



>> Message from John Donald, manager of sport and recreation

While this publication quite rightly focuses on the outstanding achievements of teams and individuals engaged in high performance sport, we should equally be celebrating the wide spectrum of activities on offer and the depth of the programmes involved.

The health of sport and recreation at UCT should not only be measured at the high end of the participation continuum.

Our clubs are to be congratulated on the fact that they generally cater for all levels of participation. A snapshot of the intramural league programmes reveals such statistics as: 30 hockey teams, 34 soccer teams and 20 rugby teams.

In addition netball, tennis, squash, water polo, cricket and basketball all offer structured internal leagues. Add to this mix the regular requests from faculties, residences, societies and other agency groupings for purely social sport.

The newly established Fitness Centre on middle campus already boasts a membership of some 2 500, a number increasing by the day as the news catches on, which further underlines the need to make provision for a healthy lifestyle as well as for those that aspire to achieve greater sporting prowess.

Another new development this year was the renaming of the South African Student Sports Union (SASSU) as University Sport South Africa (USSA). ■



>> Guest Speaker: Ray Mali

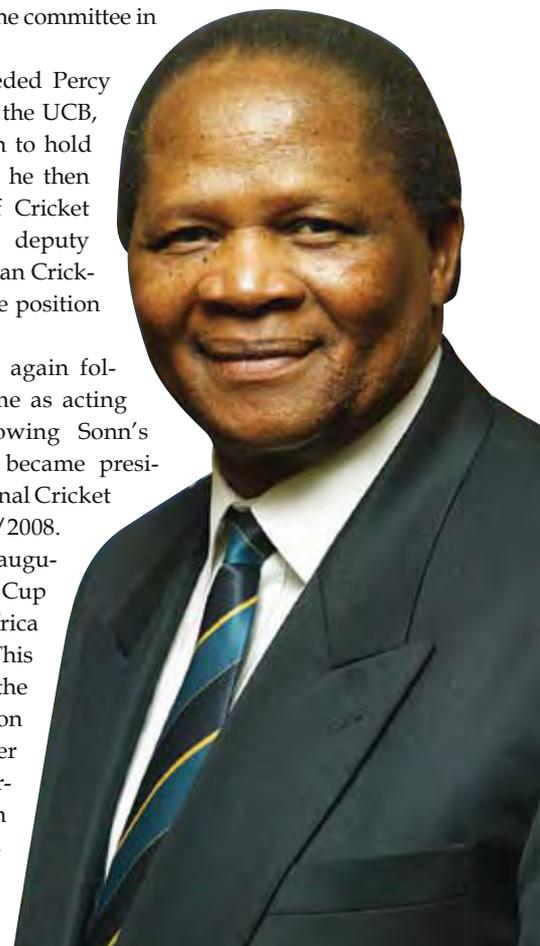
A teacher by profession, Ray Mali is a skilled administrator and a moderniser in South African cricket. He shook up the old provincial structures, was a leading advocate of Twenty20 cricket, broke down old barriers and ensured there were equal opportunities in the game. He is a pioneer of the SA cricket franchise system, and welcomed the representation of the SA Women Cricket Union on the Board of Directors in CSA.

An administrator since the 1960s, he managed representative sides after South Africa's readmission to the international fold in the 1990s. He served as a member of the executive of the Eastern Province Cricket Board from 1991 to 1996, and of the Border Cricket Board from 1996 to 1999. In 2000 he became president of Border Cricket Board and was also a board member of what was then the United Cricket Board (UCB) of South Africa. He successfully headed the committee in cricket development.

In 2003 he succeeded Percy Sonn as president of the UCB, the first black person to hold the position. In 2005 he then became president of Cricket South Africa, and deputy president of the African Cricket Union. He held the position until 2007.

In June 2007 he again followed Sonn, this time as acting ICC president following Sonn's sudden death, and became president of the International Cricket Council in July 2007/2008.

The successful inaugural Twenty20 World Cup was held in South Africa during his tenure. This was followed by the successful introduction of the Indian Premier League, where international players from different countries could play in one team. ■



>> Antunes rescues German medal



Lifesaver and swimmer Jade Antunes' coffer of trophies is filling up fast. The third-year student in occupational therapy added a bronze medal from the World Rescue Championships in Germany in July, where South Africa finished fourth overall, to her collection.

So far this year, Antunes has harvested around 30 medals in provincial and national championships. Her season's highlights, however, came at the German Cup in November 2007, and the more recent World Rescue event. These were her first outings in SA colours.

"Both tours provided me with the opportunity to gain experience," she says, "and although I was not happy with all my results, the experience has definitely helped me grow and allowed me to not only work towards future goals, but also learn what I need to do in order to achieve them."

Back home, Antunes cites a bronze medal in the open surf swim at nationals as memorable, as it was her first medal since moving up into the open category when she turned 19. Also worth noting was her selection as WP captain again. ■

>> Running the gauntlet

Apologies to the men in the UCT Athletics Club, but the women yet again hogged all the glory and medals. (We'll not count Will Robinson for now.)

