

# CAMPUS SPORT

2009



## WONDER WOMEN

James Pitman: Around  
the world in 40 days







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COVER PICTURE: Michael Watson



## Professor Mike Meadows, Chair: UCT Sports Council

I took over as chair of Sports Council in March this year. Sports Council has, over many years, most recently under the guidance of the outgoing chair, Professor John Simpson, helped to nurture and develop sport on campus. In trying to make sense of my new responsibility, it seemed a useful time to review and reassess the role that sport plays in campus life, and its potential for further development. This has resulted in, for me and other members of the Sports Council, an interesting, eventful and, at times, challenging year as we have grappled with the task of mapping out a direction for sport at UCT. I fervently hope that a renewed sense of purpose will see

us maintain our commitment to student involvement in the governance of sport, while at once increasing the level of participation by UCT staff and students in the various sporting codes, and developing improved facilities and performances in those sports.

In this publication, of course, we applaud the achievements of individuals and teams who have excelled during 2009. The realisation of excellence in performance is a goal for many of our sports women and men, but we must also celebrate the fact that so many of our students and staff engage in sport and recreation activities at a social and internal league level. The benefits that these participants derive in terms of social and emotional support, not to mention the physical health advantages, should not be underestimated. Sport and recreation can come in many different forms. For example, I would hardly call myself an 'athlete', but my daily (well, nearly, anyway!) runs on the mountain with a Labrador whose unbounded pleasure is so obvious (she is much fitter than I am and can obviously enjoy the exercise more freely!) are food for soul and body alike. To the entire sporting community at UCT: well done on yet another fine sporting year; it is good to feel part of it.

## John Donald, Manager: Sport & Recreation

Sport & Recreation is positioned within the Student Development cluster of the Department: Student Affairs. It is therefore not surprising that sport at UCT is student-centred, and that a great deal of emphasis is placed on the role student leaders play in the organisation and governance of the clubs affiliated to the Sports Council.

This does not mean that our focus is purely on mass participation and recreational benefits only. Many of our teams and individual sportspeople excel in the national arena and on the world stage, as is evidenced by those highlighted in this edition of Campus Sport.

That said, it is also important to note that many of our clubs have extensive, sustained intramural leagues that cater for a wide range of ability and interest, and that while we have some 9 000 students registered for sports clubs, 3 500 are members of the Fitness Centre.





# William Robinson, trail running



William Robinson is a multi-award-winning cyclist and road runner, and a trail-running champion. He was also UCT's Sportperson of the Year for 2008, winning the Jamison Cup for a string of wins and podium finishes in local trail races. That included a win in the 2007 Cape Odyssey with racing partner Dion Middelkoop. Robinson, 28, hardly took his foot off the accelerator in 2009. He finished second in the Addo 100 Miler, third in the Asics X-treme 17km in Montagu and the Fisherman's Trail 20km (bettering the previous race record), second in the Hout Bay Trail Challenge 35km (beating his record 2008 time), second in the Palmiet Trail Run 20km, again improving on the previous race record. His 'worst' performance was a seventh place in the 35km Table Mountain Challenge, not his greatest run, he says. He also won the 80km Puffer Ultra Trail Run, his time of 7:13:56 a new race record. Back on the tarmac, he finished 46th in the Cape Town Marathon, a personal-best time by all of six minutes. (And he didn't forego cycling either, finishing 12th in the A Group in the Argus Tour.)



**You keep a very thorough record of your training runs and races. How many kays have you covered this year? And how many pairs of running shoes do you have these days?**

Running, 2 200km; cycling, 1 600km. I have two pairs of Montrail trail shoes, and five pairs of New Balance road shoes (two are still new). I have already discarded two pairs of old shoes this year (one trail, one road).

**Would you say that trail running races – that is, your rivals – appear to be getting tougher? Do you get the sense that more road runners are heading for the trails?**

Yes, Ryan Sandes has improved a huge amount this year and ran a great race to pass me with 3km to go in the Hout Bay Trail Challenge. The perennial Bruce Arnett had good form to win Addo and the Table Mountain Challenge (both in record time), though I broke his record in the Puffer. My teammate Nicolas Rupanga is a marathon road runner who has done very well in shorter trail races this year (Winter Trail Series, Fisherman's Trail) and may step up to longer events next year. There are some other road runners who have come across to the mountain who are likely to be very competitive with another season or two of trail experience.

**What was your favourite run of the year?**

The Addo 100 was a special race. The National Park is beautiful, and I had never run in that area before. Neither had I run that distance, so it was a doubly novel experience. The organisation was superb, and finishing my first 100-miler was a proud moment. Having said that, Puffer was definitely my most satisfying run this year. That record was something I could only dream of when I first heard of the Puffer in 2000. Eventually it became a realistic goal last year, but it ended up taking two years of preparation to nail it.

**What keeps you going through these long races, when pain and tummy troubles set in? The idea of your girlfriend waiting at the finish line or just the thought of a burger?**

There are various reasons for hurrying through to the end of a race. Certainly, the sooner one finishes, the sooner one can sit down or curl up into the foetal position, as the case may be. And it is perhaps not insignificant that sponsors offer free beer at the end of some of the big races. But it is good to have supporters at the end, and I don't like to keep them waiting. At Addo I felt particularly bad about taking so long as I didn't get in until after 2am!

