is a testament to his profound dedication, hard work, and the high regard in which he is held internationally.



Mr. Willis, a highly respected former international referee for events like the Olympic Games and World Championships, also serves as the SSA Water Polo Technical Committee Convenor and the Africa Aquatics Water Polo Technical Committee





Chair, where he continues to lead with distinction and commitment. His efforts have been instrumental in developing technical officials across Africa and the globe.

We are incredibly proud of him and wish him every success in this prestigious new role. This recognition is richly deserved, and we are confident he will continue to serve the sport with the same aplomb and excellence that have defined his leadership to date.

What This Prestigious Role Entails

As Chair of this pivotal World Aquatics committee, Mr. Willis will be at the helm of shaping the global standards and development of water polo officiating. His responsibilities will include overseeing the education and evaluation of international referees, ensuring the consistent application of rules at world-level competitions, and steering the future of officiating excellence for the entire sport. This leadership position places South Africa at the very heart of the sport's governance on the world stage.

SSA Water Polo Update Report: High-Performance Programme at the Centre of Vision 2032

The SSA Water Polo Vision 2032 Strategic Plan recognises that everything depends on the strength of our High-Performance Programme. Transformation, grassroots access, and governance support remain key strategic drivers, and their impact will only be fully realised if our athletes, who already compete internationally, are systematically prepared to succeed at the highest level.



The High-Performance Programme

The High-Performance framework has been designed to prepare athletes for the international cycle leading to Los Angeles 2028 and Brisbane 2032. It includes:

- **National Training Camps**: Three camps before every international tournament, focusing on tactical competency, team cohesion, and competitive readiness.
- Regional Training Camps: Affiliate hubs hosting weekly and weekend sessions, integrating skill work, strength and conditioning, and tactical preparation.
- Athlete Tracking: Performance testing and reporting, forming part of selection criteria and long-term readiness assessments.
- **Specialist Coaching**: Swimming preparation with Swim SA-approved coaches and position-specific strength programmes designed in consultation with National Coaches.

A Young Senior Squad, A Long-Term Opportunity

South Africa's current senior squads are among the youngest on the international stage. This is a tremendous opportunity to build for the future. With targeted support, these athletes can mature into a competitive force by 2028 and beyond. Other nations are already leading in this approach – Croatia has introduced a 15-year-old into their senior women's set-up, and Spain fielded a 15-year-old at the Tokyo Olympics. These examples demonstrate how bold talent integration can accelerate success. For South

Africa, age-group talent identification is the key to directly strengthening and sustaining the senior pipeline, ensuring that promising athletes are nurtured into long-term international contributors.

Talent Identification and Transformation

The success of this journey hinges on age-group talent identification linked directly to transformation goals. Creating and maintaining a robust pipeline means widening the net to include schools, clubs, and under-



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served regions where talent remains untapped. Transformation is not a parallel track but is embedded in this process: by ensuring that selection and development pathways reflect the true diversity of South Africa, we strengthen both the competitiveness and the inclusivity of the sport.

Looking Ahead

The High-Performance training programme has been finalised and is ready to be rolled out in the lead-up to the December 2025 national training camps. This structured, long-term programme aligns with Vision 2032 and provides continuity across age groups and senior squads.

The programme will focus on:

- **Swimming conditioning**, with Swim SA-approved coaches guiding athletes in the pool.
- Strength and conditioning, developing mobility, core, and water polo-specific strength.
- Technical and tactical drills, with positionspecific development goals.
- Video analysis and tactical preparation, supported by online or in-person sessions.
- Performance tracking, giving athletes and coaches a shared framework for readiness.

December camps will apply this system, benchmark progress against defined standards, and set a consistent baseline for the years ahead. From 2026, Round 1 National Camps will launch in Bloemfontein, establishing a new phase of accountability and high-performance culture.

Please find the date for next year's Nationals below: SA National Water Polo Championships – Joan Harrison (Buffalo City), 13-15 March 2026

And please be reminded to register.