First they won the Men's Health Lighthouse 10km road race - UCT's fourth win on the trot. And again they dashed up grassy knolls or across muddy fields better than any other club, taking the Western Province 8km cross-country league for the second year running.

(For good measure, the B team also won their section.)

One of the club's star performers was Amy Aronson, selected for the WP track, cross country and road teams. And, says coach James Evans, her time at the Knysna Half Marathon was definitely respectable.

(The other standout was - representing the men - Jeanre Rossouw, WP Senior 100m and 200m champion.)

But Aronson had plenty of good support from her UCT teammates, notes Evans. It's the team's depth that saw them to those cross country and Men's Health titles.

There's also plenty to look forward to by way of competition in 2009. Western Province Athletics is introducing an overall league for track, road and cross country. Taking the combined men and women's scores, UCT would rank joint first in cross country and would feature in the top four in track events. And they wouldn't need to do a lot in a proper league to do well in the road races, either.

"They must aim to win that [new league] and can," says Evans.

But a little back-up from UCT would be necessary. Evans has a list.

Some more money would be nice, of course. A new training track wouldn't hurt, either. (Somewhere where the runners won't bounce off touch-rugby players or have to dodge soccer balls. But not necessarily something "state-of-the-art" that'll break the bank.)

And maybe a little TLC.

Given the national wail following the country's dismal showing at the Olympics, Evans doesn't think it's asking too much.

"We can't run a major Olympic sport on the current basis," he says. ■



A few runners in UCT's winning women's team - Sarah-Jane Beckett, Megan Beckett, Amy Aronson and Ineke Nel. (Picture courtesy of James Evans.)

>> Keeping the wheels turning

Not too long ago, the UCT Cycling Club boasted a well-sponsored, professional team of cyclists that could hold its own at local races. But as students graduated, the club lost its star performers, a feature of many sports clubs at UCT. This may explain its less than glittering showing at the USSA championships, hosted by nearby University of Stellenbosch in July. UCT finished fourth overall in the men's road race, and fielded only one cyclist - Susan Melmed - in the women's category. UCT didn't leave the event empty-handed, however. Oli-

ver Munnik, one of the club's more senior members and its top performer in the road race, won the mountain biking event. Kristi Jooste and Lara Hopp took fourth and fifth places respectively in the women's event. Respectable results, given the hole the club was in last year, says Melmed. And the team's enthusiasm more than made up for the dearth of silverware. "We were really chuffed to take part, and everyone trained really hard," says Melmed.

Oliver Munnik earned UCT's only win at USSA.



>> New coach lends grit to team

The first word Cricket Club administrator Kobus Olivier uses when you mention the first team's new coach is "brilliant".

"He's absolutely brilliant," Olivier stresses.

He's talking about Hylton Ackerman senior, South African cricket legend and father to HD Ackerman, who takes over the coaching reins for the upcoming season. Poor health means Ackerman can only spend about two days a week with the side, but he's more than happy to be working with a squad of up-and-coming talent again.

"It's my passion," he says. "There's nothing I like more than coaching young cricketers."

Ackerman also has a game plan in mind. For one thing, he's already looking ahead over the first team's upcoming season, always tricky as



players come and go - either caught up in exams, leaving for home after classes come to an end, or getting provincial call-ups. (Two of the side's best players have already been drafted into the first-class Western Province amateur side, for which Olivier is one of the selectors.)

The team's waning fortunes in the club competitions are unparadigmatic, believes Ackerman.

"Varsity should win the club competition," he says. "Not only do they get good school players, but they also field so well and they're so vibrant. They have this fantastic talent."

Ackerman's waiting for the first game of the season, against newly-promoted Northern Goodwood, to get a feel for the team. His players have done most of their nets indoors, training schedules stymied by the long rains. First-team captain Dean For-



Cricket chairperson Travis Townsend, Hylton Ackerman and Martin Walters.

word agrees with Ackerman that the side should be doing better than it's done over the past two seasons, when they failed to win any silverware.

"We've always underperformed given the teams we have and with the talent that comes into varsity cricket."

But a "super keen" Ackerman may be just what the team needs to get them back on track.

"He's not a disciplinarian or anything like that, but he challenges us," says Forward. ■



>> Belting his way to the top

Muya Koloko only took up ju-jitsu in 2003, but a regimen of four to five training sessions a week appears to have paid off. In August this year, Koloko became only the country's 26th Shodan (the first in a series of black belts) in the discipline, known as the martial art of "softness". He's the first African to achieve the rank, and the first person in eight years to be graded for the belt in South Africa. "It's fun, and it's a challenge," says Koloko. "You have to channel the right balance of aggression and care when you train with other people, and there's a lot of personal baggage that the individual will sort through. It's like your best friend and your rival all in one." Now comes preparation for the next belt, but that should take at least two years. Koloko's getting an early start. He's off to Denmark at the end of the year to train with a few masters. ■



When replacement Wayne Denne took over at the beginning of 2007, he had an almost brand new squad. UCT finished fourth. But Denne had obviously set the right tone, and this year that exact same team tied for first place with Western Province Cricket Club A, missing out on the title only by WPCC's better goal difference. (And they trumped Maties 5-4 in Stellenbosch along the way.) The side had also won the WP indoor tournament at the beginning of the year. "There was a really awesome

Asides: UCT student Eugene Pelteret captained the touring South African under-21 hockey side that took on Pakistan early in the year. Following that, Pelteret was again selected to skipper the side at the All Africa Games in Cairo in July, where they successfully defended their title.

