

17/March/2012

Dear Management Committee of SATSA

The week of the Winter World Transplant Games 2012 Anzere, Switzerland was one of the happiest weeks of my life. And I owe each of you a very big thank you for giving me the go-ahead to participate in the event and for funding my participation. I really appreciate it.

The games were held in the beautiful resort town of Anzere in the Swiss Alps. The drive to the town was spectacular with towering snow-filled mountains lining the road. We arrived in Anzere on the evening of Saturday March 3<sup>rd</sup>. It was an especially special arrival for me because I got to see my parents for the first time in 6 months that I have been based in Switzerland and England for the past while, so it was really great that my folks were able to join in for the event (and by the way, they were more than blown away by the event). Here's a photo of team South Africa (Front L-R: Carl Laubscher, Robbie Laubscher, Luke Dawson Back L-R: Andrew Dawson, Nick Molenaar, Kathy Molenaar, Alan Molenaar, Leanne Johansson).



The opening ceremony on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> March was great with a march into the village square with our flags and cheering supporters and a very nice welcome speech by the Anzere committee. They also introduced the 2012 Games theme song which was a very catchy little tune played with an accompanying Swiss Alp Horn. Great day!

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> March brought with it the first day of racing. I took part in the Giant Slalom event and managed to score a silver medal for South Africa! It was a wonderful feeling standing up on the podium and I'm sure a surprise to many, in that there was a South African flag amongst the many well-known skiing nations. That Monday evening I also participated in the Parallel Slalom event but it was the qualification

round for the semifinals which were to be held on the Wednesday evening. Below is a picture of me coming down the Parallel Slalom course. It was a really nice event because the ski run ran right into the centre of Anzer meaning that there was a lot of support from the townsfolk.



Monday was an exhausting but wonderful day. It was great to meet amazing people from all over the world, many of whom asked about Merwen Mellet, who had represented South Africa in the previous winter games. It was a great pity that he was unable to make these games, but he certainly left his mark at the previous games. There were many people who shared happy stories with me about their time with Merwen and were really sad that he was unable to attend this time round. Hopefully 2014!

On Tuesday 6th March I took part in the Super Giant Slalom event. I came in 5th place. Besides the racing, Andrew, Carl, Leanne, my folks and I all managed to get in a bit of skiing together. We also watched as the South African Nicholas Cup participants (Robbie and Luke) quickly learnt to ski down the slopes. Skiing is an amazing sport and takes you to some incredible places. We all felt



extremely privileged to be able to be in such a beautiful environment. The weather was incredible, the snow perfect and it was just such an awesome feeling enjoying the breathtakingly beautiful Swiss Alps!

The evening of Tuesday 6th March was an especially emotional one. Reg Green (the father of Nicholas), was at the event and he invited participants to attend a screening of Nicholas Gift, the movie that documented the fate of his son and the subsequent donation of

Nicholas's organs (The Nicholas effect) It was an incredibly emotional and moving movie and had the entire audience in tears. Mr Green and his wife are two exceptional people. Their story is one of immense sadness, but equally one of profound hope and inspiration. Watching the movie with Mr Green is an experience that I will never forget. It really made everyone so intimately aware and thankful to all the donor families.

On Wednesday, I participated in the Slalom and Parallel Slalom events. I managed to win bronze for both events and thus the total medal count for South Africa was 1 silver and 2 bronze medals. Wednesday was my final racing event and I felt very proud standing on the podium with the South African flag (and vuvuzela of course!) The event was really well organised and I owe an



especially big thank you to all the volunteers who gave of their time to make the racing so successful. The team from Anzere were both extremely professional and very friendly. They made us all feel very welcomed and considering that we were timed using the same time keeping system that they use at the World Cup events - Tag Heuer we all felt like true skiing professionals 😊

Thursday was a beautiful day and I spent most of the day skiing with the South African contingent. That evening we had a gala dinner (where I felt very proud wearing my Protea jacket) and thereafter a music event at the local discothèque with a well-known Swiss musician.

Friday brought with it the final day of the games and the all-important Nicholas Cup! The Nicholas Cup was an absolutely incredible and inspiring event. There were approximately 36 participants from around the world who had never skied before. In the week leading up to the Nicholas Cup, the kids attended ski school, mingled with each other and basically had an absolute blast! I think



that by the time Friday came around they were probably exhausted because they had done so much in the week. Nevertheless, they all put on a wonderful performance on the ski slope and Luke and Robbie did South Africa especially proud.

Below left is Robbie shortly after taking part in the Nicholas Cup and on the right is Luke, at the finishing area after his run. They both had an incredible week and by the end of it, were



skiing like champions. At the final prize giving they both stood up on the podium, introduced themselves, spoke briefly about their transplants and Luke mentioned he was hoping that as many people as possible would be attending the games in South Africa next year. Below is a group photo of the Nicholas Cup participants. They all did extremely well!



The Winter World Transplant Games 2012 in Anzer was a more than wonderful event. I owe a huge thank you to all of you for making a dream of mine come true. I vividly remember the days when I used to sit at Groote Schuur Hospital's renal wing reception area, looking up at the transplant notice board and wishing that when I had gone through my kidney transplant that I would also be able to partake in a game. And I have done so! And I owe you all a huge thank you for that. It was an event that I will never forget for so many wonderful reasons!

A big thank you to you all,

Alan Molenaar