**How's the body holding up with all your training and racing? Injuries getting more common?**

I have done very



well with avoiding injuries in the last two years. In fact, I remember nothing worse than a tight hamstring and the occasional blister. So I should be able to last a few more years!

**Are there any more trail-running dreams you'd like to fulfil?**

There are many amazing trail races around South Africa which I haven't had the opportunity to take part in yet, particularly in the Drakensberg, the Eastern Cape and the Garden Route. Closer to home, I would like to run the Tuffer Puffer sometime. And of course I would like to race overseas.

**As an athlete and a reasonably successful one at that, are you disappointed – and despondent – at the fracas that surrounded Athletics South Africa this year?**

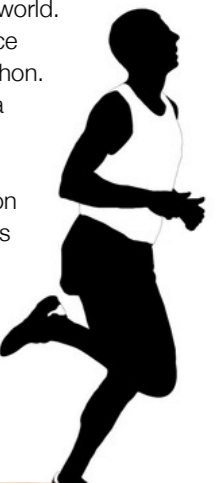
Yes, it is disappointing that the senior management of ASA apparently thought that they could get away with misleading both the government and the general public by falsifying its account of events. The national body was not acting in the best interests of one of its athletes, and was selectively applying IAAF rules. The consequences are disturbing. For many runners, one of the attractions of trail running is that events are organised independent of any controlling body.

**What's the best televised race – road or other – that you've seen this year?**

I don't watch much TV, but Usain Bolt's World Championship 200m (19.19s) (which I found on YouTube) was staggering. Oh, and my tussles with Bruce Arnett (at Addo) and Ryan Sandes (Hout Bay) were pretty good, too. Nothing compares to the Tour de France, though.

**Who are your running heroes?**

Wally Hayward is a legend of South African road running. In the 1950s he was the best ultra distance runner in the world. I grew up watching Bruce Fordyce dominating the Comrades Marathon. More recently, Hendrick Ramaala and Elana Meyer have been SA's most consistent performers internationally. I must also mention Yiannis Kouros who holds various world records from 100 miles to 1 000 miles, and boasts the top four performances in the 246km Spartathlon.





# LUCAS RADEBE, guest speaker, soccer legend and all-round nice guy

Lucas Radebe, born in Soweto in 1969, started his professional soccer career with Kaizer Chiefs in 1989. He made his South African debut in a game against Cameroon in 1992.

In 1994, Radebe and AmaKhosi teammate Phil Masinga moved to Leeds United in the UK. (A move prompted, some say, by an attempt on Radebe's life in 1991.)

He was a member of the South African side that won the African Cup of Nations in 1996, and would captain Bafana Bafana in the 1998 and 2002 FIFA World Cups.

Radebe won 69 international caps, making him South Africa's most capped player. He retired from international soccer in 2003.

Named 'The Chief' by Leeds fans, he captained the London side over the 1998/1999 season, one of Leeds' most successful in recent times. The club finished fourth in the English Premier League that season, qualifying for the UEFA Cup. They went one better in the 1999/2000 season, ending third in the Premier League and earning a spot in



the Champions League. They would make it all the way to the semi-finals of arguably the world's premier club competition.

Plagued by injuries, Radebe retired from professional soccer – and Leeds – at the end of 2005.

During his time at Elland Road, Radebe had been named an ambassador of FIFA for SOS Children's Villages, and received the FIFA Fair Play Award in December 2000 for his contributions to ridding soccer of racism, and for his work with children in South Africa. He is a goodwill ambassador for Hospice and

FIFA Football for Hope, among other organisations.

Radebe is also a sought-after brand ambassador for blue chip companies, including Coca Cola, FNB, Discovery, Aquafresh and Woolworths.

UCT awarded Radebe an honorary master's degree in 2005.

Just recently, the English Football Association named Radebe as an ambassador to boost that country's 2018 FIFA World Cup bid.

# NETBALL, first team

The netball first team's in for an interesting 2010. This year, the side took top spot in both the University Sport South Africa (USSA) B league – with some ease – and the Western Province A league. That means promotion to the USSA A league and the WP Super League next year, two tall orders for the team.

"It's a big jump for them in both competitions," says coach Louise Cameron.

Why the concern?

It's not so much about skill as it is about experience, and the fear that the team's history will repeat itself. In the past, team members graduated just as they'd gained the hard-won

experience to win league titles.

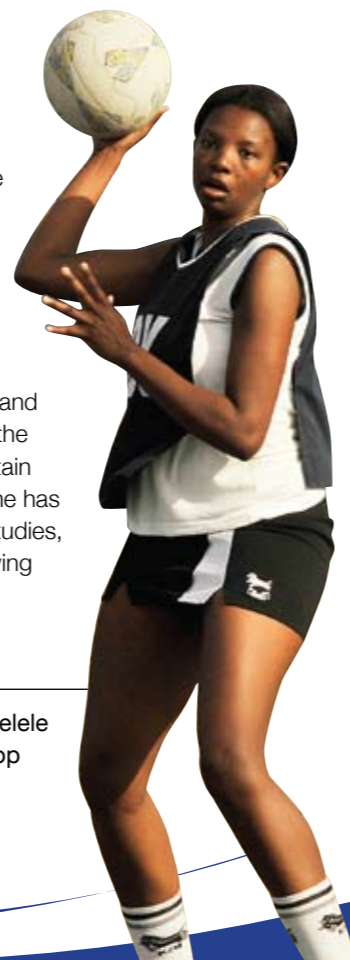
As a result, the team's stints in the top levels have been brief.