>> Good job

The high point of the year for Mikhaila Job came at her last event – she landed gold and silver medals at the SA Judo Championships in Port Elizabeth in July. The gold, won with her partner, came in the U20 Kata, a prepared set of movements that has very specific requirements. She followed that up with a silver medal in the seniors' division. The judo Shodan – first black belt – did her shoulder some harm in that final, though, and looks likely to be out for a while still. (There's an op looming.) But it won't

keep Job off the mat. She has her sights set on improving her USSA finish this year – third – and picking up a second black belt in 2009. Mom and dad, who run a judo club, would be proud. ■



>> Born again

Call this the comeback year for UCT hockey. After some time in the doldrums, the men and women's first teams rallied strongly in 2008. But perhaps "doldrums" is too strong a word. The men's run of four successive WP Grand Challenge titles, ending in 2004, couldn't go on forever, after all. Not when the club has to deal with the annual post-graduation exodus of senior players from its ranks. (More often than not, those players join UCT's rivals.) And then coach Pierre le Roux departed in 2006.

team spirit and vibe this year," says captain Matthew McConkey. "And as clichéd as it sounds, every player played for the guy to his left and right." (Denne had also brought an extra dimension to McConkey's game, says the captain.) The women's rebirth has been even more remarkable. Once the only club in the Grand Challenge to even consider giving the almighty University of Stellenbosch team, crammed with national players, a run for the title, the women had fallen well off the pace in recent years. In 2007, they finished a dismal seventh in the league. It was up to McConkey, taking over as coach from Adam Wilson in 2008, and a squad of new players to restore the team's good name. They did just that in 2008, even matching Maties for bonus points – if not overall points and goals – to finish as runners-up. How? Firstly, McConkey worked hard to get his squad fitter and stronger, and changed their mental approach. He also broke the game down into a simple but effective pattern, and brought an element of enjoyment and fun back into the game. The players did the rest. "As is typical of all UCT sport, the results were due to the team," says McConkey. "Every player stood up to be counted at different stages of the season." Expect more good news in 2009. ■

>> Weighing in with new gym

It didn't take students long to find their way to the new UCT gym/health centre – right across from the new artificial soccer turf – when it opened its doors on lower campus in early May.

The first thing anyone who's used the old weights room in the Sports Centre would've noticed is that there's a lot more elbow room in the new venue, even though some 800 students had already signed up for the club by that first week.

"It is very impressive," said deputy vice-chancellor Professor Thandabantu Nhlapo when he first visited the facility.

Apart from the weights room, the treadmills and all the mainstays of any modern gym, the aim is to give students access to a one-stop health centre, explains manager of sport and recreation, John Donald.

So, for example, the Kopano squash courts have been integrated into the centre. A beach volleyball court will be up soon. The outdoor 25m swimming pool will be heated in winter, and can accommodate everything from swimming and water polo to scuba



diving. A specially demarcated and suitably shallow area has even been included for beginners' swimming classes. The gym will also feature its own climbing wall. Qualified instructors are at the gym at all times, and will run spinning and aerobics classes.

The facility is not just geared towards the gym rats, either. To make it more attractive to women and lifestyle users, the gym has been stocked with plenty of machines that target aerobic fitness.

The centre is open on weekdays between 06h00-21h00 and between 08h00-19h00 over weekends, during term times, with floor instructors on hand to give advice and encouragement. ■



>> Freedom swim

Fifteen members of UCT's Aquatics club took a dip in the 2008 Cadiz Vista Nova Freedom Swim, in which about 200 swimmers braved the icy waters to cross from Robben Island to Bloubergstrand on 27 April. Launched in 2001 by the Vista Nova School, the swim marks Freedom Day in South Africa. Swimmers take to the water at Robben Island, then "escape" to the Atlantic coast, a hardy 7.5km swim. The real challenge though is not the distance, but the icy water, say swimmers. The swim is known as the world's "toughest cold water endurance event", with temperatures dipping as low as 12°C. Even so, UCT Aquatics did pretty well. Team Sweet Deal of Rodney Armstrong, James Todd, Jason Jamieson and Lee Hill won the relay event, while the Armchair Pirates of Cole Acutt, Rowan Dunne, Hugh Jacobs and Stephen O'Rahilly



placed third. All but one UCT swimmer, who had to pull out a mere 100 metres from the finish because of hypothermia, finished the gruelling challenge. The solo race was

won by ex-UCT student and Paralympic star Natalie Du Toit, who managed to beat last year's winner, Tyron Venter of Pretoria, by almost five minutes. ■

>> Getting out

UCT sports clubs have a proud track record in their work with local communities. The Mountain & Ski Club is no exception.

