

Top women in PR compete for coveted GSport award

 By [Juanita Pienaar](#)

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Marisa Calvert, Keabetswe Taele and Lali Stander were all nominated for the Woman in PR and Sponsorship GSport Award for 2019.

This year's event takes place on 31 August 2019 and promises to be a glitzy affair, hosting Minister of Sport Nathi Mthethwa and other dignitaries. We caught up with the three nominated women in PR to hear what the award means to each of them and to tell us more about each of their career highlights.

■ ***Please tell us more about yourself and what it is you do.***

Calvert: I am the head of PR for ASEM Engage. We fall under the ASEM Group that manages Varsity Cup and owns Varsity Sports. I manage the publicity of these two companies. I come from a marketing background but PR has always been my calling. Telling the stories of the young athletes brings me so much joy.

I am 36 years old and I've been in the industry since 2009. I studied sports management because I've always loved sport but I was never good enough to be elite. I just knew from a young age that I want to be in this industry. And I also knew that no matter what, I want to make a difference and leave a legacy behind.

“ Meet Marisa Calvert, Head of PR for [@varsitycup](#) & [@varsitysportsSA](#). [#WomensMonth](#) [#WomeninPR](#) [#GenderEquality](#) [#heroine](#) [#EduWeekCPT](#) [pic.twitter.com/kesAENAuz7](#)— EduWeek (@African_EduWeek) [August 21, 2017](#) ”

Taele: I am a PR lead at M-Sports Marketing Communications. 2019 marks my tenth year in Sports PR – specialising in event management, sponsorship leveraging and niche marketing.

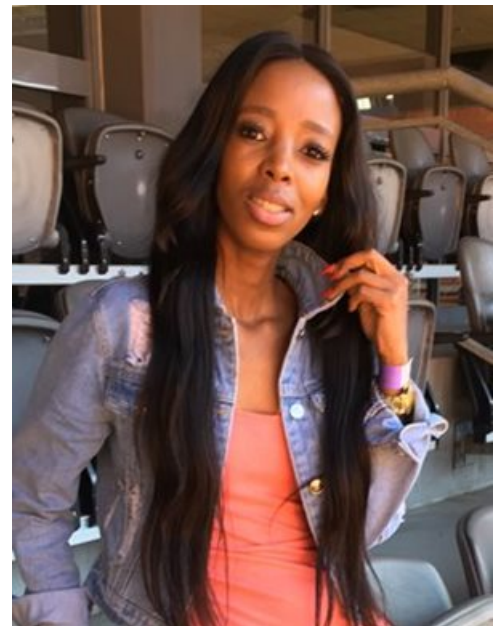
Stander: I joined the media industry as the media manager for the Sunshine Tour in 1999 and started consulting in 2011. I currently manage the media portfolios for several NGOs, including GolfRSA (men's and women's amateur golf), the South African Golf Development Board and the Canon SA Disabled Golf Open for the South African Golf Development Board.

I also consult for the Sunshine Ladies Tour (pro golf) and two golf development circuits, namely the Big Easy IGT Challenge Tour and the IGT Challenge Tour and I keep my finger on the pulse in all sports for my regular Saturday afternoon slot on Radio Sonder Grense (RSG).

■ ***You have been nominated for a gsport4girls Award in the category Woman in PR and Sponsorship. What does the award mean to you?***

Calvert: It is such an honour and privilege to be recognised in the category Woman in PR and Sponsorship. It highlights the importance of publicists in the industry, especially where women sports come into play. Our biggest challenge is youth sport, which isn't seen as big enough sports codes, yet this is where the dreams are born.

We forget that it was right here, at school and Varsity level, where the Karla Pretorius's and Leandra Smeda's are born and



Keabetswe Taele, PR lead at M-Sports Marketing Communications.

this is our job as publicists – to tell that story from beginning to end.



[#WomenInBiz] Scoring goals with Marisa Calvert

Evan-Lee Courie 11 Aug 2015



Lali Stander, PR for GolfRSA, the South African Golf Development Board and the Canon SA Disabled Golf Open for the South African Golf Development Board.

Taele: Kass Naidoo has created an amazing platform in the G-Sport Awards. Her efforts in celebrating the success of women in this country has been remarkable and must be acknowledged. The platform has played a significant role in raising the profile of SA women in sports and therefore to be part of these awards is an honour and privilege, mainly because it is in rare occasions, where you get to see women being recognised for making a difference in this industry.

Stander: I consider my fellow finalists Melissa Calvert and Keabetswe Taele as two of the powerhouses in PR and Sponsorship in SA sport and to be a finalist alongside these icons is such an honour.

