



WINNING ATTITUDE BRIAN GRAY

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“Hard work beats talent if talent does not work hard.”

By Wilhelm de Swardt

Brian Gray (Hoërskool Menlopark) will never forget these words of wisdom spoken by Ryk Neethling, the South African Olympic swimming medallist, some years ago.

Last year in July, while he was in a training camp in Hungary, Gray was again reminded of the importance of these words when he saw for himself the intensity with which Chad le Clos trained.

Gray was privileged to share a lane with Le Clos during one of the sessions and this gave him an opportunity to get to know South Africa's swimming sensation. His contact with Le Clos served as extra motivation for Gray who is now beginning to reap the rewards of his increased hours of training.

At the recent A-division Inter-High Swimming Gala he won three gold medals and was awarded the Senior Victor Ludorum award for a third time.

But Grey's own performance at the gala is not the only thing that excites him. It is when he starts talking about the performance of the Menlopark team that he really becomes excited.

“Menlopark did not only win overall. Both our girls' and boys' teams were victorious. It was the first time in the history of the event that the Menlopark boys' team managed to win the team competition and I am proud that I could be part of their success in my matric year.



It was an awesome day. Of the seven trophies on offer Menlopark won six.”

At last year’s South African age-group gala Gray won four gold medals, but his fourth place finish in the 200 m individual medley at the South African Senior Championships gave him even more satisfaction. He was, after all, competing against the ‘big boys’ and it was a confidence booster for him to be able to hold his own against them.

Gray is not obsessed with fast times and records. “I swim to enjoy myself. The only thing that matters to me when I compete is to give my best and if I manage to do that, I am happy. Nobody could ask for more.”

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Gray grins when he recalls how his swimming career began.

“I have an older sister who is also a swimmer. I tagged along when she trained or competed and ended up irritating my mom with my complaints about being bored. Eventually my mom could no longer endure my whining and decided that I should also start swimming.”

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the national championships as a 10-year-old and won six gold medals. It made me realise that swimming might just be the sport for me.”

Gray admits that last year’s training camp in Hungary was a real eye-opener for him. “It was definitely the hardest I have ever trained for two weeks. I think we swam about 136 km in total.”

“It was a definite highlight for me to get to know Chad le Clos. We shared the same lane on day one and I was pleasantly surprised to see how humble he is. He constantly wanted to know whether I was OK and he gave me some helpful tips all the time.”

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made time for his fans. There were about 50 small kids who all wanted photos taken of themselves with Chad and he obliged every time without complaining once. He is actually willing to talk to anybody about anything.”

Gray faces a bit of a dilemma because he is so multi-talented.

“I should love to continue swimming competitively but I am not sure if it would be possible. I am planning to study to become a chartered accountant and it might be difficult to put in the long hours of studying as well as swimming.”

“If I should find that I am not able to cope I might have to tone down on my swimming



until I have completed my studies, but it will certainly not mean that I am quitting swimming for good. I will still train and compete but maybe not at such a high level.”

“Last year, at the World Championships in Barcelona, Giulio Zorzi proved that it is possible to make a comeback after completing your studies by winning a bronze medal in the 50 m breaststroke. Perhaps I can do the same.”

Gray is also a talented sketch artist who loves to do portraits with a difference.

“As an artist I don’t believe in doing the usual ordinary sketches. I was actually quite tempted to rather study art, but I realised that there was no real money to be made as an artist. I decided that it would be better to just sketch as a hobby. It relaxes me.”