For the past few years the club, working hand in glove with the South African Education and Environment Project's Asanda Lugalo, have been giving local kids a little introduction to the wild outdoors. This year, for example, the club has taken around 15 grade-10 learners - age groups vary each year - on a series of outings, including hiking and climbing sessions.

The hikes range from the easy (a contour path from Constantia Neck to Kirstenbosch scores 2/10), to the tough - the final one up Table Mountain with a 10kg backpack merits an 8/10. There's also a gruelling march up Devil's Peak as well, a 10.

Each year, the club and children go through the same phases, explains Stephan van der Watt, who holds the outreach portfolio and has been involved in the project since 2006.

"In the beginning, they've got this form



of nervous anxiety because they have absolutely no idea what this programme is about," he says. "After the first meet, they feel as if they've accomplished something really big by going into the forest, going through a rough time (being exhausted by going up and down hills on the hike), but at the end realising that it was something truly amazing and they've accomplished something which initially seemed impossible to do."

Sore feet or not, the kids stick with the programme. About 90% of those that join the

group at the start of the year are still there at the end. (The biggest dropout rates come after the first meeting, where the commitment needed from them is spelt out.)

The project introduces the kids to new adventures and places, even ones they've seen every day. Like Table Mountain, where they enjoy a hike and a sleepover.

"They always comment that they've always seen Table Mountain standing on its own, but they never thought that they would actually walk to the top," says Van der Watt. ■

>> Yacht Club maintains Lipton showing

The UCT Yacht Club matched their bar-setting 2007 performance by finishing sixth in the centenary Lipton Challenge Cup, which took place in Table Bay from 24-29 August. Not bad for a bunch of students, as Lipton attracts some of the best and most experienced sailors in the country. There was still some disappointment for skipper William Norton and his shipmates, though, as the team was in fifth place until the final day of the six-day event. (Quite a few races were scrapped because of conditions.) "That would have been our best position in recent years," said team manager Steven Rhodes. ■

The young UCT sailing team goes head to head with the country's best at the Lipton Challenge Cup.



>> Knight protecting Queen

UCT sports administrator Frans Mamabolo (Knight) joined the South African student team as manager for the 10th World University Chess Championship in Novokuznetsk (Siberia), Russia, in March. Here he shares some of his experience in the land of Lenin, ballet and more chess legends than Bobby Fischer would have cared to remember.

At the beginning eight students were selected, which included UCT's own chess star Jenine Ellappen. However, Jenine and five other students were unable to travel for financial and academic reasons. So the team at the end consisted of myself and two students, one from Wits and the other from the University of Limpopo.

Even before I left, my colleagues gave me a name that would be easier for the customs officials in Russia - Frans Mamabolov.

Arrival in Moscow was the start of the cultural shock. English was spoken minimally, and we ended up using a lot of sign language.

Everybody was looking at us, and later it dawned on us that we were the only blacks in and around the airport. After being stared at for eight hours in Moscow, we boarded a flight to our final destination, Novokuznetsk.

When we arrived, the temperature was a nippy -23°C. We could not even speak for shaking, and we had to be whisked onto the bus. In Novokuznetsk it was snowing, from day one until we left the area.

People kept staring at us, and everywhere we went people took out their cameras to take pictures of us. And, of course, there were those who resorted to James Bond tactics and used hidden cellphones to snap us.



At some supermarkets there would be people queuing to have their shots taken with us. At first it did not bother us, but it became so hectic that we were unable to walk 100 metres before someone stopped us for pictures.

We were on different TV channels every night that we were in Russia.

As for the chess, it did not go well for our SA guys. It was like fighting a snake in its hole.

The Russians were ruthless in their game, they did not spare anyone. However, China did give them a run for their money. In the end, Russia won all the sections, followed by China and Mongolia.

There were 12 countries participating and we were the only country from Africa. We finished 11th.

Even though we did not win, we gained a wealth of experience. And some bruised egos as we thought we knew how to play chess.

And certainly the Russians won't forget the SA group that hit the dance floor and had everyone looking. Again.

Russia is a large and beautiful country, with many in-



teresting places to visit. One place we visited was a steel factory that was set up during World War 1. It was massive and covered about 5km.

Russian people are nice and I think many of us don't know that, because when we think of Russia we think of the Cold War era and of people who are suspicious and take no nonsense. ■

>> Surf's up

The UCT Surf Club made waves at the 2008 USSA championships, held at Seal Point in Cape St Francis in July, winning both the men and women's categories. This marks the first time UCT's pulled off this feat, and follows on the men's triumph in 2006. What's happened, explains the club's Chris Bond, is that some very good women surfers have come into the club over the past year. Good thing, too, as it demanded a team effort to see the women to the top of their category, with Kerri Anderson getting the highest individual finish, third. It took some doing for the men to win their event as well. Bond and Josh Sallie, first and second, respectively, in 2007, were

UCT's sole representatives from the semi-final stage onwards. In the end, they had to take the two top positions to see UCT to a win. Which they duly did. Only this time, Sallie won and Bond was the runner-up. ■



>> Olympic low

As our Paralympians snapped up medal after medal in Beijing, UCT sports scientists at the Sports Science Institute of South Africa were dissecting the dismal performance of Team South Africa at the Olympics.

