Two teams pull with all their might,
Each side determined to win the fight,
Straining muscles and gripping tight,
Tug-of-war, a thrilling sight.

The rope taut, the crowd cheers loud,
As each team tries to gain some ground,
Both sides refuse to be bowed,
In this game where strength abounds.

Back and forth, the battle goes,
Neither team willing to impose,
But finally, the weaker team shows,
And the stronger side triumphantly glows.

Tug-of-war, a test of strength and will,
A great sport that never gets its fill,
Of excitement, challenge, and thrill,
A game that can make the toughest chill.
On Thursday 23 March, a total of 338 teams from all over South Africa descended on this little town, filling up the boarding school and every other available accommodation in and around the town.

A little ‘tent town’ went up at the local municipality’s camping grounds and even a hall at the Agricultural Show grounds was made available to accommodate teams.

Of special interest this year, was the participation of a visiting English junior team in the event - providing some international flavour. A well-organised team of SATF officials, manning 3 weigh-in stations, weighed the almost 1,700 athletes between 08:00 and 14:00 on Thursday - averaging 4 athletes per minute.

After a night of rain, Friday morning 24 March dawned with a beautiful fresh morning, with some overcast.

The opening ceremony was conducted by the Mayor of the Overberg district Municipality, followed by a moment of silence to observe the memory of Tom Allan, a member of the English junior squad who tragically passed away a month after the World Championships in Holten. The anthems of both England and South Africa rounded off the ceremonial opening of the event.

THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES WERE HOSTED ON FRIDAY 24 MARCH:

- 230 kg Primary Schools
- 480 kg Boys (High Schools)
- 520 kg Girls (High Schools)
- 360 kg Primary Schools
- 600 kg Boys (High Schools)
- 400 kg Boys (High Schools)
- 280 kg Primary Schools
- 440 kg Primary Schools
- 520 kg Mix (High Schools)

Top: The teams from Upper Eden and Strand High School at their final training camp at Helderberg Club.
Left: The Tom Allan touring group from England at the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town.
The 520 kg Mixed category was won by Robertson High School, thus claiming the opportunity to represent South Africa in the World Championships in Switzerland in this division.

The day was concluded with a 520 kg Mixed International Test match between two teams from South Africa and two teams from England - South Africa A claiming gold, with England A claiming silver.

THE FOLLOWING TEAMS COMPETED ON SATURDAY 25 MARCH:
- 400 kg Primary Schools
- 520 kg Boys (High Schools)
- 440 kg Girls (High Schools)
- 440 kg Boys (High Schools)
- 320 kg Primary Schools
- 480 kg Girls (High Schools)
- 560 kg Boys (High Schools)

The 480 kg Girls category was won by the English junior ladies team, with the girls from Westcliff in SA claiming the opportunity to represent South Africa at the World Championships in Switzerland.

The 560 kg Boys category was won by Oakdale A, followed by Drostdy A and Oakdale B claiming bronze.

Again, the day was ended by International Test matches against the English touring side with South Africa A (Oakdale) claiming gold in the 560 kg Boys, followed by South Africa C (Oakdale B) and South Africa B (Drostdy).

Final match of the day was the 480 kg Girls where the English ladies won a well deserved gold medal, followed by South Africa A (Westcliff) and South Africa B (Worcester Gymnasium).

The final medal ceremony was interrupted by a massive rain storm, bringing an end to yet another very successful junior championships.

Rain is considered a blessing in South Africa and this was accepted as a good sign of growth in our sport - not only the growing of our youth movement here in South Africa, but also across the World!

ANTON BOTHA
President, SA Tug-of-War

Top left: The English team after the closed competition.
Top right: The triumphant 480 kg English Junior Ladies team on the podium.
Left: The 520 kg English Junior Mixed team with their silver medal.
THE SA JUNIOR TUG OF WAR CHAMPIONSHIPS IN SWELLENDAM CONTINUES ON PAGE 4
A
fter our junior team mate Tom Allan tragically died last year after the World Championships in Holland we wanted to dedicate this tour to his memory. Tom was the gentlest of giants and his talent and natural ability for tug of war was evident the first time I saw him. Tom hardly missed a training. I could train Tom as hard as I like and he would just keep coming back for more. I feel very lucky to have been able to coach Tom and to also consider him a friend.

Jonathan (Treasurer) Claire (Secretary) and myself Joe (Manager) packed in a busy schedule over the 10 days to cover a wide range of educational, sporting and cultural experiences in South Africa. We covered 700 miles whilst on tour, training with local junior team Helderberg Toutrek; visited Stellenzicht school; played numerous sports on the beach and took in the sights of Table Mountain, V & A Waterfront, Aquilla Game reserve, Penguins at Betty’s Bay and much more whilst also squeezing in the SA Junior Championships.

DAY 1
The junior Tug of War Championship was the biggest event that any of us have ever witnessed with over 1600 competitors over the two days - and 338 teams entering.

Our small squad of 9 girls and 10 boys along with coaches Jim and Martin entered 5 teams on day one where we really struggled to adapt to the conditions.

The girls started well and gained a respectable 4th in the 520 kg just missing out on a medal, with the boys just missing out on the crossover in the 600 kg. The extreme heat was a real factor with our juniors having never experienced anything like it before - our mixed team suffered the consequences in the midday sun.

