



Witsblitz

#7 10 June 2014

sports edition

WitsSport wishes all Witsies a successful June exam season. Our best wishes too to all grade 12's tackling mid-year and trial exams. We look forward to welcoming you to the world of sport and academic studies at Wits in 2015!



@witsport



WitsSportCouncil

First WitsSport recruitment drive a huge success

On a cold winter's afternoon, after months of planning and communicating with the selected group of local schools, WitsSports and internal stakeholders staged the first recruitment event to specifically target learner-sportsmen and women. It was, by all measures, a resounding success. WitsSport and the School Liaison Office, the Wits Sports Council (WSC), the SRC, Campus Security, Bidvest Wits and Residences all partnered to pull off a last Friday's first-ever exercise to attract top-performing athletes to make Wits their institution of choice for tertiary studies.

The event attracted 120 learners and their parents. The recruitment drive aims to challenge the beliefs of many learners and their parents that Wits' academic and sport offerings are not on par with those of universities outside Gauteng. Many hold these views precisely because they have not been or exposed to Wits' range of academic offerings and world-class sports facilities.

Hosting the afternoon's programme, WitsSport's head Adrian Carter said that despite having been at Wits for only four months, he is in awe of the beautiful campus and its outstanding facilities. "Wits needs to showcase its offerings in order to become a viable option for targeted sports scholars," he said. "While the schools' liaison office does an outstanding job of marketing the Wits brand, the feedback from parents who visited and saw both the campus and the incredible accommodation at Wits Junction was extremely positive."



BOYS WILL BE BOYS: Jeppe Boys' learners sit in on one of the presentations.

WitsSport despatched busses to St Stithians College, KES, Jeppe, and Parktown Boys' while grade 12's and their parents from St Mary's, St Andrew's, St Benedict's, Trinity House and St John's made the trip to Sturrock Park under their own steam.

The afternoon highlighted the congenial nature of Wits' student leadership. Asked at the last minute to accompany the Jeppe boys to the campus, current Wits SRC Vice President, Jeppe old boy and former Wits Sports Council chairperson Paul Ndiweni had no hesitation in obliging. He was accompanied by Wits SRC president Shafee Verachia. Both student leaders are owed our gratitude for the role they played.

Welcoming the learners, Adrian introduced the presentations from Annerie van der Walt of the schools' liaison office and Kerry Yates, recently appointed to manage the WitsSport academic support programme. Kerry and Carter are assigned to aggressively drive the Wits Sport recruitment process. Together, Annerie and Kerry's presentations clearly outlined the course options open to learners' who wished to pursue studies at Wits, and the various entry requirements. Kerry assured the visitors that if they elected to study at Wits, they could expect to benefit from WitsSport professionalising the way it managed its student-athletes, and that each student-athlete would enjoy professional academic support.

With the academic information disseminated, it was time to introduce students Jade Aspling and Andrew Keightley-Smith, both outstanding students and active in sports administration at Wits. The Grade 12's enjoyed their witticisms and wisdom as the two final-year LLB students wooed both learners and parents. Jade struck a chord with the visitors as she spoke of her own experiences of having to learn how to balance sport and academics.

Andrew, the current WSC chairperson (who leaves Wits with three degrees at the end of this year), highlighted some of the achievements of Wits' sportsmen and women over the years.



JUNE'S AUGUST ASSEMBLY: Prospective Witsie student-athletes at Friday's first-ever campus visit, arranged by WitsSport and partners, gather for a group photo.

With the presentations concluded, Adrian requested each learner to complete the forms requesting biographical and contact details as well as sporting interests and achievements. They were also asked to indicate whether they wished to arrange a one-on-one session with a WitsSport staffer at a later date. All learners were presented with branded goodie bags containing a gym towel and water bottle. Father of two (both daughters attended the presentation) Cavibrands CEO Malcolm Hyland, commented on the impressive scale of the project and that it was, to his knowledge, the first of its kind.

After the presentations the guests boarded buses for the campus tour. Andrew led one group with a microphone he grew to enjoy, whilst Jade kept the other – largely Jeppe Boys' – contingent enthralled with numerous Wits facts. Kerry Yates, impressed the third group of mostly parents, and WitsSport senior admin manager Marius Henn took charge of a fourth party in the last bus.

The entire party then alighted at the Amic Deck to walk past the magnificent engineering buildings and on to the Great Hall, where they posed for group pics!!



BAGGING NEW WITSIES: WitsSports' guests show off their goodie bag gift packs.

Carter remarked that even *he* wanted to study at Wits!! The recruits and the parents made their way down the grass bank to The Matrix, in-between two beautifully-maintained residences and out towards the Sanctuary. Once at the main rugby field Andrew informed the group that when New Zealand rugby team trains on the field, there are guards posted to ensure that it is a closed practise. I can just picture Nita Lawson-Misra peering out of her window with a pair of high-powered binoculars, observing the respective specimens below!!

The final part of the walk on the East Campus was to the hallowed Bidvest Football Stadium, the sight of much joy and a little anguish for Wits alumnus Brian Joffe. Once the view of the football stadium had been enjoyed the tour party made its way Amic Deck. The final stop leg of the tour took our guests to the Wits Junction, via the Wits Education Campus to see the substantial excavations that form the foundation of the new Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital. This enabled the visitors to take in the picturesque still-new Wits synthetic hockey pitch which, in May, Andrew was quick to point out, hosted the inaugural round of the men's Varsity Hockey tournament.

And after a quick viewing of Medical School it was on to the final stop, Wits Junction, the venue WitsSport would like to utilise as accommodation for student-athletes.

The arrival and subsequent feedback whilst at the Wits Junction would have made Rob Sharman - the man with the most Shakespearean accent at Wits - swell with pride. The party was greeted by Junction resident Charles (completing a doctorate this year) who took our party through the extremely impressive facilities to an eventual vacant room, which had 50 year old fathers wanting to move in!!

A St Stithian's mother, whose daughter plays first team hockey and who intends to study Physiotherapy, had not even contemplated applying to Wits. After statements such as "I am absolutely blown away" and "my eyes have been opened" she was adamant she would submit her daughter's application in the coming week.

After the tremendously successful afternoon, many parents and staff contacted members of the Wits team to express their gratitude and how impressed they were with the campus and its facilities. The next recruitment drive takes place in the first week of August which falls inside both the state and private school terms. Even though this pilot venture was a success, there is always room for improvement.

WitsSport would like to thank all who supported and contributed to the first of hopefully many such drives. The intention is to change top quality scholars and parents perceptions of Wits, which we firmly believe was achieved at least in part on Friday 6 June.



GOING WALKABOUT: Parktown Boys' learners make their way to The Matrix.