Our athletes had faced an ambush, with insufficient armour, weapons, or strategy, said Dr Ross Tucker.

The problem lay with sports structures that marginalised coaching expertise and misunderstood the need for a scientific approach to sport.

For example, the SA Olympics team had departed for Beijing without a sports psychologist on board.

"The Olympics is too big an occasion to get away with this," said Tucker.

Having fallen well short of SASCOC's 10-medal hopes, it was the country's worst Olympics performance since re-admission in 1992 - and since 1936.

"We [sports scientists] don't want to stand on the outskirts," Tucker said. "We want to be involved in the diagnosis and the development of a vision for 2020."

And while many African and personal-best records had been smashed by our athletes, Tucker said that unless we begin to invest in those athletes now, it is unlikely that any would make a final in London in 2012.

But talent isn't the problem.

"We have good young athletes and potential medal winners, but they will be lost over the next four years because there is no structure to feed them into."

He advocates a simple, inclusive strategy: match the best athletes with the best coaches and provide real financial support and a thoroughly intellectual approach.

South Africa, he said, marginalised its expertise.

"Our best 800m coach is working in a Virgin Active gym as a personal trainer."

It wasn't enough to emulate the Australians with their Australian Institute of Sport, a government-funded centre that pools the world's best coaches, sports scientists and elite athletes.

"When you copy someone you're always behind them. We want to be ahead."

Professionalism is the key - and investment in intellect.

Tucker and Professor Tim Noakes have put together a strategic vision for maximising the potential of high performance sport in the country by 2020.

"We can't allow our sport to slip into mediocrity," noted Noakes, Discovery Health professor of exercise science and sports medicine at UCT. "The time is now and we have to change it." ■

Looking ahead: Dr Ross Tucker: "We [sports scientists] want to be involved in the diagnosis and the development of a vision for 2020."



>> On their way



The women's soccer team has again trumped their Western Cape rivals to earn a spot at the USSA competition, to be hosted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal in early December. UCT was undefeated and conceded just one goal in their entire regional campaign. Leading from the front were senior players like striker Linda Brickhill, goalkeeper Zoli Ndondlwana and defender Tara Weinberg. The side's biggest hurdle lies ahead, though. Last year, they nearly had to bow out of the USSA tournament because of shortage of funds. But one way or another, says captain Cassie Clark, they're getting to Durban. "Even it means selling ice cream on Jammie Steps like we did last year." ■

>> Green, green grass of home side for Hall

Once the R5.5-million project is completed, UCT will boast the first FIFA-accredited artificial soccer turf in the country.

It's been a long and complicated process, bedevilled by a long winter. The natural grass had to be removed, the ground prepared and a drainage system installed. That was followed by the installation of the turf - a rough polypropylene base topped by a layer of crumbed rubber and a specially-prepared sand to hold the artificial grass in place.

The lines are precision-cut into the carpet.

The final effect is very similar to natural grass, without the wear and tear - or maintenance - that comes with the years.

"The advantage of having artificial turf is that it allows for extended use, particularly during winter," explains John Critien,

>> John Simpson looks back

Professor John Simpson steps down as chair of UCT Sports Council this year. Here he writes about recent developments in UCT sport.

What are the changes that we have noticed in sport at UCT over the years?

The most obvious is the recent improvement in facilities. By the end of the year, we will have seen in excess of R20 million being ploughed into a new fitness centre, improvement of the swimming pool to meet international standards, and an all-weather artificial-surface soccer field and surrounds.

Add to this, the recent upgrading of the hockey field and the support by way of sports bursaries, and it's evident that sport is now truly recognised as being an important element in the everyday life of a student, and that it has a role in attracting students to choose UCT as a place to study.

But this hasn't always been the case. For some while, UCT has lagged behind other universities in terms of its commitment to sport and leisure.

Other changes, which go some way to explaining this recent increase in support for sport, include considerable growth in students using our facilities at a time when the trend among youth is exactly the opposite; fewer school-leavers continue to play sport than before.

We believe that today nearly half of all our students are active in sport, and that this is because the range of sports codes which we support – over 40 – is quite remarkable and certainly exceeds that of any other university in South Africa.

Add to this the huge growth in intramural sport; at last count, there were nearly 150 teams regularly competing in 10 of these sports codes.

We have also seen improvement in performances in a much wider variety of sports at local, national and international level, and in doing so, UCT hasn't fallen into the trap of recruiting outstanding sportsmen and women simply to ensure success, especially in the "high-profile" sports. Instead, they have steadfastly maintained their commitment to ensuring that sport is for real students who meet their entrance requirements like all other students.

