

RYK, NO COUCH POTATO



By SHEETAL SCHNEIDER CROSS
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South African Olympian swimmer, Ryk Neethling, is best known for holding world records but he is also an extremely talented entrepreneur. He owns four Ryk Neethling Swimming School franchises in South Africa, is a shareholder, MD and Property Developer at Val de Vie Estate in the Cape, owns shares in the construction company, Brick Art, and is also a shareholder in a development company on the estate called Guardian Project which recently won at the International Property Awards.

How does he balance it all? To start with he is so committed to his goals he doesn't own a TV. "I have to be active otherwise I get grumpy. You don't go from pushing your body to the limit for five hours a day for decades to being a couch potato!

Exercise is important to me and enables me to operate at a higher level than I would otherwise. I swim a bit, run, mountain bike and gym," says Neethling.

Throughout the years, he has dedicated himself to charity work, passionately involving himself with Hope through Action, an organisation which builds sports facilities in disadvantaged communities and Legacy Lifestyle's Blow the Whistle to stop the scourge of violence against women and children.

When his sister, Elsje Neethling-Blair, was diagnosed with a brain tumour yet continued swimming and living an active life, he was inspired to do the same. He has never looked back.

"Every day I try to squeeze the most juice out of life. I have learned from taking on too much, to equip myself to deal with these things by reading books, having meetings and advice from mentors. To surround yourself with people who help you, to get the right team around you, because you don't win gold medals by yourself even though you stand on the podium alone. There is a whole team of people who help you to get there. It takes

the same discipline to be an entrepreneur," he said.

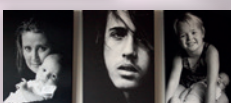
In doing so, he has learned to overcome his introverted personality. Sharing his experience of living in the United States, Neethling realised that the culture of 'loud and proud' meant that he would have to speak up and be heard if he wanted to be taken seriously.

Good on you, Ryk!





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