



MORE THAN A CLUB

Introduction

Atlantis is a community Swimming Club that focuses on competitive swimming and is affiliated to Central Gauteng Aquatics (CGA) and Swim South Africa (SSA). We also support Open Water Swimming and look forward to annual events like the Midmar Mile.

Atlantis currently has 60 swimmers across all age groups with a handful who complete at the SA Junior National and SA National levels. Two of our elite swimmers have moved over to swim for the University of Pretoria and train with the likes of Olympic Gold medallist, Tatyana Schoenmaker.



Our club is fortunate to have highly experienced and passionate coaches. They lead a team that is determined to ensure that swimmers from communities like ours that have been disadvantaged by years of apartheid inequality and racial discrimination are successful and achievers.

Early History

Atlantis was re-established in Lenasia in 1998. However, this was not the beginning of Atlantis. To get a true reflection of the history of our Club, we must go back to the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Atlantis Swimming Club was founded to provide coaching and competition opportunities for black swimmers from the wider Lenasia area.

Interestingly the name of the club came from the popular TV series, “Man from Atlantis”. Atlantis was one of the community clubs at the forefront of the campaign to promote non-racial sport under the banner of SACOS and followed the dictum that there can be ‘No Normal Sport an Abnormal Apartheid Society’.

In this time talented swimmers from Lenasia competed under STASA, (Southern Transvaal Amateur Swimming Association) participating in many national championships, including one held at the Orlando Swimming Pool. At that time, many SACOS athletes would stay with family, friends and volunteer hosts from the schools and clubs.

This was a reciprocal relationship as the athletes competed in different centres across the country and helped facilitate a bond and network of young swimmers, many who keep good relations to this day.

The original team was led by Rafik Badat and “Joe” Cassim amongst others. The team was coached and Thambi Naicker. In this early period of Atlantis, the club endured the hard segregation and even harassment of the apartheid state and many promising swimmers were denied some of the simple opportunities to excel; opportunities that we take for granted today.

Atlantis’ talented swimmers of yesteryear could not enter Ellis Park the premier 50m Olympic size pool as this was reserved for Whites only. More than this, state officials would lock them out of their only available training facility at Greyville Swimming Pool and overdose the water with chemicals because of the moral and political position that the club took.

Atlantis’ talented swimmers of yesteryear could not enter Ellis Park the premier 50m Olympic size pool as this was reserved for Whites only. More than this, state officials would lock them out of their only available training facility at Greyville Swimming Pool and overdose the water with chemicals because of the moral and political position that the club took.



By the late 1980s economic and political conditions worsened in the country and swimming among the black communities all but disappeared.

Atlantis Resurgence

The enthusiasm and passion for swimming in Lenasia still existed and in 1996 Dolphins Swim School started with a handful of neighbourhood kids. Soon the demand for quality teaching and coaching grew and in 1998, Atlantis Swimming Club was re-established under the visionary leadership of then Chairman Rashid Bhatat and a committed new executive.

Julie Cassim, a former Atlantis swimmer took the role of coach and was supported by club alumni like Denin Naidoo and Yaseen Cassim. At the time new opportunities were emerging for South Africa in international sport and there was a belief that Black athletes would now get the opportunity to excel at the highest levels of the sport.

However, competitive swimming had progressed to a highly competitive level and Atlantis Swimming Club had to catch up fast. In this period, Atlantis was tagged as a 'Development Club' and for the time this helped the entry into a predominantly 'White sport'. Soon, with dedication and commitment, our swimmers established themselves as leading contenders in Gauteng and even nationally.

The club won the accolade of 'Community Club of the Year'. Unlike many other clubs, Atlantis is a community club and a registered non-profit organization. Our

coaches and executive members all serve voluntarily, and it is only in recent years that the club has managed to pay a stipend to our secretary and coaches.



The club has always dreamt big and for a long time the key members were uncomfortable with the 'development' programme to transform sport. Believing that the label placed a glass ceiling and thus limited the potential of our swimmers to achieve,

Atlantis took the strategic decision to reposition itself to compete as equals, despite being community based. From then the club has never looked back and has excelled at every level of swimming from Junior League to SA Nationals, earning respect and acknowledgement for the talent that keeps emerging with Atlantis.

Numerous swimmers and coaches have been selected to represent South Africa at regional and international competitions.

Facilities

The biggest challenge for any sports club is access to facilities. The Greyville Swimming Pool has been the home of Atlantis swimming club since the 1970s. Sadly, due to inadequate and unequal budgeting, a lack of maintenance and upgrading of the facility, the pool was shut down in 2007 and an alternative training facility was arranged at the local Virgin Active.

At the same time, Atlantis and the local Barcelona supporters club initiated the SAVE THE POOL CAMPAIGN that was supported by members of the community and

community leaders. At a meeting with the Mayor of Johannesburg in 2010, agreement was reached for a special budget to refurbish and re-open the facility.

In April 2011, the Greyville Pool was re-opened and in November 2012 Atlantis hosted a very successful CGA Gala at the pool, with 17 swimming clubs from across Johannesburg attending. This gala has been hosted annually since then.

With community support we have been able to fit heat pumps at the facility and were looking forward to start training post-Covid. Unfortunately, we are still plagued by poor upkeep and maintenance of the facility which undermines our swimmers' development, fitness and goals for success.

Community swimming is once again being compromised by the local government's failure to upkeep its facilities and thus support the sport with the basics of a public swimming pool on a consistent basis. We can only hope that the legacy of Lenasia sport will give rise to a new way of managing and operating of such facilities so that competitive swimmers and social bathers can once again benefit from the use of Greyville Swimming Pool.



Contact Details: Secretary - Fatima Vally - 083 409 7690

Chairman: Dr Yazeed Seedat - 083 778 2002

Email: info@atlantisswimming.co.za