Indeed, this commitment to the ethos that "sport is for students" has permeated UCT sport over the years, and it has been borne out increasingly in students' role in managing sport. Here again, we have seen significant advances in a number of areas.

Examples include the initiative in achieving funds to own assets such as land by the Mountain and Ski Club, an ocean-racing yacht by the Yacht Club, and expensive boats by the rowing club, to mention but a few.



We have also seen an increasing involvement in outreach programmes by clubs, again driven by students themselves. Some have been so successful that their provincial sporting associations have passed the development responsibility on to the UCT club. Other clubs have generated and supported clubs in disadvantaged communities while some, like the soccer club, have adopted local schools.

But probably the biggest challenge which UCT sport has faced in recent times is the need to transform and here, too, we have seen remarkable change by sport in general and by the clubs themselves, evidenced by the very representative composition of the current Sports Union Executive.

And all this very responsible change, based on sound UCT principles, has undoubtedly given rise to the increased acceptance of sport as an integral and important part of UCT. ■

executive director of Properties and Services. "There has been a resurgence of the popularity of footie as we approach 2010, and this is to be encouraged."

Despite off-season maintenance, with some 35 soccer teams jumping and sliding and running across the turf, the current fields get a thorough working over each year.

"The field just gets kicked to pieces," says John Donald, manager of sport and recreation.

The new artificial turf requires little attention, and is durable enough to be in constant use without damage. Twenty-four hours a day even, suggests Donald.

The R5.5 million comes courtesy of the Notes Levy Fund, a levy that students pay to cover the costs of course material and lab notes, which had accumulated over the years before the move to course-based fees.

"Council decided that these monies could, by application, be released only for projects that would strictly benefit students as a whole," explained deputy vice-chancellor Professor Thandabantu Nhlapo.

As well as the main field, a new five-a-side field will be built in the place of the old reservoir, and a new underground water tank



is being built above the field. The embankments, seating and fencing will also be overhauled.

Imported from Belgium, the artificial turf was installed by accredited BEE company Artificial Grass Africa (AGA), who will be assisted by FIFA officials.

"This FIFA-accredited field will allow for a six-fold increase in playing hours, eliminate all natural grass maintenance, resting and repair, and of course it will not require the three million litres of water a decent grass soccer field needs every summer," says Pierre de Groote, CEO of AGA.

"It will be of a standard suitable for international teams to play on." ■

>> Hitting the trail



William Robinson could not be blamed if he was confident going into the Cape Odyssey, the hottest new thing on the trail-running calendar in South Africa, where he and teammate Dion Middelkoop triumphed in 2007.

Consider his three emphatic wins in the run-up to the event – in the 80km Salomon Puffer, the Hout Bay Challenge and, maybe not so emphatic, the Crazy Store Table Mountain Challenge. These and a few other good finishes pushed him into second spot on the national Montrail-Capestorm Ultra Cup rankings. But the five-day, 200km Odyssey, run from Hermanus to Stellenbosch, is another ballgame altogether. It's fast becoming the most talked-about trail race, drawing the country's top runners. (And some celebrities – this year, Bafana Bafana stars Mark Fish and Mark Williams signed up.) "The multi-day aspect is interesting because it introduces more scope for tactics," says Robinson. "While each stage is a self-contained race, it is essential to keep the subsequent days in mind and moderate one's effort accordingly." It's also a team event – both runners have to finish together – so it takes some synchronising. "It's essential to look after one's partner as well as oneself. It only takes one teammate to go through a bad patch of a few kilometres for a team to lose a lot of time, and the challenge will be to cope with such scenarios as efficiently as possible." Even should he not win, 2008 will still count as a remarkable year for Robinson, who "retired" his racing bike to concentrate on running, particularly trail running. But not before he landed the Cape Argus Pick n Pay Cycle Tour/Two Oceans Ultra Marathon Trophy for the best combined times in this year's events. ■

>> Chess queens

Talk about the luck of the draw. As the lowest-ranked player (number 1 895) at the World Women's Championship in Nalchik, Russia, in August, the hapless Anzel Solomons found herself across the board from defending world champion and Grand Master, Xu Yuhua of China. Solomons wasn't flustered, though.

"I was well prepared and looked forward to playing against her," says the 30-year-old master's student in public law. "In South Africa we don't often have the opportunity to play such strong players." Solomons came within a whiff of causing a major upset, pushing Xu to a draw in the second of their two games. That was enough to get the media and the online bloggers buzzing.

"Throughout the game I ignored the fact that I was playing the women's world champion and focused only on the next move." But Solomons was disappointed to let a few winning opportunities slip through her fingers. She'll have a chance to make amends, however, when she represents South Africa at the 38th Chess Olympiad in Dresden, Germany, in November, alongside another UCT player, International Chess Master Jenine Ellappen. Ellappen, 22, has had to pull out of a number of 2008 events, primarily to fit in her honours-year business-science studies. ■



>> Dancing up a storm

Dinatsohle Keebine and Phillip Monatisa are novices to the dance floor, like many in the Dance Sports Club at UCT, an offshoot of the UCT Ballroom Society. So the level-one pair's first big win, a regional competition held in Retreat at the end of August, was particularly memorable. Especially as they only joined forces around March or April. Monatisa, 20, a second-year BSc student, has some dancing in his blood – his dancing-partner parents had long been pushing him towards the discipline, although he only took it seriously when he joined the UCT club this year.