Thank you SSA Water Polo TC





















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

Building Our Tide: SSA Unveils Strategic Squad System for LA 2028

The journey to the podium in Los Angeles 2028 begins today. In a decisive move to forge the next generation of South African swimming champions, Swimming South Africa has officially launched a revamped, strategic national squad system. This initiative is meticulously aligned with the Long-Term Participant Development (LTPD) model and SASCOC's rigorous selection criteria, creating a clear and powerful pipeline from emerging talent to Olympic glory.

The core mission is unequivocal: to identify, support, and develop swimming talent capable of delivering medal-winning performances at the 2026 Commonwealth Games and the 2028 Olympic Games.

A Tiered System for a Talented Nation

Understanding the diverse needs of our athletes, SSA has developed a multi-level squad structure designed to cast a wide net over the nation's best while focusing resources for maximum impact. The system comprises three distinct squads:

- LA Olympic Squad
- Senior Squad
- Youth Squad





"This squad system is our engine for the future," stated the High-Performance team. "Its primary objective is to increase our pool of talent, with various levels of support dependent on our available resources. It's a dynamic, open-door system where performance is the only key."

The Pathway is Open: Selection and Progression

The selection process is built on a foundation of fairness and global standards. Athletes are evaluated using the World Aquatics Points System, which assigns a value to every time achieved. The initial selection is based on performances at the SA Senior and Junior Nationals, with updates made throughout the season.

Critically, the door to the squad system is never closed. Any swimmer who achieves the required point score for a category at any recognized meet will be added to the squad, ensuring that every burst of talent is captured and nurtured.

Our Unwavering Objectives:

- Identify & Develop: To pinpoint athletes who will win medals at senior international competitions and the 2028 Olympic Games.
- Support & Facilitate: To provide crucial support services to identified South African-based athletes.

- **Expose & Enhance**: To ensure international competition exposure, increasing our pool of elite athletes and enhancing performance.
- Represent & Inspire: To ensure the future makeup of our teams reflects the beautiful demographics of our country.

Success will be measured by the tangible metrics that matter most: the number of semi-finals and finals reached at Olympic Games and World Championships, and the growing presence of South African swimmers in the World Rankings.

The tide is turning. The strategy is set. The journey to LA 2028 is officially underway.

Learn More & View the Squads:

SSA High-Performance National Swimming Squads 2025-2026

#RoadToLA2028 #HighPerformance #SquadSystem



















Competitions - Thrills in the Pool & **Open Water**

Open Water Swimming Update by Mr. Neville Smith, SSA Open Water Coordinator

Open Water Wave: SA Dominates in Eswatini, Looks to Kenya & Domestic Season

The summer open water season surged to a successful start as South Africa dominated the 6th African Aquatics Zone IV Open Water Swimming Championships at Lupholho Dam, Eswatini. Our team of emerging stars claimed a comprehensive team victory, triumphing over nine competing nations in the invigorating 19°C waters.

The momentum continues as a strong South African

contingent now prepares to 'lock horns' with Africa's finest at the Africa Aquatics Junior and Senior Open Water Championships in Mombasa, Kenya (21-23 October). The entire fraternity wishes them the best in their quest for the summit!

Building Official Capacity for the Season

To ensure a safe and well-oiled domestic season, SSA presented two virtual technical officials' clinics in September:

- Judging (16 Sep): Presented by Thian de Jager, attended by 174 individuals.
- **Timekeeping (23 Sep)**: Presented by Ronel van Veenhuyzen, attended by **130** individuals.









A Critical Reminder for Athletes

Only times recorded at SSA Approved Open Water Swimming Events will be considered for entry into the 2026 SA National Open Water Championships (2026SANATOWS) at Marina Martinique, Jeffreys Bay. Ensure your events are approved!