Finally we had the Mixed International where England A and B faced up against South Africa A & B, both our sides learnt from the days pulling, adapted the style to suit the ground and the heat wasn’t an issue as it was dusk before we even started! Both teams winning ends

In late October 2022 we were delighted to be invited to the SA junior championships in Swellendam. This was a massive honour after only recently getting junior tug of war going again in England. We had previously taken our junior team to the World Championships in Holland however South Africa was a whole different ballgame.

JOE BIRCH
England’s Junior Manager
with the A team winning silver and the B team taking it to 3 ends against the hosts Swellendam just missing out on the bronze.

DAY 2
This was a busier schedule with us entering 6 teams, both the boys and girls teams performed to their potential learning from the previous days’ pulling. The boys entered the 520 kg and 560 kg level on points just missing out on the crossover by 0.4 kg, really heart-breaking for the lads. The girls started with the 440 kg where they hit to ground running and made it through the crossover however yet again finishing 4th, next up was the 480 kg where the girls had a large group of 9 teams with us dropping ends here, there, and everywhere but just scraping through in 3rd place where the top 3 from each group go in a second round robin group best of 3 ends. The team gained momentum only dropping two ends to Westcliffe with the two teams finishing 1st and 2nd and meeting again in the final. I have never seen such team spirit and a willingness to do it for each other. As the teams walked out together the noise was electric and the atmosphere was something that none of us had ever experienced before, with shear determination the girls won the final 2 – 0 and were crowned SA 480 kg Champions!

The standout athlete of the tour was **CARLEY THWAITES** - she pulls front (see left). She was captain of the girls, and was awarded Coach’s Puller and Puller’s Puller, whilst also being in all 3 teams that won medals!

Carley is relatively new to the sport with only 12 months under her belt but a huge amount of Natural Ability and plenty of drive and determination.

Carley was weighed down with silverware as she was part of the teams that won silver in the mixed test match and also in the 480 kg SA Championships and 480 kg test match.

This year Carley has signed for Upper Eden who have sights on their first ever gold at this years National Championships off the back of this junior success.

We were extremely well looked after during the whole tour by Anton, Melanie, Carel and their team. A huge bond has been created between the two nations - one that will hopefully continue for many years to come.

**WILL HOWARD - Boys Captain**

Will has a large amount of tug of war experience for his age which is rare in England and has tug of war in his blood going back generations.

Will is a quiet lad but leads by example on the rope; his fitness and ability clear to see as he was part of the team that won silver in the mixed test match. He drives his teammates to reach new goals. The tour gave Will a huge opportunity to come out of his shell and experience different things all whilst making new friends for life.

Will has just signed for Lincoln and I’m sure this will propel his career competing at the top level with some of the best pullers England has to offer.
The World Games family already has its sights firmly set on the next Games in Chengdu. This year’s IWGA Media Workshop focused on effective public relations for the 12th edition of The World Games (TWG), to be staged from 7th to 17th August 2025. About 60 media officers from the IWGA member federations attended the two-day meeting at IOC headquarters in Lausanne; about 20 of them took the opportunity to follow the workshop online. The workshop was organized by Anna Jacobson, IWGA Head of Communications.

During the exchanges, the focus was not only on developing strategies to gain world-wide attention for the competitions in the capital of Sichuan Province. Another challenge will be to promote and publicize the sports of The World Games within China as a whole.

Patrick Medley-Browne, IOC Social Media Localisation Manager, reported on the experiences at the 2022 Winter Games in Beijing. He also gave examples of how athlete and fan engagement via social media can succeed.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF
Julian Gornall-Thode, General Manager of the Lausanne Office of the Shankai Company, provided insight into how social networks work in China and the rules of the game when foreigners seek proximity to the audience in the host country of TWG 2025. The company has extensive experience in China, and the audience took the advice on do’s and don’ts for successful communication very seriously.

As examples of best practice, Chris Wells, World Archery, and Valentin Weber, International Fistball Association, shared how their federations effectively and efficiently get their messages out to fans.

Two discussion rounds, in which the participants could exchange ideas in smaller groups, looked for answers to two questions: *What are your own new ideas on how to interest the different target groups for the Games, and what kind of support do you expect from the IWGA for your promotion of the multi-sport event in China.*

The feedback on the workshop was extremely positive. Valentin Weber formulated this on behalf of all the participants:

“The presentations and discussions were very informative and right to the point. But what was almost more important for us was that we were able to exchange ideas and compare experiences with media officers from the other federations.”

The President met with the Chinese Taipei Tug of War team.

CHRISTINE YANG

The President of Taiwan met the 2022 World Outdoor Tug of War Championship team and praised the outstanding performance of the pullers, showing the world the ‘power and beauty’ of Taiwan. She also said the government will provide full support to the pullers so that we can build a strong national team together.

In the 2022 World Championships, a total of 130 teams from 21 countries around the world participated. It was not easy for the Taiwanese

CONTINUED OVERLEAF
team to achieve this outstanding result. Prior to this, the women’s team had won the World Games 2022 in July last year, making it five in a row. Behind these excellent results, there is much puller practice, as well as a lot of hard sweat and tears.

And the President said that she would also like to thank our association and its coaches for their support and for being such a reliable backing for the pullers - enabling them to reach these brilliant results.

The 2026 World Indoor Tug of War Championship will be held in New Taipei City, Taiwan. This will be the first time that Taiwan hosts such a high level tug of war event. Taiwan will be able to welcome representatives and teams from all over the world as a host country, and so we hope that our pullers manage to keep their medals here in Taiwan.