And, as yet,

Cameron's not sure what her squad will look like next year. She hopes to keep the bulk of her 2009 squad, which would be a relief. (She's also confident that her B-team players are good enough to step into the shoes of those moving on.)

Among those staying would be 2009 stand-outs like Imam van der Ross and Thandiwe Ngubani. More good news for the coach is that UCT and WP under-21 captain and SA under-23 cap Spehelele Sikhakhane has one more year left of her physiotherapy studies, and will be around to share her ever-growing experience with her younger teammates.

It'll be up to the likes of goalkeeper Spehelele Sikhakhane to keep UCT afloat in two top leagues in 2010.



# ANGUS MORRISON, mountain & ski and a few other things

Much is often made of the tug of war between academia and sport that many aspiring (or just keen) sportspeople at university experience. But perhaps it's even more so in the case of Angus Morrison, named the Most Outstanding Student Leader in Sport at last week's UCT Student Leadership Awards.

It would be trite to say that Morrison, 23, has a busy schedule. "I run around a lot," he says.

Let's start with the demands of his master's studies in physics. He spends plenty of time in the labs at both UCT and the iThemba Laboratory for Accelerator-Based Sciences about 15km outside of Cape Town.

There are other academic demands, such as his duties as class tutor, which come with marking responsibilities.

Then, of course, there's the sporting stuff. This year, for example, he's

chairperson of the UCT Sports Union, the body that oversees student sport at the university.

Though he's a former treasurer of the Yacht Club, of which he remains a member, the UCT award was directed more at his involvement with the Mountain & Ski Club. Morrison's been with the club for five years, serving as conservation convenor, huts convenor (they have a few that need tending and management), treasurer and, this year, chairperson.

With 600 members, it's a sizeable club. What's more impressive, however, is its activity schedule.

The club incorporates hiking, kloofing, caving, bouldering, adventure racing, conservation and, come winter, skiing. Not counting its longer trips – scaling Mount Stanley in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for instance – hardly a weekend

passes that the club doesn't have something going on.

That's not counting the spur-of-the-moment stuff when an inspired member rallies a flash mob to gallop up a hill somewhere.

For Morrison, the conflicting demands mean lots of give and take. He's missed out on some fun jaunts because he had to attend one physics meeting or another, but admits that sometimes the pull of the mountains trumps the books and symposiums.

"Up until this year, I hadn't missed a single weekend trip," he says.

The contest continues.



Angus Morrison (right) receives his Student Leadership Award from John Donald, manager of sport and recreation.

# MARTIN MULLER, rugby

Martin Muller came to a crossroads recently.

He'd been in the professional system since 2008, when he represented Western Province at under-21 level. And halfway through Varsity Cup early in 2009, he received a call-up for the WP Vodacom Cup squad.

The Vodacom summons came as a surprise to Muller. Locks, target-of-choice in line-outs, usually have to bide their time for a spot in the senior sides, and at just 21, although hopeful, he figured he'd have to pay some more of his dues first.

Imagine his delight then when he was drafted into the injury-decimated Stormers squad, making three substitute appearances in the Super 14. Muller, who stands a towering 1.98m, or 6'5", had settled into the Vodacom pace easily enough, but found the Super 14 game a few gears faster.

"I only played half an hour each game, but felt like I'd played a full match," he says.

Given the gift horse that fell before him, Muller put his business-science studies on the backburner

for the first semester. Eventually, he finished only two courses.

At that rate, he realised, "I was going to study for the next 10 years".

So, recently, he deregistered from UCT and has started his BCom degree with UNISA instead.

That way, Muller won't be giving up on his studies, but with a taste for top-level rugby now in his mouth, he understandably doesn't want to back off from his rugby, either.

"Playing for the Stormers helped my game a lot, especially my confidence," he says. "Once you move down again, you feel like you've coped at the highest level."

And who wouldn't want to get back there again?





# JESSICA ELLIS, UCT Tennis Development Programme

Jessica Ellis gets goose bumps when she speaks of the tennis club's development programme.

And going by the way-too-orderly folder – harbouring schedules and fact sheets and plans – she keeps tucked at her side, the project's never too far from her mind. But given its scale, a neat paper trail is a necessity.

At more than 15 sessions over a seven-day week (yes, Monday to Sunday), Ellis (in picture, below right) and a band of club mates host training sessions with what adds up to hundreds of school learners at seven primary and high schools in the Cape Town City Bowl.

And while the order is not too structured – the kids have to have fun, after all – they're not just winging it, either.

After kick-starting the club's long-dormant development programme last year with Cape Town High School, Ellis joined forces with Michelle Whitehead in 2009. A well-known figure in South African tennis, Whitehead had launched an outreach initiative of her own, and invited the UCT club to help out.

Acting as assistant coaches to Whitehead and another coach (who has since left the programme), the students picked up enough of the basics of Whitehead's Play & Stay programme to run the classes themselves. Approved by the International Tennis Federation, Play & Stay still calls for tennis essentials like rackets, balls and (smaller) nets, but foregoes the standard-sized court, often not available at schools.

Initially, the aim is just to encourage the kids to get the ball over the net as often as they can.

