

# Pretoria North

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## Comrades coach caught in tough spot at the finish line

To be coach of both of the two top women Comrades athletes could easily land one between a rock and a hard place.

After Sunday's dramatic Comrades race Lindsey Parry (Tuks/hpc head coach) can certainly vouch for this.

Charné Bosman (@Nedbank Dream Team) was the eventual winner with Caroline Wöstmann (KPMG) in second place. It was obvious that Wöstmann was seriously in pain and struggling with every stride because of severe cramping.

Because of this scenario that developed over approximately the last 20 kilometres of the route, Parry found himself in the proverbial 'Catch-22' situation'. Keep in mind that he coaches both athletes and was privy to their dreams and disappointments over the past 12 months.

But what was he to do? Sport is cruel and there can only be one winner.

"When Caroline started cramping about 30 kilometres from the finish, her situation worsened progressively. I knew she needed my support and help badly, but so did Charné," Parry explained.

"My saving grace was that I had two supporting seconding teams on route. I always believe that a coach's duty lies with the athlete who is suffering and therefore needs help more urgently. That is why I stayed with Caroline but I first made sure that Charné received all the relevant information she needed to stay on course to win." Parry described Bosman's victory as well-deserved.

"Charné was committed to winning and she has made great sacrifices to fulfil the dream towards which she had been working for years. "But I feel for Caroline. Luckily she is still young and there will be other op-

portunities for her to win major races."

The fact that Wöstmann took the lead in the women's race almost right from the start led to speculation that she probably set her mind on winning in under six hours and was going too hard too fast.

According to Parry, going for the record was never on the cards.

"If Caroline wanted to have a realistic chance of breaking the record for the down run she would have had to go through halfway in at least 3 hours and 4 minutes or even quicker.

She was timed at 3:07 at the halfway mark. According to our race plan she was supposed to be running about 3:10 at that stage.

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"I can honestly say that Caroline did not take the lead because she was pushing the pace. She felt comfortable within herself with the way she was running. In hindsight I perhaps should have asked Caroline to slow down. When I saw her with 30 kilometres to go she was still fine. Three kilometres later she started cramping."

Parry said Wöstmann's altercation with the motorbike is not the

reason why things went awry.

"Naturally I would have preferred that it did not happen, but it did and there was nothing we could do about it.

"The reality was that Caroline was in trouble before it happened, therefore I don't think it influenced the outcome of the race in any way."

As to Bosman's and Wöstmann's plans from now on Parry said: "Charne will do more or less what we did last year. She will keep on training to stay in shape but there is no major race left for her this year.

"I want Caroline to recover before we start talking about what she wants to do. I think she may want to compete in another race, but I am not sure at this stage."