



RYK NEETHLING



Ryk Neethling is one of the most successful swimmers in history to compete for the University of Arizona and the Republic of South Africa. He is the first South African to have participated in four consecutive Olympic Games, his highlight being winning a Gold Medal and World Record performance in the 2004 Olympics in Athens, Greece.

Currently, Neethling holds the South African record in five different events and ranks in the top ten in the world in both the 50, 100, 200 Freestyle and Individual Medleys. Yet it is his success as an intercollegiate swimmer at the University of Arizona that elevated him to become one of the most highly regarded athletes in Tucson and the International swimming community. Ryk's collegiate athletic career at Arizona was unmatched, leading to nine individual NCAA Championships and the Arizona Athlete of the Century Award.

Born and raised in a close-knit family in Bloemfontein, Ryk started taking water safety lessons at the age of 6, after a near fatal drowning incident at a neighbor's house, and immediately took to the water. He soon became a national force in the age groups, but international sanctions against South Africa at the time prevented South Africans from competing internationally, and Ryk realised that he would need to go to the US to study and swim to make his Olympic dream a reality.

In 1995, at the age of 17, several colleges began recruiting Ryk for swimming scholarships. At this point, he had never visited the United States and barely spoke English. He was recruited by swimming powerhouses Michigan, Stanford, Southern California, and ASU. At that time, Michigan was his first choice because of their history of great distance swimmers, but when Michigan did not guarantee him an athletic scholarship, he committed to Arizona, enrolling in the fall of 1996, immediately following the Atlanta Olympic Games.

During his career at Arizona, Ryk's success in athletics was unparalleled, and he became one of the most successful intercollegiate swimmers in history. He was a nine-time NCAA National Champion (2nd most in history) and was voted Arizona Athlete of the Year and PAC-10 Swimmer of the year for four consecutive years. In 1999, the NCAA named him the Swimmer of the Year, the highest honor in intercollegiate swimming. He also earned other Arizona honors such as the Sapphire Award Winner in 2000, while the most prestigious

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award he received during his collegiate career was the University of Arizona Athlete of the Century Award, over other influential Arizona athletes such as Annika Sorrenstan, Chrissy Ahman, Jason Terry, Amy Skieresz, Jenny Finch, and Abdi Abdirahman.

Ryk began participating in international competition for South Africa in 1993 and continued throughout his career at Arizona. He has since held over 20 junior national records and 22 South African National titles., and represented South Africa and medaled in three Commonwealth Games, the most in South African history. He has also been a five-time finalist in the Olympics and the World Championships, participating in the 1996, 2000 & 2004 Olympic Games.

In the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Ryk participated as a member of the South Africa 4x100 Freestyle Relay, anchoring the team to a Gold Medal and World Record (3:13.17) performance. Ryk also made the finals in the 100m Freestyle, placing 4th overall. During the 2004/2005 FINA World Cup Series Ryk continued his success in the pool by dominating the 200m Freestyle and 100m IM with record breaking performances. In 2004 he competed in the World Championships in Montreal and the FINA World Cup 2005/6 series in Durban, Sydney and Korea.

Currently, Ryk is based in Johannesburg, and continues to travel to international competitions to represent South Africa.

SERVICES

- Guest Speaker
- Celebrity guest

AWARDS

International Career:

- Athens Olympics 2004 Gold medalist
- 4x100m freestyle World Record holder (3:13.17)
- 100 Individual Medley World Record holder (52.01)
- Five (5) time Olympic Finalist
- Three (3) time World Championship finalist
- African & South African Record Holder in 200m, 400m, 800m and 1500m freestyle; - 100m IM; 100m Butterfly
- Goodwill Games Gold medalist (New York 1998)
- Three time (3) Commonwealth Games medalist
- Won 22 South African national swimming titles
- Represented South Africa in 1996, 2000 and 2004 Olympic Games
- Represented South Africa in three World Championships
- Represented South Africa in three (3) Commonwealth Games (most in SA history)
- Represented South Africa in international competition since '93
- Held over twenty (20) junior national records

Collegiate Career:

- Nine (9) time NCAA title winner (second most in history)
- NCAA swimmer of the year 1999
- Four (4) time Pacific-10 Conference swimmer of the year
- Voted University of Arizona Athlete of the year four (4) consecutive years

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- Voted University of Arizona Athlete of the Century
- University of Arizona Athletics Sapphire Award Winner 2000
- Two-Time US Open Record Holder
- One-Time US National Champion

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