"Play & Stay is quite different from other teaching methods in that you're not teaching technique," says Ellis, 24. "You just give the child the opportunity, the net and the equipment, and in time they pick up the technique naturally."

In fact, a few have shown such promise that Ellis and Whitehead are arranging a special workshop for them to pay a little more attention to technique and the like.

One worry, however, is the longevity of the programme.

As other clubs have experienced, initiatives like



these are very personality-driven. And when that personality moves on, the programmes fold.

Which is where that neat folder comes in.

Ellis, now in the final year of her fine-arts degree, is about to graduate. But she's made things very simple for her successor, and, likely, her successor's successor, with her fastidious record- and schedule-keeping.

"Right from the beginning, I was determined that this project was not going to be one of those that just fade out," she says. "It's very important to me that my baby [a laugh] doesn't just stop."

The rewards are too great, she adds. It's chaos when the kids pour out of their classes onto the tennis site, but they're keen.

"You can see how they've improved. They pick it up so quickly."

Ellis, for one, will miss not being there next year. "It's the highlight of my week."

# WONDER WOMEN

## THANDEKILE SEATLHOLO, wheelchair basketball



Thandekile Seatlholo gets hurt a lot. She falls out of her wheelchair even more. But don't worry, it's mostly her own fault. The thing is, Seatlholo, 19, will be the first to confess to an irrepressibly aggressive streak in her wheelchair basketball game. It's a feature of her playing that's spooked rivals, annoyed teammates and – one foul and one yellow card too far – caused coaches no end of vexation. But that hot-blooded attitude has also earned her a spot in the South African women's side that finished a very-impressive third at the Americas Women's qualification tournament in Guatemala in June. Wheelchair basketball started as therapy for the Soweto-born Seatlholo after a disabling car accident in 2000. But her interest and career took off after she

moved to Hope School in Johannesburg, where the game became an everyday thing. Soon she was playing for the untouchable Central Gauteng side and then for a string of maybe-not-so-invincible conference teams. But she found her temperamental home with the SA side this year, where her on-court passion is encouraged. "My captain loves it," says Seatlholo. ("If you don't have a bruise after the game, it means you haven't played," says captain Fahiema Beckles.) The team is still in its infancy, but with a training camp in Belgium, the Guatemala competition and a few other events in the pipeline, Seatlholo gets to feed another obsession – travelling. On-court that may be frowned on, but not so off it. "I just want to see the world," she says.

But she also knows that opportunities are few locally, and that her business-science studies will have to take first place in her diary.

That said, she still puts plenty of time into her life-saving, and is looking forward to the World Games in Egypt in 2010. She's just worried about the timing, as it takes place just before her final business-science exams.

"I'll take the life-saving as far as I can," she says. "But my career has to come first."

## KERRI-LEIGH ANDERSON, life-saving

Kerri-Leigh Anderson takes a very sensible, pragmatic approach to the sometimes conflicting demands of academics versus top-level sport.

She's been doing life-saving since she was just eight, and it's second nature to her now. She gets to enjoy the sunny outside, hangs out with her friends, keeps fit and just has fun.

"It's become a way of life, as opposed to something I think about," she says. "I just go out and do it."

And if she should get into the SA under-23 side, as she's done for the past two years, and gets to travel around South Africa and beyond, great. But she also understands that, life-saving wise, opportunities locally are limited.

She's seen what can be achieved at the very top levels of the sport when she competed against the in-a-league-of-their-own Australians – made up of professionals who make a living out of the sport – in the Five Nations Surf Lifesaving event in Durban in March this year, where she captained the SA side.

She and the rest of the South Africans were in awe of the Australians' flair on the waves, their slick transitions, their all-round, well, breezy Australianness.

"You learn a lot from just being around them," says Anderson, 21.

## JADE ANTUNES, life-saving

Accolades came early this year for Jade Antunes, Nike naming her as one of its Sportswomen of the Year in January.

Since then, she's picked up a few more titles. Antunes, 22, was named the most successful competitor (*Victrix Ludorum*) at the Western Province swimming and stillwater lifesaving champs, was selected as WP captain, and made it into the national women's team that took fifth place at the World Games in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, in July.

Were it not for some inclement surf conditions – she takes part in both stillwater and surf events – Antunes may well have picked up more medals and acclaim.





KERRI-LEIGH ANDERSON

JADE ANTUNES

LAURA BARRETT

JULIA CHEN

YASMIN HANKEL

PHIWOKUHLHE RUBULUZA

JULIA SFARLEA

LAURA IRVING

Things are about to change for her, though. After four years of study, she completes her occupational therapy degree this year, so her schedule is going to change. For example, one of the next two years will have to be dedicated to community service.

But work may not be all bad. No homework, for one.

That means she'll be able to dedicate more time to training. While there've been few scheduling clashes, the occasionally long days doing practicals has meant that she's not always put in the training time she would like to. That impacted, she thinks, on her showing at competitions.

"I've probably not been performing at my full potential," she says.

With a little more time on her hands and the professional support she receives on the Macsteel Maestros programme at the Sports Science Institute of South Africa, Antunes can set that right in 2010.

Plus she's getting older, stronger and smarter. "You learn how to train better, and that it's not always about training longer."

So, come the 2010 Lifesaving World Championship – Rescue 2010 in Alexandria, Egypt, she may well realise at least one of her sporting ambitions.

"I have to, have to, win an individual international medal."