Domestic Season Kicks Off

The summer calendar is now in full swing! A busy weekend on **12 October** features:

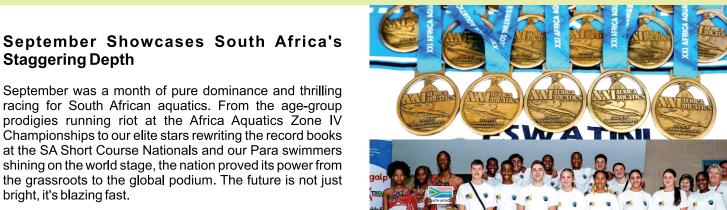
- Aquatics Gauteng: Midmar Mile Seeding Event at Munyaka Estate, Midrand.
- Mpumalanga: MPL Open Water #1 at Ngodwana Dam.
- **Eastern Cape**: Swim Series #1 at the premier venue, Marina Martinique.

(Note: The Western Cape event at Grabouw Dam on 5 Oct was postponed due to low water temperature and has been rescheduled for late November.)

Latest Open Water Calendar

On behalf of Swimming South Africa, we wish the entire open water fraternity a successful and safe season as you strive to achieve your goals!

Neville Smith



Africa Aquatics Zone IV Championships – Manzini (Eswatini)

Team SA's Record-Breaking Rampage

South Africa delivered an absolutely spectacular performance, storming to the top of the medal table with a staggering 18 medals (9 Gold, 6 Silver, 3 Bronze) on the opening day alone, shattering **16 Championship Records** in the process. The momentum continued throughout the competition, culminating in a monumental final tally of **113 medals** – an astonishing haul of 57 Gold, 39 Silver, and 17 Bronze. This incredible medal count secured South Africa's position at the top of the medal table. The dominance extended to the Open Water events, where Team SA ruled the course, clinching 13 individual medals and 2 relay medals to win the overall title.

A truly dominant display of emerging talent from start to finish. Congratulations, Team SA!



FULL SET OF RESULTS:

- Swimming
- Open Water Swimming





WATCH THE ACTION:

































ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT: SWIMMING

- Jayden Williams: The Paarl breaststroke sensation secured a spectacular clean sweep, winning gold in the 50m, 100m, and 200m Breaststroke.
- Nicholas Pretorius: Crowned Victor Ludorum for Boys 15/16, he claimed five individual golds, a bronze, and set four Championship Records (100m Back, 200m Free, 100m Fly, 100m Free).
- Kyle Snyders: A powerhouse performance yielding 4 individual golds, 2 silvers, 4 individual records, and 3 relay golds with 3 relay records.
- Bandile Mahaye: Showed incredible versatility, winning multiple medals including gold in the 100m Fly and a record-breaking 50m Backstroke.



- Johan De Beer & Abigail Kotze: Kicked off the meet with a record-breaking gold in the 800m Freestyle.
- Zuria Venter: A medal machine, winning Gold in the 200m IM, silver in the 100m Breast, 200m Free, 400m Free, 800m Free, and bronze in the 50m Breast.
- Jayden Viduya: Secured 7 Gold and 3 Silver medals, including a new Championship Record in the 100m Breaststroke.
- Saskya Kistnasami: Earned gold in the 100m Breaststroke, along with two silvers and a bronze.





ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT: OPEN WATER

- Zibusiso Xulu: Showed great promise, securing a silver medal in the 3km event.
- Aiden Green: Struck gold in the 3km event for the 13-year-old Boys age category.
- Taylor Kassebaum: Demonstrated incredible dedication and grit, striking gold in her age group.
- Liam Forsythe: In his second national team appearance, earned a gold medal in the U14 men's 3km event and also competed in the mixed team relay.



World Para Swimming Championships - Singapore Sadie Leads South African Charge with Grit and Glory

Team South Africa delivered a series of courageous and record-breaking performances, headlined by the superb Christian Sadie.