Keebine, 18, doing first-year medicine, had also been nursing an interest in ballroom and Latin dancing for some time, but UCT was her first stab at it. "When I got here, I thought, why not try it out," she says. Their match-up came by chance. Monatisa's four former partners had all "managed to vanish" on him, while Keebine had been pretty much a one-woman show at practices. Then one night, Monatisa was left stranded again and so he took to the floor with Keebine. "It's been magic ever since," he says. So much so that they took top honours at their first competition, a Cape Town event, in early August. And the club's named them as its Outstanding Dance Couple of the Year. Monatisa loves the competition, the spotlight, the beautiful people, and the grooming that comes with the sport. But more than that, he says, "it's about learning the art of discipline, patience and efficiency". ■

>> Pipped at the post

Once the memory of those dying moments of the 2008 FNB Varsity Cup are put aside, the UCT Rugby Club will remember the tournament as its coming-out competition.

Hardly even mentioned when favourites for the inaugural event were first listed, no-one's likely to make that omission again. These are, after all, the upstarts – seeded eighth – that saw off archrivals University of Stellenbosch 38-32 in an early clash, knocked out the much-trumpeted Pukke of North-West University in the semi-final of the tournament, and then came within a whisker of clinching the title against a Stormer-bolstered (enough said) Maties.

They made their mark, for sure. Champagne rugby and a brace of tries earned them the coveted Team of the Tournament nod, allowing them to match Maties' Cup-winning purse. (Their game lived up to the tournament's tagline – "Rugby that Rocks" – said event patron Francois Pienaar.)

Matt Turner was the tournament's top scorer with nine tries, teammate Marcello Sampson the runner-up with eight.

"... the outstanding legacy of the 2008 Varsity Cup Ikey Tigers is the evidence they provided that through the application of attitude, hard work, enterprise, innovation and self-belief, UCT rugby can become the envy

of all the rugby-playing universities in South Africa in the next few years," said Professor Tim Noakes, Discovery Health professor of exercise and sports science at UCT, one of the behind-the-scenes expert called on by the rugby club. (He was there until their very last game of the season.)

But the Varsity Cup took its toll on the first team. By May, many of the players were feeling jaded.

"The guys are beginning to feel tired," said captain JJ Gagiano in May.

The Western Province Super League became almost an afterthought.

Interviewed at the end of the season, both coach John Dobson and captain JJ Gagiano admitted that, standing next to the glitzy Varsity Cup with its generous sponsors, wall-to-wall crowds and television coverage, the WP Super League paled somewhat.

The plan for 2009 is to keep something in the tank for the Super League, said Dobson. ■



>> Rugby club: 125 years

The FNB UCT Rugby Football Club celebrated its 125th anniversary in style by launching a commemorative book in July.

Titled *Varsity Memories*, the 72-page publication was released on 5 August and contains a historic record of thoughts, photographs and memoirs from various sources. The book celebrates the pantheon of provincial and national rugby stars who once donned Varsity colours, with notes on the history of the club, its greatest rivalries, heroes and good memories, and transformation and future plans.

It features reflections from the likes of Leonard Kaplan, the late Louis Babrow, longstanding patron Pat Tebbutt, Robbie Fleck and Doc Cecil Moss.

John le Roux, chairperson of the 200 Club, a support base of alumni and friends, believes that the rugby club has an enviable track record, having produced more than 60 Springboks over the years.

"We thought it was something to celebrate," he said.

At the event, Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price was welcomed as the club's new patron, an honorary role in recognition of his title. "He believes that UCT should not only be an outstanding academic institution, but should also offer outstanding sporting experiences," said Le Roux. ■

>> Staff Notes



- Prof Eric Bateman, running in the colours of Varsity Old Boys, took it easy in the Two Oceans 56km Ultra Marathon this year. Not just because he was battling the flu, but in crossing the line in six

hours and one minute, Bateman collected a Blue Medal, the final piece in his Two Oceans collection. Over his 29 ultras since 1971, Bateman's picked up two Golds and 15 Silvers, Sainsbury and Bronze medals. And now, of course, that Blue.

- Sue Wright, an administrator with the Centre for Legal & Applied Research, ran her 10th Two Oceans race – five ultras plus five half marathons – with daughter, final-year law student Michelle. Even bet-

ter, both ran in UCT colours, a first for a mother-daughter pair, according to coach James Evans. Michelle finished her first Two Oceans run in 02:14, mom got home in around 02:31.