## LAURA BARRETT, water polo

Like many others there, Laura Barrett had a few Bambi-in-the-headlights moments at the 13th FINA World Aquatics Championships, held in Rome over July and August.

Here she was in one of the world's most beautiful and popular cities, appearing in only her second international event with the senior South African water polo squad. The state-of-the-art Foro Italico sports complex – big screen and all – was

unlike anything she'd seen before.

And was that Michael Phelps strolling around the Village Roma09?

In the water, the team had been thrown into the deep end as well. Placed in the 'Pool of Death', South Africa was up against tournament favourites Canada and Australia (who would finish second and sixth respectively).

Barrett had to compete against women twice her size, some sporting Olympic tattoos.

"It's something I couldn't have prepared for because I didn't know what to expect," says Barrett, 23. "The game wasn't just faster, but so much more physical – they were on you all the time."

Just as they'd done at the FINA World League event in Lille, France, two months before, the ill-prepared South Africa – Barrett met at least one teammate for the first time at the opening match – had to settle for the wooden spoon. But Barrett's far from throwing in the towel.

"I just tell myself I'm going to learn from this," she says. "I'm here and I'm

going to play. Even if it is against Australia."

And as coach to youngsters at Rustenburg Girls High School and in the Western Province school squad – with baby sister Nicola, 16, who represented the SA juniors in Russia this year – she has the chance to nurture the next generation of water polo talent.

"I'd like to see those girls, who have that love and that passion for the game and are good enough, carry on from here."

As for her own game, the 2016 Olympics is still within reach, she believes. Then she might just get a tattoo of her own.

## JULIA CHEN, bouldering

Julia Chen scrambled up a lot of trees when she was younger, but thinks her piano training has probably played

a bigger part in her rapid climb – get it? – to bouldering success.

Just two years after first taking up the sport, Chen, 24, has become the top woman boulderer in the country. And this year she's scaled some tricky rocks, earning some seriously high grades, including a 7B+ first ascent. (In the discipline, the Fontainebleau system grades climbs by difficulty from 1 to 8C+.)

Bouldering, for the uninitiated, is done mostly on outdoor rock and without a rope and, unlike sport climbing, without anchors, grips or bolts. And although it is normally limited to very short climbs over a crash pad – to cushion any falls – climbs can go up to eight metres.

So as with any rock climbing, a strong grip comes in handy. Which is why Chen figures she had the upper hand – get it? – on others.

"Playing the piano really strengthens your fingers," says the architecture student.

The appeal of bouldering, she adds, is the novelty of the sport.

"It's always a challenge. There's something new and different every time."

Such as the spot at Red Hill in Simon's Town where, in May, she earned the national open title. Yes, she was pipped by American student Cidney Scanlon, but being the top South African there, Chen took the national honours.

And if climbers want to polish their technique, they couldn't ask for a better outdoor gym than right here.

"In South Africa, the possibilities are endless," says Chen. "There's so much rock, so much potential."

"Even in Cape Town, there are so many boulders, so many crags that haven't been climbed yet."

## YASMIN HANKEL, fencing

Yasmin Hankel probably has more reason than most South African sportspeople to be frustrated with her career.

Others qualify for international competitions but have to pay their own way, or have to settle for just a handful of such events over their careers. But at least they get a taste of sport at the highest level.

Not so Hankel, 21. Ranked as the country's number-one woman fencer in foil in 2008 and 2009, and top junior in 2007, she's been eligible to compete in the International Fencing Association's competitions – including the world championships this year and in 2010 – ever since, but can't because, technically, she's not a South African.  
Born

to German parents in Mexico, Hankel has had permanent-residence status since 1998, but does not hold South African citizenship because Germany does not recognise dual citizenships. (If she'd actually been born on South African soil, things would have been so different.)

"A contemporary problem fashioning from a globalising world," she says.

Loath to give up on her German citizenship – it's her heritage, after all – the fine-arts student has little choice but to take the philosophical approach.

"What can I do?" she asks.

Keep her chin and training up, it appears.

"The challenge is to stay motivated and stay number one," she says. "The title is something worth defending, I think."

To hone her skills, Hankel's started fencing in the men's categories whenever she can, and is now ranked third in that category in the province.

But Hankel's not given up on international competition just yet. She cites the case of Marguerite Langton, a 60-something South African who just recently won her third veteran's world title.

"I couldn't live without fencing and am glad that fencing's something one can do for a long time," she says.

Let's just hope she gets her stab at international glory before she turns 60.

## LAURA IRVING, chess

Being a champion chess player can be a lonely business.

Take Laura Irving's preparation for the upcoming All African Individuals Championship in Egypt in December, to which she'll be travelling with the South African junior side. For this event, much as there was for competitions in Spain and Greece, there'll be plenty of self-preparation.

Oh sure, she'll have a couple of practice sessions with her UCT teammates, but there's little opportunity to meet up with team members from the SA squad, most of whom hail from Johannesburg.

So what to do, then?

"You just get out a book, and work through the puzzles and combinations," explains Irving, 20. "Or you play online."

Online is via [www.chesscube.com](http://www.chesscube.com), where she works out against actual, if distant, opponents. But even that arrangement is far from ideal. You don't see your rival, so you miss out on any telltale mannerisms or gestures that could tip you off to her state of mind.

Also, Irving, who describes herself as an aggressive player, is a tad impatient.