- Christian Sadie: The Cape Town swimmer was in sublime form, finishing the championships with a silver (SM7 200m IM) and two bronze medals (S7 50m Fly, S7 100m Back). He capped his campaign by setting new African Records in the S7 50m and 100m Freestyle.
- Nathan Hendricks: Showed immense promise, setting a new African Record in the SM13 200m IM and narrowly missing a medal with a 4th place finish in the S13 400m Freestyle.
- Team Spirit: Strong swims also came from Alani Ferreira and Danika Vyncke, with Head Coach Theo Verster expressing excitement for the team's future heading towards the LA 2028 Paralympics.

WATCH THE ACTION!



























Bombela Concession Company SA National (25m) Championships - Pietermaritzburg Thompson and Le Clos Light Up the Short Course Pool

The G.C. Jolliffe Pool was electric as the nation's best turned up the heat in the fast-paced short course format. **Headline Acts:**

Jessica Thompson (18): The superstar of the meet, claiming FIVE national titles (100m Free, 50m Fly, 50m Back, 50m Free, 100m Back) and smashing the 16-year-old national record and equalling the legendary Kirsty Coventry's

African mark in the 50m Backstroke (26.85).

- Chad le Clos: The champion's return was triumphant, securing gold in the 100m Free, 50m Fly, 50m Back, and 100m Fly, and signalling his exciting new focus on backstroke.
- Lara van Niekerk: In a heart-warming return to form, the breaststroke queen completed a stunning clean sweep of the 50m, 100m, and **200m titles**, declaring, "I'm enjoying racing again." **Duné Coetzee:** The Olympian showed her class,
- winning a tough triple in the 200m Free, 400m





Free, and 200m Fly.

• Matthew Caldwell: A distance force, dominating the 200m Free, 400m Free, and 1500m Free.

Rising Stars Shine:

- Abigail Kotze (16): Stunned the field to beat Coetzee for the 100m Butterfly title and pushed her all the way in the 200m Fly.
- Jarden Eaton: A surprise winner of the men's 200m Butterfly from lane eight, dipping under two minutes for the first time.
- First-Time Champions: The future is secure with first national titles for Carli Antonopoulos (800m, 1500m Free), Adrian van Wyk (200m Back), Keira van Heerden (200m & 400m IM), and Armand Landmann (50m Free).

The Big Picture:

The depth, passion, and world-class talent on display across all competitions in September have set an incredible foundation for the road to the **2026 Commonwealth Games and the LA 2028 Olympics**. The wave of South African swimming shows no signs of slowing down.

· Full Set of Results:



WATCH THE ACTION!



#RaceReady #TeamSA #FutureIsBright



Mass Participation Programme (MPP) – Swimming for All

MPP Drives Water Safety and Fun from uMlazi to Pietermaritzburg

September was a month of tremendous energy and outreach for the SSA Mass Participation Programme (MPP), as we delivered activations focused on fun, education, and community spirit in two key KZN locations.

uMlazi Activation: A Community-Wide Splash of Success

Our partnership with the uMlazi Sharks Aquatic Club, Ethekwini Municipality, and the KZN Department of Sport, Arts and Culture kicked off at the uMlazi G Municipal Pool, delivering a powerful two-day event.

- Recreational Schools Gala (September 18): The programme began with a vibrant splash, welcoming 350 enthusiastic pupils from five local primary schools: Phila, Intwela, Manyunswa, Windy Heights, and Isipingo Hills Primary. The gala was a perfect blend of fun and essential learning, featuring recreational races with pool noodles and kickboards, alongside crucial water safety education sessions. The joy and engagement from the learners were truly inspiring.
- · uMlazi Sharks Recreational Gala (September 20): The momentum continued with a gala for local clubs and



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community swimmers. Despite being challenged by bad weather, the dedication of our young athletes shone through, with 100 resilient swimmers participating and showcasing their talent and passion.



Pietermaritzburg

Following the success in uMlazi, the MPP team moved to the host city of the Bombela SA National (25m) Championships to continue our vital water safety mission right beside the elite competition.

