

SA target Youth Olympic spot in kiteboarding

20 February 2018 – Two talented teenagers are in Morocco this week with big Olympic dreams.

Rut Gouws and Terje Groenewoud are competing at the continental kiteboarding qualifiers with the aim of booking a spot to represent South Africa at the Youth Olympic Games.

The pressure is on as only a win in Morocco will secure them the spot at the Games, to be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina in October. Kiteboarding is a sport that has seen massive growth in the last few years – with an estimated 1.5 million participants worldwide.



This is the first time it will be included in the Youth Olympic programme – with the view to the sailing discipline eventually being added to the senior version of the Games. And 14-year-old Gouws and 15-year-old Groenewoud are determined to get there.

“I’m hoping to give my best and be the best and ultimately qualify for the Youth Olympics in Argentina later this year,” said Groenewoud. “The field is pretty full with lots of good and fierce competitors, not only Africa but Europe too. Anything can happen. Heats are made up with all nationalities but at the end of the day only one boy and one girl per continent can go through,” added the Melkbosstrand High School student.

“So it’s pretty hard to make it to first place as you can imagine with about 40 other kids aiming for the same top position. ‘If you ain’t first, you’re last’ is the saying here. Let’s hope for the best and may the best man win.”

The pair are no strangers to international competition, having been introduced to the sport at a very young age – Gouws at age 10 and Groenewoud at 11.



“I love absolutely everything about the sport,” enthused Gouws. “The combination of wind, water, speed,

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the excitement of the sport itself and then of course the people and all the good vibes always.

“You have to have dedication, perseverance and flexibility (time wise) to excel. When the wind blows, you stop with everything else and you kite,” she added.

It’s a similar attraction for Groenewoud.



“What I love about kiteboarding is the thrill and overwhelming feeling that I get when I land an extremely difficult trick or when I get a really gnarly wave and shred it,” he reckoned.

“I love the feeling of freedom out there as you are one with the elements and nature and even maybe the possibility of a great white. It’s just you and your equipment and nothing bothering you – a great way to recharge the batteries after a long school day.”

The talented pair also have big ambitions to go along with their love of the sport.



“My long-term goals are to be world champion in strapless freestyle and wave riding and contribute to the growth of the sport in these disciplines. I want to travel to great places that are perfect for kitesurfing and have as much fun as possible while doing all of this of course,” explained Groenewoud.

His teammate added: “I really want to thank SA Sailing and the South African Kitesurfing Association for this huge opportunity and Airush, my sponsor. Without their support this would not be possible.”

Competition in Dakhla, Morocco runs from 20-25 February.

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