- I was a finalist in the Contribution to Sport category in 2017 and win the first Women in PR and Sponsorship award last year, so I am incredibly humbled to be a finalist again. Truthfully, though, as much as I appreciate the recognition, the real highlight of my career was when GolfRSA won the Sports Federation award last year.
- It took blood, sweat and tears at the start to put amateur and women's golf on the map and it was hugely gratifying when GolfRSA beat some big federations last year.
- It sent a message that the small fry can be just as effective and dynamic and, I hope that, with this nomination, I will inspire everyone in PR and sponsorship at the smaller federations and businesses to keep plugging away and to reach for the stars.

“ *"It is vital to recognise the women who give selflessly, often working behind the scenes to grow women's sport."* Lali Stander [#gsport12 pic.twitter.com/h3bkGRn09A](https://twitter.com/h3bkGRn09A)— [@gsport4girls](https://twitter.com/gsport4girls) [August 22, 2017](https://twitter.com/gsport4girls/status/634444444444444444) ”

Calvert: Highlights include:

- Signing a naming sponsor for the Brazil vs Oman friendly game in Muscat in 2009.
- Working with the Brazil National Football team in 2009.
- Working with the Oman National Football team in 2009.
- Doing the marketing for the Oman Football Association in 2009 to 2010 (only woman in a male-dominated industry)
- Managing the media relations for the OFA for all their international friendlies
- Being nominated for GSport Awards in 2018 and 2019

Taele: I have worked on incredible campaigns and it almost feels surreal when looking back. Highlights would include:

- 2010 World Cup Campaigns – this is when I was starting and had the privilege to work on Coca-Cola, MTN and Sony campaigns.
- I also had the privilege of working on the 2013 CAF Champions League first-leg final with Standard Bank.
- Key locals campaigns include Nedbank Cup/Telkom Knockout/CBL Cup/#MadibaJersey for Rugby 7s just to name a few.

“ Keabetswe Taele will be on [#TheLadiesClub](#) on [@SABC_2](#) with [@VaylenKirtley](#) & [@LeboMotsoeli](#) as our game changer! Tune in @ 11:00 📺! [pic.twitter.com/IOTShwWTMa](#)— SABC Sport (@SPORTATSABC) [November 7, 2018](#) ”

Stander: I have had 100s of incredible moments, but I'll try to narrow it down to my top five.

1. Watching Tiger Woods and Ernie Els duel it out at the 2003 Presidents Cup
2. Sharing in Kajal Mistry's incredible SA Women's Amateur double.
3. When Ashleigh Buhai beat the cream of Europe to win the Investec SA Women's Open title for the third time.
4. Working at the Turkish Airlines Open from 2015 and always having at least one South African in the mix on the final day.
5. The Canon SA Disabled Golf Open – every year. If ever you need some inspiration, this event is the place to be.

■ **Elaborate on the importance of celebrating women in PR and Sponsorship in 2019.**

Calvert: I think PR as a whole should be celebrated! Publicists are so important to keep the story going and publicists with a passion for what they do are a rare breed. Without publicity and sponsorship, who will tell the story of the athlete? The athlete needs to concentrate on her discipline. Her coach needs to concentrate on coaching. The team manager has to concentrate on managing.

So who tells the world the story? It is us. So thank you GSport for recognising us. This category was brand new last year and it has already brought along so many other women in the sports industry, working hard behind the scenes to elevate women sports in the public eye.

Taele: Lets also not forget that there is a generation of women that came before us and paved a way for us in this industry. The likes of Madam Ria Ledwaba, Madam Felicia Ntisa, Kass Naidoo, Madam Ntambi Revele and many more fought for the recognition we see today. It is therefore imperative that we recognise and appreciate the excellent work done and yet to be made in this industry.

Stander: This category was introduced at the GSport awards in 2018 and I applaud Kass Naidoo and her team and the sponsors for acknowledging the people who work tirelessly behind the scenes to promote their sports and grow awareness for their athletes.



Marisa Calvert, head of PR for ASEM Engage.

UPDATE: On Saturday, 31 August, Marisa Calvert walked away with the Woman in PR and Sponsorship GSport Award for 2019!

Marisa Calvert

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We are told women athletes are paid less than men because they generate less money. But that will always be the case if women's sports aren't marketed properly.

To every journalist who says "kwaai Reesie, stuur en ons gaan die storie run" - this is for you.

To every Varsity Sports student-athlete who takes our call, who sends through their quote for the umpteenth time but most importantly, who allows us to tell their story - this is for you.

To my colleagues - both in office and at the universities - whom I deal with on a daily basis and who allows me the opportunity to do what I do best (and love doing) - this is for you.

To my family, who suffers the most when I have to work late - this is for you.

Thank you to everyone who has voted, prayed and believed in me.

And thank you to Gsport Trust for this incredible stage where we celebrate women in sport. Last night was absolutely magical ☐

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For more on the Awards, click [here](#). You can also connect with Calvert on LinkedIn [here](#) and follow [Taele](#) and [Stander](#) on Twitter.

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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