"I just play one-minute games, which is not the same as playing for 30 minutes or an hour," she explains.

Those training shortcomings notwithstanding, Irving earned – while still in matric – the ranking of World Chess

Federation (FIDE) Master.

The All Africa Championship will be just the place for her to go one better. A strong showing in Egypt for the South Africans – among the favourites at the competition – could well see her move up to lifetime International Master.

It may not make training any less lonesome, but at least it'll be a fair reward for all the solitary work.

## PHIWOKUHLE RUBULUZA, dance sport

In many ways, Phiwo Rubuluza's story mirrors that of others in the UCT Dance Sport Club.

Rubuluza, like other club members, only started dancing competitively when she went to university, in her case for the University of KwaZulu-Natal dance club. She competed until she graduated, and has since taken time off – perhaps not by choice – from dancing.

Now in her first year of medicine at UCT, Rubuluza's back on the dance floor. And with dance partner Khaya Jack, she's doing quite well.

She and Jack, competing in the novice section – unlike other sports, you have to work your way up, through four levels, to get to novice level – have won both the Western Province and KZN inter-provincials in 2009.

Rubuluza counts herself fortunate to have found Jack. As the lion's share of her clubmates at UCT are still dancing in the lower four levels, she's had to turn elsewhere for a suitable partner who could compete with her in the novice section.

"Because the man leads, a dance couple is only as good as the male dancer," she explains.

As the most experienced dancer in the ever-growing UCT club, it's not

surprising that Rubuluza has been its standout performer this year.

It's also a club with something of a split personality, operating as two distinct groups: the ballroom and Latin dancers on the one hand, the hip hoppers – who've enjoyed a few successes of their own – on the other.

"You have to make sure you look after the interests of both groups," says club chairperson Vusumuzi Zikalala.

With Rubuluza as the senior dancer in the club, the younger members, regardless of their speciality, may well have found themselves a pacesetter.

## JULIA SFARLEA, sailing

At just over 1.55m and somewhere about a strawweight, Julia Sfarlea hardly looks like your archetypal sailor; you know, rugged, craggy and bushy-bearded.

Well, you've been cautioned about judging books by their covers. Because Sfarlea, 24, has used her slight frame to good effect, in almost no time going from rookie to two-time provincial, 2009 national and, in Durban in 2007, world champion sailor.

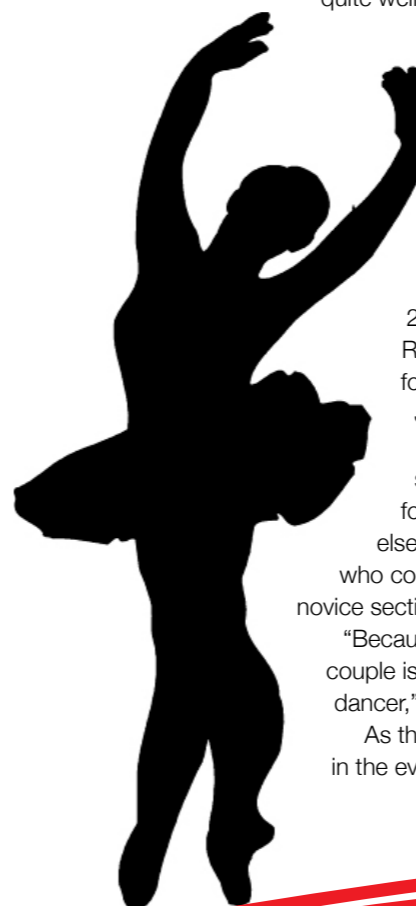
Sfarlea's sailing tale is an unusual one. She was introduced to the sport just a few years ago by boyfriend William Norton – his marketing pitch centred on the Yacht Club's parties – and cut her teeth on two-person dinghies. But at a Lipton Cup after-party she was approached to join Shosholozza skipper Mark Sadler and crew members Paul Wilcox and Gary Sindler aboard the J22-class Orion Express, which comes with a 275kg competition limit for the three- or four-strong crew.

Sfarlea kept the Orion within that limit, but with the edge of that fourth sailor.

"The extra hands make the work lighter," she says.

Sfarlea's modest about her own contributions, but she's played her part in turning the crew into a near-unbeatable outfit, helping them to that national title this year. And winning's become infectious for the once pastime-only sportsperson.

"I've realised I'm quite competitive at heart," she says. "I enjoy being on the winning boat."





# JAMES PITMAN, adventurer alumnus



James Pitman and Mike Blyth have a cuppa.



UCT graduate James Pitman and business partner Mike Blyth made aeronautical history this year by flying their two-seater Sling light sport aircraft – their own design and build – 45 000km around the world. But, in a manner of speaking, it took Pitman a roundabout trip to get to this landmark achievement

James Pitman says he's always loved airplanes and flying, so his 45 000km round-the-world jaunt with business partner Mike Blyth in their self-designed Sling light sport airplane must've seemed like a long time coming.

Pitman started off as a dual BSc and law graduate; by his own admission, an odd combination, but related perhaps of his growing interest in the emerging field of intellectual property. His professional career has followed the same mix-and-match trajectory.

