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College Old Boy hopes to play for Proteas

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MARITZBURG College Old Boy Kurtlyn Mannikam begins a new journey this week that he hopes will one day see him turning out for the Proteas.

After being named as vice captain of the KZN Inland team at the CSA U17 Cricket Week last year, the youngster, who gets regular phonecalls from the legendary Jacques Kallis, was selected to be a member of the Dolphins Academy.

The Ladysmith-born 18-year-old said 2013 was a year he regarded as having being his best cricket year.

“I didn’t have a good 2012 and my confidence was a bit low going into the year,” he told The Witness last Friday.

“Then we played against Peterhouse from Zimbabwe and I scored 72. That score pretty much set the tone for the rest of the season. I was moved to number four on the order and I was getting scores of around 30 and 40.

“In the fourth term, I did well. I scored 71 in one game and got 54 in another and I took a couple of wickets also,” said Mannikam, who is also a medium pace, second-change bowler. Mannikam began playing cricket at the age of seven in Ladysmith. When he completed his primary schooling at Egerton Primary School in Ladysmith, he landed a scholarship with the Jacques Kallis Foundation which saw him attending the famed Maritzburg College.

Speaking about those that have guided him through his career, Mannikam said, “A lot of people have had an impact on my cricket, from my coaches at Ladysmith and all the coaches I’ve had at College. Mike Bechet has played a huge role, but all coaches have helped.”

He also praised his parents, saying, “They’ve helped me a lot, and they even relocated from Ladysmith to Pietermaritzburg when I was given the scholarship.”

Having received a scholarship from the Jacques Kallis Foundation, it’s no surprise that the teenager, who is enrolled at UKZN Westville in Durban to study sports science, regards the legendary all-rounder as his hero.

“He’s definitely one of my heroes, as an all-rounder, and because his foundation made it possible for me to get here. I chat to him at least once a month. He calls or sends me e-mails often just to check up on how my marks are. He’s been a good mentor,” Mannikam said, adding that he modelled his batting around Aussie skipper Michael Clarke.

Mannikam’s ultimate goal is to play for the Proteas before he is 25. “I’ve got seven years to go, so I’m going to give it a go.”

For now though, he is going to use the coming year to break into the Dolphins A or B sides and land a rookie or semi-professional contract with the franchise.

Mannikam comes from a sporting family, and said his 11-year-old sister Georgia is a talented swimmer while his father Jay used to be a provincial 100 m and 200 m sprinter in his younger days.

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