

## **Shining the spotlight on some of South Africa's most deserving sports talent**

### **Sports tournament for rural kids finishes with an inspiring award ceremony**

The prestigious Transnet Rural and Farm Schools Tournament was a huge success with learners, coaches, and sports officials. But what made the event so special and a humbling experience for all involved was seeing first-hand the excitement on the faces of the youths. "Coming from a rural area, the children were so excited to be in the city. For some, this was their first time here" said Bakamela Raj, a teacher from Mabela Intermediate School.

This annual sporting event began with over 22 000 learners across South Africa only to be whittled down to a mere 2 000 entrants who were competing in this year's three day long National Tournament. Teams came from Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, North West, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape.

The festivities kicked off on Monday, 23 September 2013, with the opening ceremony featuring inspiring speakers and entertainment, finishing off with a spectacular fireworks display.

Tournaments for netball, football, athletics and – recently introduced for its benefits for cognitive development – chess, took place over the past three days. These games were played by girls and boys between the ages of 13 and 19, all of them coached by trained staff.

The tournament concluded with a gala dinner and prize giving on Wednesday, 25 September 2013.

Many awards were given out during the ceremony. Best province of 2013 was given to the Free State, second place went to KwaZulu-Natal and third place to Eastern Cape.

The Free State once again shone during this tournament. Their teams dominated the chess category and walked away with gold medals for the under-13, under-15 and under-17 teams. Both the girls and boys football teams in the under-17 age group were awarded with gold medals. The under-17 netball team from the Free State also secured gold.

Even though the Free State had the most medals in the athletics category, KwaZulu-Natal walked away with a whopping 22 gold medals!

Other provinces were also under the spotlight – Mpumalanga won gold for their under-13 netball team and Limpopo secured gold for their under-13 girls and boys football teams, as well as the under-15 girls' football team.

As a result of this tournament, children participating in this programme have been presented with opportunities that they normally would not have had access to without Transnet Foundation's assistance.

This Tournament has grown and become a rewarding opportunity for all those involved. Now in its eleventh year, and proudly holding its own, the event was attended by dignitaries, sport celebrities

and Transnet executives all in full support of South Africa's rising sports stars at the Boksburg Stadium.

While South Africa is rich in sporting talent, much of its potential talent sits undiscovered and remains to be identified, nurtured and developed into the heroes of tomorrow. But Transnet has made an effort to turn this around using the Tournament as a starting ground for many of these youths.

Studies have shown the positive impact of team sports on the development of young people. Overall, they do better academically, and are more likely to matriculate, get a tertiary education or learn a trade and find jobs. Children who participate in these group activities attend more school, get into less trouble and are closer to their community.

With this in mind, the Transnet Foundation felt obliged to go the extra mile and use their expertise and resources for the social benefit of all South Africans. They used money from their budget to launch this programme in 2002, specifically targeting the more rural and isolated areas, by providing these youth with opportunities and the chance to be all they can be.

To help learners and their caregivers focus on competing and enjoying their time, the Transnet Foundation has provided transportation and accommodation for all the participants – 20 schools per province in all seven of our provinces for the duration of the event.

Bakamela Rai, a mathematics teacher from QwaQwa, has been involved with the Transnet Rural and Farm Schools Programme since it started, having been trained as a coach, Bakamela reports that “the children themselves noticed an improvement in their focusing abilities, they mentioned that they're able to concentrate better and have improved reasoning capacity” – these are benefits from playing chess.

Annually, Transnet spends between R140 million and R160 million directly through the Foundation and the other R20 million through other divisions.

In our new democracy, South Africa needs young adults who have these values. By just granting these youths the remarkable and rewarding opportunity to show South Africa their talent, and their ability to grow and succeed, they are already benefiting the future of South Africa.

For more information on the Rural and Farm Schools Sport Programme, please contact Sibusiso Ngomane on 078 098 9546 or visit [www.transnetfoundation.co.za/csi-portfolios/sports.html](http://www.transnetfoundation.co.za/csi-portfolios/sports.html)

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Issued on behalf of the Transnet Foundation.

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