



Lucas Sithole in the quads final
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Wheelchair tennis king sets sights on London 2012

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South African wheelchair tennis star Lucas Sithole has truly earned the right to be called the most dominant player in Africa.

The Paralympics-bound Sithole maintained his world number nine ranking with a victory in the Men's Quads Singles final at the SA Airports Company Gauteng Open when he beat world number 10 Marco Innocenti from Italy 6-1 7-5 last week.

Sithole and his team-mate, Kgothatso Montjane, were named Sportspersons of the Year in the disabled category last year.

"At least wheelchair tennis is now recognised," enthused Sithole.

"It was the first time that our sport received an award. We were never recognised before. It used to be basketball or swimming athletes who used to walk away with all the prizes."

Sithole won the quads singles and doubles of the Be Active Adelaide Wheelchair Open held in Australia in January. Following that success, Sithole was runner-up in the Melbourne Open.

It comes as no surprise that the wheelchair tennis king approaches London 2012 as one of the medals hopefuls and undisputed favourite.

But for Sithole himself, the pressure of being expected to win whenever he takes to the court is not easy to deal with.

"Sometimes my record gives me a lot of confidence and sometimes a lot of pressure that everybody expects me to win. But at the same time, I feel very powerful. I'm training very hard to improve some aspects of my game," said the University of Johannesburg student.

"I am very confident that I will be able to win a medal," he said, adding that beating Innocenti was crucial to his Paralympic preparations.

"He is very experienced and he's one of the top players in the world," he added. "But I want to be the best in the world."