

One of the undoubted highlights on our school calendar is the biennial *Sportolympiade* of the five German schools of Southern Africa (DSJ, Deutsche Internationale Schule Kapstadt, Deutsche Schule Pretoria, Deutsche Höhere Privatschule Windhoek and Deutsche Schule Hermannsburg). The first running of the *Sportolympiade* took place in Pretoria in 1986 and was the brainchild of Günther Kesselmann from Windhoek.

As the name suggests, it is a sporting showpiece where athletes partake in the following disciplines: athletics, handball, soccer, volleyball, basketball, tennis and swimming. The DSJ has played host to three editions of the *Sportolympiade* (1990, 2000 and 2014) and has won 12 of the 17 which have taken place.

The *Sportolympiade* usually lasts the duration of a week and includes opening and closing ceremonies. Both ceremonies are special for different reasons, with the opening providing terrific entertainment while the closing ceremony provides a totally different atmosphere. The sense of anticipation ahead of the announcement of the results creates a truly special environment.

Traditionally each team will consist of approximately 50 athletes plus the coaching staff. While competition on the field is fierce, the *Sportolympiade* is more than just a simple sporting battle. It builds friendships and instils the values of the 'Olympic Spirit'. There is also a real sense of 'community' as visiting athletes are accommodated by families of the host school.

To host a *Sportolympiade* is no easy task and requires months and sometimes years of planning by the organisers – all of which can change if the weather does not play its part.

Possibly the most famous DSJ *Sportolympiade* 'graduate' is Dominik Meichtry (Grade 12 2003). Dominik represented Switzerland at three Olympic Games (2004 in Athens, 2008 in Beijing and 2012 in London) and won over 30 Swiss national titles.

