



The South African table tennis open was held in Secunda from the 24th to the 30th of June. The 2018 edition of this event saw team Gauteng Central make great strides into becoming a dominant force in South African table tennis.

In the **u13 section** Michael Nmah, Muhammad Patel and Nigel Mavuwa won bronze medals in the boys team event. They had a nail biting semi-final against Cape Town, where the outcome was decided by a match between the two eventual singles finalists. Michael Nmah lost the very tightly contested match against Cape Town's Nur Van Dyk 2-3, 15-13 in the fifth. The u13 girls team of Esther Nmah, Batsesana Moopi and Hannah Levy performed very well, but were unfortunate to lose in the quarter finals.

The combination of Esther Nmah and Hannah Levy won bronze medals in the girls section, losing to a rather noisy pairing from UMG. Michael Nmah and Nigel Mavuwa lost in the quarter finals of the boys doubles. On the finals doubles night, Gauteng Central had a set of twins win silver medals in the mixed doubles, as Michael and Esther Nmah lost narrowly in very tense final. (The coach, who happens to be typing this, won't mention anything about the wonderful umpire from Cape Town who refused to correct a mistake he had made, even after it had been pointed out by numerous people in the crowd.)

Finally we get to the singles. Hannah Levy and Nigel Mavuwa lost in their respective quarter finals, while Batsesana Moopi and Muhammad Patel lost in the round of 16. All of our u13s made it into the last 16 of the tournament. Esther Nmah won a bronze medal for the girls singles after losing in the semi-final to her nemesis from UMG, Kailey Reddy (appropriately nicknamed, "The Screamer!!"). Michael Nmah won silver in the u13 section. He played 2017 finalist Luthando Tromp in the semi-finals. Michael absolutely crushed him, with game scores of 11-1, 11-1, 11-4 ! Michael lost to Cape Town's Nur Van Dyk in the final.

In the **u15 section** Dean Levy, Joshua Sachs, Dj Swanevelder and Khulekani Nxumalo lost in the quarter finals of the boys team event. It was wonderful to see the boys come alive and show great spirit with Joshua making "Come ooon!" very popular, as well as Dj learning to shout "Cho laaaaayyyyy" and turning something meant to sound like Mandarin, into something very Spanish. The 15 girls team consisting of Mbali Masitseng, Belinda Ncube, Sanele Nkabinde and Sithembile Buthelezi won bronze medals! We are very proud of these young ladies. Three of the team members had never played in a South African open before. This was an amazing achievement for the u15 girls!

Doubles showed that the u15 boys are capable of far greater things next year, with Dean Levy and Joshua Sachs winning gold in the boys section! After a ridiculously tight semi-final, Joshua and Dean

destroyed the pair they played in the final. A massive congratulations to these two boys. Dean Levy paired up with a young lady from UMG to win another gold medal in the mixed doubles. Joshua Sachs and his partner were knocked out by the eventual winners in the quarter finals.

The u15 girls were well represented in the singles with all of the girls getting out of the group stages. There were 5 girls who made it into the last 16, Belinda Ncube, Esther Nmah, Basetsana Moopi and Hannah Levy. Mbali Masitseng made it to the quarter finals!

The u15 boys section saw two big upsets in the round of 32 with both Dean Levy and Joshua Sachs losing their respective matches. Dean the number 1 seed for the tournament, came up against one of his South African team mates while Joshua lost a tight match to a boy from KZN he had previously beaten in the team event. Michael Nmah, one of the u13 players, made it to the quarter finals where he lost to the eventual champion of the u15 section, Refai Yaghya from Cape Town.

The **u18 section** was by far the most improved age group, with both ladies and gents earning bronze medals. This was especially significant for the boys u18 team (considering that they all get to go back again next year) as the u18 boys team of 2017 were knocked out in the group stages of the tournament. The 18 boys lost in the semi-final to the eventual winners, Cape Town, in what was a very hard and well fought match. Our boys were exceptionally competitive against a very strong team with the whole Cape Town team belonging to the National side. The u18 girls lost in the semi-final to silver medalists Eastern Cape. Laila Edwards showed her pedigree by winning all her matches.

The combination of Lerato Moopi and Laila Edwards won a bronze medal for the u18 girls. These two young ladies also won bronze medals in the ladies senior event winning two bronze medals for doubles!

The singles for the ladies saw Laila Edwards performing well again, making a quarter final in the u18 girls section. Mbali Masitseng and Lerato Moopi both made it into the last 16. Very well done to these ladies! The u18 boys saw Dean Levy losing to his compatriot Siphoo Boo in the round of 16. Tshepo Majoe also played exceptionally well to make the last 16 of the section. Siphoo Boo performed very well, losing in a quarter final match against national player Keenan Jooste.