He practised law for a bit, then took seven months off to drive a 30-year-old Bedford truck from Cape Town to London, a pilgrimage he chronicled in the novel *Malachite – A Journey Through Africa*. After which he “knuckled down to six years of graft” as an attorney in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

The perennial adventurer, he took a break from law in 2000 to travel through India for eight

months, and then attempted to drive an Enfield motorcycle from Kathmandu back home to Cape Town. (He got as far as Cairo when “financial, logistical and motivational difficulties” at the Sudanese border scuppered his plans.)

He returned to law, punctuating legal practice with rock climbing, especially between 2003 and 2006 when he scaled the great ‘el Kapitan’ in California in the US, and the Trango Tower high in the Karakoram mountain range in Pakistan.

In 2006 he and a partner started up a uranium-mining business, Pitman acting as corporate counsel throughout Africa for the company, which was listed in London and Toronto. “It was an interesting 18 months,” he says with a laugh.

In 2007, however, Pitman and his partner made a packet when they sold the business.

“Suddenly I was fortunate enough to do what I always wanted to do.”

That being airplanes.

He and Blyth – an equally intrepid type, Blyth, 56, holds a number of flying world records – started up the Airplane Factory in Germiston in Johannesburg. Here they focus their attentions and expertise on the development and manufacture of “high-quality, high-utility” aircraft.

Their first project is the two-seater D6 Sling, a light sport aircraft constructed mainly out of composites.

Pitman, 41, takes pride in the plane’s local-is-lekke’ origins. For once, he says, South Africa gets the better of the deal – no selling low-value materials to Europe or the US only to buy a marked-up product built from those selfsame materials.

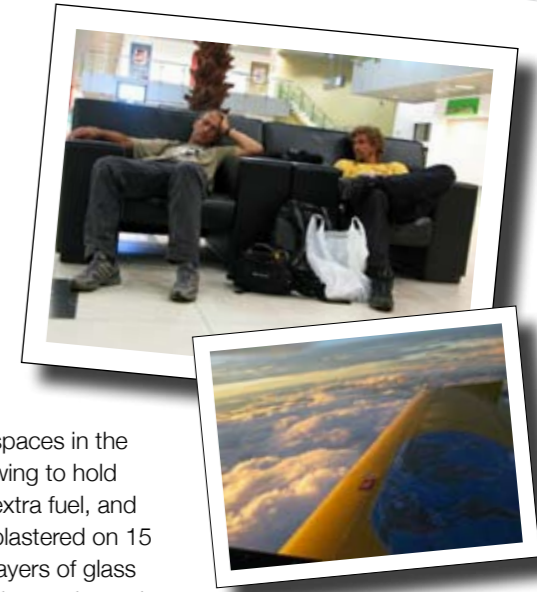
“It’s a totally South African design,” he says. “For me, I get a perverse pleasure from selling a South African product to wealthy US and European clients.”

Given that both are adrenaline junkies, it’s no surprise that the two soon struck on a high-risk plan to market the Sling. They decided to fly it to the Experimental Aircraft Association’s annual convention, EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, said to be the world’s largest airshow – it attracts more than 800 000 people and 12 000 aircraft – and held in Oshkosh, Wisconsin in the US, from 26 July to 1 August.

But once they realised they’d be flying the Sling one-third of the way around the world just to get to Oshkosh, they figured they might as well go the whole hog. It was, they knew, a big ask.

“It’s not customary to fly an aircraft this small that far,” says Pitman. “But we knew that this way we could prove the airplane to ourselves, and to others.”

Modifications were needed, of course. They sealed off additional



spaces in the wing to hold extra fuel, and plastered on 15 layers of glass fibre to the main undercarriage to brace the aircraft, which measures around 6.6m stem to stern.

The journey would take them 39 days and 19 legs, starting on 18 July and ending on 27 August. They covered 45 150km, including some lengthy stretches, many legs well over 2 000 and 3 000km. The longest, from Conakry in Guinea to Belem (Val de Caes) in Brazil, clocked in at just over 4 000km.

“The plane flew unbelievably well,” says Pitman, “sometimes under pretty trying circumstances.”

And even though the limitations of their VHF radio meant they were cut off from the outside world for most of the trip, family, friends and fans would follow their every move via satellite tracking on the company’s website ([www.airplanefactory.co.za](http://www.airplanefactory.co.za)).

As a marketing ploy, the trip worked like a dream.

“I can’t imagine how else we could have created such a response from all over the world,” says Pitman.

“You guys are the bomb,” wrote one fan. “I wanna get me one,” applauded another.

The Sling, Pitman explains, has many uses, from the recreational to the training of pilots to, should the occasion ever arise, the transport of passengers. And it’s upset the industrial applecart, just ever so little.

“There’s resistance in the first world to buying from a country like South Africa, not considered a technical leader,” he says.

Not anymore, perhaps. Now, thanks to their landmark trip, the Aircraft Factory is ready to take off in a big way.





# MICHAEL WATSON, slalom canoeing

Michael Watson figures he should have done better at the three Slalom World Cups he took part in this year.

After winning the SA National Championships in April, he and teammate, 2008 Olympian Siboniso Cele, went up against the best in the world in three World Cups in France, Slovakia and Germany over June and July. Taking part in the K1 slalom event – where paddlers, seated and armed with a double-sided paddle, have to negotiate their way through a string of gates hung over the river – Watson, 21, did not live up to his own expectations.

At his first senior international competitions, he admits he was a little stage-struck.

“I underperformed, and I think that had a lot to do with nerves,” he says.

