

CGA Artistic Swimming TC Report Back 2021/22

Following a successful Olympic competition for Johannesburg based Team Phoenix Artistic Swimming High Performance Coaching Center, I was approached in October 2021 to help restart Artistic Swimming in CGA.

My wife Vicky Drinkwater, who coached the Olympic team, and I are passionate about the sport and immediately embarked on a specific strategy to grow Artistic Swimming not only in CGA but also in the country.

Our main goal is to promote the sport as a recreational sport at schools and clubs in the district, focussing on show days and creative events over the next few years – specifically non-competitive. One of our initial roles is to facilitate and assist schools and clubs to be able to offer and coach Artistic Swimming.

Our overall strategy can be summarised as follows:

1. Introduce the sport using our elite athletes to new swimmers
 - a. We held Olympic Encounters in Johannesburg, Pretoria and Durban – approximately 100 swimmers and coaches attended.
2. Focus on recreational artistic swimming – mass participation for fun
 - a. Introduce the sport to schools directly
 - b. Currently 2 schools are now offering synchro as an extra mural
3. Train local coaches at schools and clubs
 - a. The first recreational beginner coaches course will be held on 2&3 July.
 - b. 2 Coaches have already completed the SSA Level 1 Coaches course.
4. Introduce individual coaching on request through Team Phoenix – both Johannesburg based and Nationally
 - a. Almost 2 dozen swimmers are currently being coached both locally and nationally.
5. Approximately a dozen new registrations are expected this year

We have made good progress in the past 8 months, setting up the processes and programs to enable this to happen. There are several new Artistic Swimmers now being trained with many more to come.

Results:

National Age Groups:

In December last year 2 swimmers who attended our Olympic Encounter in October were inspired to return to the sport. Kenzie Malan (Age 10) won the 12 and Under Figures and Jadi and Kenzie Malan won the 12 and Under Duet competition after just a few weeks of intensive coaching.

SA Nationals:

Vicky coached a number of routines for CGA and other provinces, earning first place finishes in all but one category which was a 2nd place. Vicky also coached the first ever Mixed Duet which competed and exceeded expectations. Laura Strugnell achieved the top routine score of the competition.

Laura Strugnell was selected for the SA Team for World Champs for Technical Solo. Laura and Ayrton Sweeney (KZN) were selected for Mixed Duet.

World Champs:

Technical Solo:

Laura set a new highest score for SA at 68.1 (previous highest in 2013 was 62.4), an excellent achievement. Laura is only the 2nd South African athlete ever to attempt this difficult routine internationally.

Mixed Duet:

The undoubted highlight and most eagerly anticipated of all the SA team routines was the Mixed Duet. With huge support from fellow competitors and spectators, Laura and Ayrton scored a superb 63.6 missing finals by just 0.9 of a point. Coach Vicky Drinkwater was congratulated by many national coaches and FINA representatives for a superb routine and complimented for her excellent and clever choreography and excellent use of Artistic Impression. The routine was unique in that Ayrton was a rank beginner swimming with an Olympic athlete. With only 4 months of training, their performance was remarkable.

CGA is fortunate to have both the SA Olympic Coach and an Olympic athlete as resources and we will take advantage of these skills to grow the sport in the district.

It takes about 4 to 6 years (depending on the age of the swimmer) for a beginner to reach SA Nationals standard. In this light the CGA plan for Artistic Swimming needs to be seen as a long term plan. The challenge Nationally is that swimmers are often rushed into competition without mastering the basic skills. This results in lower performance levels as can be seen at various competitions. Our aim is not to rush athletes into competition but prepare them properly so that when they do compete they set and raise the standard.

I'd like to thank the CGA Executive for their tremendous support, Yusuf in particular, and look forward to a productive and successful year ahead.

Dave Drinkwater

Chair: Artistic Swimming TC