Presbury Primary School (September 22): We launched the activation with a dedicated Water Safety Education Drive, empowering young learners with the knowledge to stay safe in and around water.



Heather Secondary School (September 23): The focus then shifted to Heather Secondary School, where we engaged 100 Grade 8 pupils. The day began with an impactful water safety theory session, which was immediately followed by practical swimming lessons and fun-filled activities in the water. This "theory-to-practice" model is essential for building confidence and cementing life-saving skills.

A Unified Mission for a Safer, Stronger Swimming Community

These activations underscore the MPP's core mission: to make swimming accessible, promote essential water safety, and foster a lifelong love for the sport. From the vibrant energy of uMlazi to the educational focus in Pietermaritzburg, we are proud to be making waves across South Africa.

A heartfelt thank you to all our partners, the **uMlazi Sharks** Aquatic Club, Ethekwini Municipality, KZN DSAC, and the schools and communities that welcomed us. Your collaboration is the driving force behind our shared goal of a drowning-free nation.

#MakingEverySplashCount #WaterSafety #CommunityFirst#SwimmingForAll



Ready to take the plunge and unlock your coaching potential?

Register now and embark on an exciting journey.

Education & Training (E&T) -**Building Future Leaders**

Your Coaching Pathway Starts Here: Introducing the **SSA Online Bridging Course**

Dreaming of a career on the pool deck shaping the next generation of champions? The journey begins with the right foundation. This month, we are excited to spotlight

the SSA Online Bridging Course – your direct route to the coaching pathway.

What is the SSA Bridging Course You May Ask?

The SSA Bridging Course is specifically designed for aspiring coaches who are passionate about following the coaching pathway but do not currently intend to teach swimming.

























This innovative course provides access to the Level 1 Coaching Course for candidates who do not yet hold a valid Learn to Swim (LTS) certificate. Please note: this is not a qualification itself, but an essential bridge to further training, equipping you with the fundamental knowledge to begin your coaching journey with confidence.

Pre-Requisites for Enrolment

Before starting the Bridging Course, candidates must meet the following requirements:

- Be 18 years or older.
- Have passed Grade 11 (or equivalent).
- Complete the Watermanship Assessment Video.
- Upload a certified copy of your ID.
- Upload a signed Candidate Risk Assessment Declaration

Bridging Course Outline

The course covers essential foundational units to prepare you for the coaching environment:

- Unit 1: Aquatic Safety
- Unit 2: The Importance of Swimming
- Unit 3: How People Learn
- Unit 4: Core Aquatic Skills
- Unit 5: Principles of Movement in Water
- **Unit 6**: Stroke Development

Assessments

- Completion and assessment of the course worksheet.
- A multiple-choice exam (pass mark of 70%).
- Candidates who do not meet the competency requirements will have the opportunity to retake the exam.

Important Note

The Bridging Course certificate is not a teaching or coaching qualification and does not authorize you to teach or coach independently. It serves solely as a prerequisite pathway to the formal Level 1 Coaching Course.

Ready to Take the Plunge?

Your future in coaching awaits. For more information and to enroll, click the link below.

Enroll Now: SSA Online Bridging Course

















The SSA Bridging Course Goes Live!

After months of dedicated effort, the SSA Online Bridging Course officially went live on 3 September 2025! This milestone is the result of countless hours of collaboration between the Education & Training unit and a dedicated team of experts from our affiliates.

Today, we shine a well-deserved spotlight on one of the driving forces behind this project: Thirunavalli (Vani) Govender.



Three Decades of Passion and Expertise

Vani has devoted over three decades to teaching swimming, passionately advocating for skill development in communities across KwaZulu-Natal. Her dedication is evident in every aspect of her work. Collaborating closely with the E&T unit, Vani was an unwavering presence throughout this journey, ensuring the course material resonates perfectly with both instructors and students.