We are exceptionally proud of ALL the juniors! The majority showed exceptional dedication to training leading up to the South African open. We finished with the following being ranked in the top 20 of their respective age groups.

u13 Boys

2. Michael Nmah
17. Muhammad patel
18. Nigel Mavuwa

u13 Girls

- 4. Esther Nmah
- 6. Hannah Levy
- 9. Basetsana Moopi

u15 Boys

- 2. Dean Levy
- 13. Joshua Sachs
- 17. Michael Nmah

u15 Girls

- 5. Mbali Masitseng
- 10. Esther Nmah
- 11. Basetsana Moopi
- 16. Hannah Levy
- 20. Belinda Ncube

u18 Boys

- 6. Siphoo Boo
- 8. Tshepo Majoe
- 19. Dean Levy

u18 Girls

- 5. Laila Edwards
- 10. Mbali Masitseng
- 11. Lerato Moopi

We would like to say a special thank you to Tevia Sapire and Mubeen Hadjee for their tireless efforts preparing the children in the lead up to the South African Open, as well as their dedication to the kids while in Secunda. It takes very special, dedicated and selfless people to be able to accomplish what you two gents did! A personal thank you for all the sacrifices, both financially and time related, that you two biscuits make!

In the senior section, Danesha Patel won yet another title, winning the Gold medal in the senior lady's event. Danesha Patel and Chetan Nathoo were unfortunately not able to defend their mixed doubles title, losing a very tight match in the final. They ended up with a silver medal. Chioke Osuji won a bronze medal with his partner in the mens doubles.

The mens team won a bronze medal losing to the South African University team in the semi-finals of the team event.

The team really could use a manager in future who looks after the entire team, not just a management side consisting of a player and coaches. It would be wonderful to have someone dedicated to looking after the best interests of the entire team, who has also been involved in the planning of the event. Relating to this, the seniors need to be included in the build up to future events. The seniors should have training sessions from the Gauteng Central coaching staff, where they prepare the team for the event. If we are going to show that we are serious about our sport, we have to take ownership of training the entire team, not just juniors. Gctta's responsibility is not solely to juniors, but seniors as well. If we are going to see the whole of Gctta grow, we need to get everyone on board, moving in the same direction.

The accommodation was adequate for the team, supplying us with a bed to sleep in. From a managerial side, the setup was not ideal for looking after a squad of children. The girls and guys were split, but left the managers and coaches being unable to monitor players after they had been sent to their rooms for the evening. As much as possible, men were kept separate from women, however, it was not possible to monitor this the entire week, and by the end of the week it seemed that there were men staying in designated lady areas. This did cause a few issues in the team, where parents had a few concerns as to the safety of some of the younger ladies at night. I would like it if in future, especially for team spirit and safety, that the whole of the Gctta team stay together. Would make managing the side a lot easier.

It would not be fair to leave out that the eating in the morning and evenings was a real pleasure. The food for the most part was great. Eating in the same area and room as the rest of the teams allowed a fantastic opportunity for players to get to mix with fellow players from other provinces. The only real downfall with the eating arrangements was that there wasn't enough provision for the kosher portion of our team. This should also be addressed for future tournaments.

Overall the tournament was well run. There were issues during the week that were well dealt with by the staff running the tournament. They ran the schedule effectively, making sure that we didn't have any ridiculously late nights (as opposed to 2017 men playing the round of 16 at 2.30am). We would like to say a massive thank you to the team of umpires and referees responsible, they did a fantastic job!

We were curious at the beginning of the week as to who had inspected the playing premises prior to the commencement of the tournament, as it could never be suitable for any children to play in a bar area with very poor light. The children were then moved during the week into a hall with tumble driers and washing machines to play the early rounds of their respective sections. The SATTB would need to find out who was responsible for this oversight. In order for the best possible table tennis to be played, players will need the best possible playing conditions to showcase their skills.

As a Gctta Team we would like to thank all the people responsible for helping us get to the South African Open, as well as the support from some of our very generous parents. It was heart warming to see how the table tennis community supported each other making possible for all our players and coaches to participate.

A special thank you to Mrs Swanevelder, Mr Nmah and Mr Mavuwa for your financial contributions and helping the team look snazzy! We really appreciate the time and effort it took for you to help the team at such a late stage. It was fantastic to see our parents get involved and take ownership of helping the team.

A big thanks to the whole Executive committee in the various different ways they helped, however Mr Volkwyn, Mr Maharaj and Mr Salie need thanks for their time and effort leading up to the tournament. We would also like to thank Mr John Ojo Tunde for his generous donation which helped get players equipment.

We would also like to say a massive thank to Tlou Technologies, Df Holdings and Mr J Maphosa for their sponsoring of our kit.

Overall Team Gctta had a successful tournament. We now begin the long, tough and strenuous journey to prepare for 2019. We will continue to grow and improve for next year!

Jonathan Wernich