But perhaps, in his defence, preparation was also an issue. There’s the lack of time that comes with being a third-year mechanical-engineering student.

Also, the courses and conditions in Europe were new to him, and he struggles to find local spots that can match the full, strong rivers that are par for the courses there. That’s essential for the technical discipline required of slalom paddling.

He knows he’s going up against professional, full-time paddlers – “that’s the difference, hey” – but is looking forward to trying his arm against them again next year, should he qualify. And an Olympic appearance remains an ambition.

But for now, paddling remains a fun break from his books.

“It’s a chance to get away and do something different.”

# MICHAEL MALAHE, fencing

There are up-sides and down-sides to a ‘small’ sport like fencing, says Michael Malahe, who made his very respectable South African senior debut this year. One of the pros is that, because of the small pool of good fencers, you can fight your way up the rankings in quick time. The biggest con is the lack of quality sparring partners. “It’s very frustrating to train with the same small group of people for long periods, because it’s easy to get into a rut where we become too comfortable with each other,” says the imposing Malahe, 21, an épéist who at 1.89m (6’ 3”) has a distinct reach advantage over his local rivals. So even though he gets to train with three SA fencers at UCT – Yasmin Hankel, Giselle Vicatos and Jacques Viljoen – what really sharpens

his game is international competition, which he had plenty of at the All African Fencing Championships in Dakar, Senegal, in August, and the World Fencing Championships in Antalya,

Turkey, in September and October. It’s here that experience counts most, says Malahe.



# YUSUF OMAR, sports reporter

Yusuf Omar beat out some salted rivals to win the Sports Journalist of the Year Award at the 19th Sanlam Awards for Community Press in September.

The largest of South Africa’s annual 32 press competitions, some 145 community newspapers took part this year. No fewer than 945 individual entries were judged in this year’s competition.

Omar, 20, had been nominated for his monthly commentary, *Sports Talk*, for *Muslim Views*.

“He writes with a maturity well beyond his years and handles the tools of his trade - words - with skill and alacrity,” noted one reporter afterwards.

A keen sportsperson and fan, sports writing is not too much of a stretch for Omar. He admits to consuming sports pages - anything he can find online - by the dozen.

“It’s a lot of fun writing about something you love,” he says.

“The back page is often my front page.”

While he’s eyeing a



career in political journalism, Omar understands that sports journalism is no less demanding than any other kind of reporting.

“It requires the same skills and insights,” he says.

# RICHARD COLBURN, squash

Richard Colburn has a thoughtful take on squash. For example, he enjoys the demands it makes on players. “It combines strategy with physicality,” says the 21-year-old commerce student. “You’ve got to be technically and tactically aware, and you’ve got to be strong enough.” It seems he’s mastered all three elements and, after three successive SA under-19 titles, he’s now the top-ranked student squash player in the country. This despite UCT’s premature exit from the University Sport South Africa championship

because of swine flu. Colburn regrets that he can’t pay more attention to his squash – his dad, for instance, played full time for a while – as he’d like to improve his national ranking. He may get his opportunity now that dad’s agreed that he can complete his final-year studies over a year and a half. For one, he’s already started his preparations for next year’s world student games, where he finished 16th this year. Colburn’s looking forward to the challenge. “You’re pretty much one-on-one in a confined space, and it inevitably leads to confrontation,” he says. “That’s the beauty of squash.”





# New initiatives



**S**ports & Recreation launched two new initiatives this year. The first was Learn to Swim, a programme to teach students some basic swimming skills.

Held

in the remodelled swimming pool alongside the UCT health centre, lessons ran from February to April, under the guidance of Swimming South Africa-accredited instructor Deanne Deary. The second initiative was a disability sports evening, hosted in collaboration with UCT Disability Service and the League of Friends of the Blind. The evening featured two sports - wheelchair rugby and goal ball. South Africa's national

teams demonstrated how the games are played, and spectators were challenged to join them for both sports. The event aimed to create awareness of disability sports among both disabled and non-disabled people, and to bring the disciplines and athletes closer to the mainstream sporting arena.

## BRENDAN GLIDDON, rowing



**B**rendan Gliddon became the toast of the schools-rowing circuit when he coached the SACS First Eight to top honours in the 2km sprint race at the 2009 Schools' Rowing Championships in Pretoria, an event that had 31 schools competing in 199 races over three days in March.

That win – the first for a Western Cape school – plus first spots in the sprints at the Buffalo and Selborne regattas in East London in February cemented the SACS crew's standing as the best in the country for 2009. It's just reward for the hours of training the learners put in, says Gliddon, 24,

chairperson of the UCT Rowing Club and coach of the Western Province under-19s. "At the start, I asked them what they wanted to do, and they said they wanted to win everything. And I reminded them that whenever they trained they had to keep their goal in mind."



## ERNEST AND NICOLAAS LOUW, brothers in judo

**F**or two brothers who compete in a contact sport, there's surprisingly little sibling rivalry between Ernest and Nicolaas Louw. Maybe that's because they save any aggression for the judo mat, where they've both made their mark in 2009. Big brother Ernest (in picture), 22, represented South Africa in the under-81kg category at the world university games, aka Universiade 2009, in Belgrade, Serbia, in July. In turn, Nicolaas, 20, who fights in the under-73kg section, has been named to travel with the SA senior side to the Commonwealth Judo Championship in Singapore in January 2010.





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