Her expertise isn't limited to the pool deck; she is also a certified World Aquatics timekeeper and judge and represented SSA at World Cups from 2005 to 2008.

A Rigorous and Rewarding Journey

The development process was both rigorous and rewarding, involving numerous in-person meetings in Johannesburg and eThekwini, extensive online discussions, and countless calls outside of working hours. Vani's meticulous attention to detail, patience, and subtle sense of humour kept the team motivated through challenges, from re-recording voice-overs to reworking slide presentations for optimal clarity.

We are immensely grateful for her contribution and are confident that the SSA Bridging Course will make a significant impact on coach development across South Africa and the entire African continent.

#SSAEducation #CoachDevelopment #BridgingTheGap #SwimmingSA





Don't Miss Out: Two Essential October Courses with Dion Willis!

Join us for two impactful online courses this October, presented by **Mr. Dion Willis**, newly appointed Chairman of the World Aquatics Referees and Officials Commission (ROC)! Gain expert insights, stay current with the rules, and earn **2 CPD points** per course.

- New Water Rules: Monday, 21 October 2025
- Water Polo Referees Course: Tuesday, 22 October 2025
- Time: 19:00 21:00 (SAST) | Fee: R200 per course

Registration Closes:

New Water Rules: 19 October at 12:00
Water Polo Referees: 20 October at 12:00

Secure Your Spot Now!

- · Register for New Water Rules
- Register for Water Polo Referees

Don't miss this unparalleled opportunity to learn from the best! Book your spot today.

#SSAEducation #WaterPolo #NewRules #RefereesCourse#CPD

Upcoming Events

"Mark Your Calendars!"

October 2025 Preview

- World Aquatics Swimming World Cup Stop #1 – Carmel (USA), 10-12 October 2025
- World Aquatics Swimming World Cup Stop #2 – Westmount (USA), 17-19 October 2025
- World Aquatics Swimming World Cup Stop #3 – Toronto (Canada), 23-25 October 2025
- Africa Aquatics Zone 3 Swimming Championships – Nairobi (Kenya), 16-19 October 2025
- Africa Aquatics Open Swimming Championships, Senior & Junior – Mombasa (Kenya), 21-23 October 2025

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

General Updates - Poolside Chat

Catch Up on All the Latest SSA News SSA Celebrates Global Success

Dive into our official press release celebrating the outstanding international achievements of our athletes and the strategic partnerships powering them forward. A must-read for every fan!

Read More: <u>Swimming South Africa Celebrates</u> <u>International Success</u>

The Road to LA & Brisbane: SSA and Bombela Unveil High-Performance Roadmap

Pieter Coetzé: In His Own Words

Go behind the blocks with Pieter Coetzé! In an exclusive interview, he shares an intimate look at his journey, the hard work behind the glory, and what it truly means to represent South Africa on the world stage.



























A Legend Takes on a New Role!

Huge congratulations to South African swimming icon Natalie du Toit, who has been announced as the new Head of Brand in South Africa for The Laureus Sport For Good Foundation!

Natalie recently joined CapeTalk's Pippa Hudson to reflect on her legendary career and her new mission to drive meaningful change through sport on a global scale. From breaking barriers in the pool to championing hope and opportunity, your journey continues to inspire us all!

Catch the interview on CapeTalk!



Community Spotlight: A Dream Made Reality at Chesterville Pool

This is what community is all about. We are incredibly proud to see our Chesterville Pool featured on Newzroom Afrika in a story that embodies the heart of service.

The story follows a courageous young girl from Mayville whose dream was to swim in a pool, a wish made even more meaningful as her new home was built to fully accommodate her disability. Witness the joy as she swam under the guidance of our dedicated supervisor, Mr. Sipho Langa.

A special thank you to everyone who came together to create this moment of pure joy and belonging.

Watch her heartwarming story

SHARE THE SSA LOVE: Don't forget to **Tag us** on Facebook and Instagram to be featured in our Stories!



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?

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



















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