

## University of Pretoria celebrates Tuks 2012 Olympic Athletes' achievements

By Sanku Tsunke

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*Back row (l to r): Rowing gold medal champions James Thompson, Sizwe Ndlovu, John Smith and Matthew Brittain. Front row (l to r): Deputy Minister of Sport and Recreation, Gert Oosthuizen, Bronze medallist Bridgitte Hartley, and Prof Cheryl de la Rey.*

The team of 32 athletes, coaches and Tuks staff members who took part in this year's Olympics in London were lauded for their achievements at a ceremony attended by the Vice Chancellor and Principal at the University of Pretoria, Prof Cheryl de la Rey, who was joined by the Deputy Minister of Sports and Recreation, Gert Oosthuizen.

The year 2012 has been extremely successful to the sporting fraternity of the University of Pretoria, as demonstrated not only by our Olympic medallists, but also by the University's rugby, cricket and soccer teams.

The rugby junior and senior teams were crowned the 2012 FNB Varsity Cup Champions, while the Tuks cricket team won the South African National Club Championship. Most recently Tuks' soccer team AmaTuks became the champions of the National First Division (NFD) and qualified for the Premier Soccer League (PSL).

South African gold medallists include Matthew Brittain, Lawrence Ndlovu, John Smith and James Thompson, who won the men's lightweight rowing event. Two of the foursome are full-time students at UP, one graduated last year and the fourth took a gap year from his studies. They trained together at the University of Pretoria's High Performance Centre (hpc) over a number of years in preparation for the Olympics.

Caster Semenya, a member of TuksAthletics, came second and won a silver medal in the 800m women's race, while Bridgitte Hartley, also a former student at Tuks, scooped the bronze medal in the women's K1 500 m canoeing event.

Prof Cheryl de la Rey congratulated the Tuks athletes for their contribution to the success of Team SA at the Olympics: "Taking part in the Olympic Games means that you are already an achiever. You have reached the highest level of performance in your sporting code. Winning or not, it is an achievement because it means you are the best, as you managed to qualify for the greatest world sporting event: the Olympic Games," she said.

Prof De la Rey said sports plays the important role of contributing positively towards social cohesion and national pride, creating an environment within which the society can flourish, developing positive bonds amongst people – both young and old – and thereby promoting tolerance and respect for diversity in society.



Back row (l to r): James Thompson, Sizwe Ndlovu, UP's Director of TuksSport Kobus van der Walt, John Smith and Matthew Brittain

Front row (l to r): Deputy Minister of Sport and Recreation Gert Oosthuizen, Bridgitte Hartley, Prof Cheryl de la Rey, HPC Chief Executive Toby Sutcliffe, and UP Executive Director Antonie de Klerk.

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