- Prof Kevin Bennett (below right) of the Department of Mechanical Engineering won the green jacket at the annual staff (and spouses) Ron's Mug competition at the Rondebosch Golf Club. Bennett beat



Prof Del Kahn of the Department of Surgery in a count-out, while auditor Guy Murcott was third on 37 points, one behind the winners. The competition is named after the mug – duh – donated by the late Ron Allen, a UCT staffer, in 1991. Kate Brown (aka Mrs Hugh Amoore) retained Kate's Jug, awarded to non-UCT employees, for the sixth straight year.

- Prof Wayne Derman travelled to Beijing as team physician for the South African Paralympic squad. Derman had also headed up the medical teams for the Sydney and Athens Olympics in 2000 and 2004.

- This year saw the release of *Bob Woolmer's Art and Science of Cricket*, which UCT's Prof Tim Noakes penned with the late former Proteas coach and UCT scholar Dr Helen Moffett. The aim of the book, said Noakes, was to explain both the hows and whys of cricketing technique. ■

>> The fine art of fencing

At the end of a busy year-long sojourn in London, fencer Jacques Viljoen, 20, beat all comers at the Aldershot Senior International Open in England in January. The fine-arts student, currently ranked number one in foil in South Africa, went up against a score of English and European fencers at the A-grade event. His most difficult fight came in the quarterfinals, when he knocked out a former British champion.

"Up to that point he had eliminated all the other high-ranked fencers for me and I had a fairly easy path to the final," notes Viljoen. But Aldershot was just one of a train of competitions for Viljoen over 2007, which included a packed Junior World Circuit. There were even a few results that he thought more rewarding, such as third spots at another A-grade event in Wales, against a larger field and stiffer competition, and at the All Africa Games. But Aldershot stands out, and not just because it was his first international win.

"The tournament really sticks in my memory because I was extremely sick in the morning and almost pulled out," he says. "I think the fact that I was not feeling well forced me to slow down, relax, have no expectations and rely more on tactics than speed, which is my usual strength." Those lessons may come in handy. Viljoen's heading for the UK again at the end of the year for another three-month stint there. His eyes are on the big prize, though. London 2012. "Everything I do, and have done, is focused on the 2012 Olympic Games," he says. It's going to take some doing, though, and plenty of time. (His lecturers have already advised him to give up the sport.) But that's not stopping him. "I can and will do it."

Another UCT fencer in the news this year was Giselle Vicatos, 19, who travelled to Italy for the Junior World Championships in July. Alas, Vicatos didn't quite live up to her aspirations – aiming for a spot in the top 64, she had to settle for 68th place instead. She's taking the cup-half-full approach, though. "Even though I didn't achieve the goal that I had set for myself, I am not too disappointed, because the amount of training and, especially, experience fencers from other countries are exposed to is a lot more than a South African is exposed to." There were some highs at the event, though. Like her comeback win against a Hungarian rival after being just one point shy of defeat. ■



>> Sailing: Gareth Blanckenberg

It's hard to imagine that Gareth Blanckenberg, 2007 UCT Sportsperson of the Year, could have topped his sailing performances last year.

Blanckenberg, breaking the stranglehold women had on the UCT trophy in recent years, won gold in the Laser class at the All Africa Games in Algiers, co-skippered the winning boat in the Lipton Challenge Cup, and was a crewmember on the UCT boat that won the SASSU sailing games.

Well, by all accounts he hasn't slowed down at all. He won every race in the Laser Standard Class to take top honours at the Action Bolt SA Laser Class National Championships in Richard's Bay in July, and as helmsman he steered Dalys Insurance of Theewater Sports Club to its third successive Lipton Challenge Cup in the event's centenary year.

By all appearances, then, Blanckenberg is equally adept sailing on his own, which he does more often, or when joining a crew. When pushed, he admits a preference for the former, though. (If only just.)

"I enjoy being self-reliant, and obviously there is so much more for you to do on the boat," he says. "That said, Lipton is a nice departure from what I usually do, so it is always a good challenge."

While he's sailed with the UCT team at the USSA events, for Lipton Blanckenberg's been a fixture on the Dalys boat.

"With the boat and crew we have, we are always going to be in the hunt for the win, and we prepare accordingly," he says.

The financial support of Dalys Insurance helps give the team an edge – from preparing the boat's hull to buying new sails and equipment.

The seasoned crew doesn't hurt, either. Co-skipper Greg Davis, for example, has some 20 Liptons under his belt.

"We have years more experience," says Blanckenberg, "which is critical in, one, knowing how to tune the boat; two, keep it racing fast at all times; and, three, ensure the correct tactical decisions are made at all times. Well, nearly all."

Blanckenberg's in a reflective mood about his future. A recurring back injury ruled him out of possible spots at the World Championships in Australia in February, and maybe even Beijing. And he's due to graduate in December.

So he's not sure if a globetrotting sailing career, as he did for seven full-time years straight after school, is quite where he's headed.

"They were very good years, but I am currently seeking some new challenges from life."

And, taking his cue from 58-year-old John Dane who represented the US this year, he has plenty of time for that Olympic berth. ■