

Athenkosi Hlenkani

Summary biography for the Parmigiani Spirit Award

Nationality: South Africa Date of Birth: 03.11.1989 University: University of Johannesburg University course: Entrepreneurial Management Rowing club: Nemato Rowing Club
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Athenkosi Hlenkani arrived in Johannesburg from the small community of Nemato. He was raised by a single mother of eight children in a disadvantaged neighbourhood, but he did not let this stop him from attending the University of Johannesburg and becoming one of the best rowers on the team. He drew his inspiration from his family and community, making it his life goal to show people who shared similar childhood circumstances that it is possible to overcome hardships.

Hlenkani began rowing at the Nemato Rowing Club and received a scholarship to attend the University of Johannesburg. He quickly made an impression on his university teammates, showing them that his near-perfect technique could make up for his small stature. Hlenkani was not discouraged by his physique, but instead determined to find a way to give more.

Over the past four years his involvement in the club has grown and now, as an athlete, coach and committee member, Hlenkani dedicates his time and energy to helping the club succeed and helping to promote the sport of rowing.

Last year, Hlenkani was elected captain and transitioned flawlessly into the position of power. He decided to lead by example, rather than dictating to his teammates to train harder, he gave an extra 10% at every training session to inspire them to follow. He earned the unfaltering trust and respect of his teammates and thus the position of captain came without question.

Whenever possible, Hlenkani continues to help his home club of Nemato. On one occasion, just before the South African Junior Championships, the club lost their boat transportation. Hlenkani worked through the night to find boats to borrow and to help tow some of the boats to the competition.

At university, Athenkosi was selected as a Residence Academic adviser (tutor) for first year students from 2010 to 2011. Hlenkani was also one of the twenty youth leaders from Africa elected through the United Nations Office of Sport and Development to attend the Youth Leadership Camp in Qatar in 2012.

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