

Building a legacy for Women Judoka's in Botswana

The Kapeko's Twins story

Neo and Tiroyaone (Tiro) Kapeko (Twins) were born in 1993 in small village of Omaweneno in western Botswana, due to family circumstance the girls were taken as babies to the SOS children's village in Tlokweng, Botswana for residence and care and were raised there until the age of 18 years. At the age of 16 they were taken under the wings of the Botswana Judo Federation, where they started off as assistant coaches and today, they run the Debswana sponsored programme for judo Re Ba Bona Ha as coaches.

In 2004 Neo and Tiro started doing Judo and they have never stopped. Through the journey of their judo Life, they have grown both emotionally and physically to realize the ability and potential they have to be leaders in sport. They participated in competitions both at national, continental and international level with great results. In 2009 Neo and Tiro were trained for level 1 coaching course which they passed. This made them the first female Judo Botswana Coaches. In 2010, Neo was the first judoka to ever represent Botswana at an Olympic Games, albeit the Youth Olympic Games in Singapore, it was a very proud moment not only for Neo but also for the Botswana Judo Federation.



In 2014 Botswana Judo Federation was through Botswana National Sports Commission (BNSC) offered an opportunity to be part of the Re Ba Bona Ha grassroots sports development program, sponsored by Debswana. This provided the Federation an opportunity to use the training that has been provided to Neo and Tiro. They were hired under the program to be Assistant Coaches in the Mmopane Re Ba Bona Ha Judo Club. A job they have taken seriously and with vigor. They have impressed Sensei Segokotlo in how dedicated they are to time, their teams and work. They embody the Judo Values and live them as they work with young people. This coaching opportunity has provided further growth for them in their Judo Life Journey. Not only have they been a success at coaching they have also participated in competitions as technical officials such as the African Youth Games held in 2014.

They continue to be an inspiration to younger girls at the Mmopane Re Ba Bona Ha Judo Club, something they take very seriously since they realize the important position and role, they have to play in growing the Sport of Judo in Botswana. In 2015 alone they have been able to take through to the national club competitions the RBBH Mmopane club members who have won Gold, Silver and Bronze medals at these competitions.

When asked where they will like to see themselves in 2-5 years Neo had this to say: "I will like to see myself work very hard to develop young players in Botswana, as well as making a living out of Judo as a coach". In Tiro's case she said, "She will like to see herself continuing to coach young players and making a living out of coaching, with a goal to also continue competing at international level".



Thebe Loabile Coach, Neo Kapeko, Tiro Kapeko

The General Secretary of the African Judo Union and former President of the Botswana Judo Federation, Estony Pridgeon says “These girls have been through extreme adversity and hardships in their lives. Through judo, they have managed to create a successful career for themselves. It makes me so proud to see where these girls were and where they are now. They have grown up to be responsible young adults, who have a passion for the sport and devote themselves to the promotion of Judo in the rural areas.”

Both young ladies are appreciative of the support given to them by BJF and sincerely hope they can continue to get support in their journey as Judoka’s providing the opportunities to compete at international level as well as qualifying further in their coaching.

Their Journey continues.....The legacy continues, Neo’s daughter Keolebogile now 5 has followed in her mother’s footsteps



Keleobogile Kapeko with the former Japanese Ambassador to Botswana Masahiro Onishi