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## Gerda Steyn invited to join elite runners

South Africa's new golden girl of long-distance running, 2018 Two Oceans champion and Comrades marathon gold medallist Gerda Steyn, has been invited to join the elite women's field at this year's New York City Marathon (NYCM).

This 2018 women's field is seen as one of the most competitive ever to compete in New York.

This is also why she will not be competing in the world 100km championships.

She committed to the NYCM soon after Two Oceans and her training was already structured accordingly three weeks after the Comrades Marathon, specifically for New York.

"I am so thrilled about this. The organisers of the New York Marathon contacted me after my Two Oceans win earlier this year. They invited me to run this year's race and I accepted their invitation after discussing it with my coach Nick Bester. I have already started with my initial preparation and really want to make sure that I will be in my best possible shape when I line up come 4 November," said Steyn.

She will be part of a star-studded women's open division that includes the likes of three-time NYCM champion Mary Keitany of Kenya, London Marathon champion and Kenyan Vivian Cheruiyot, 2017 NYCM champion Shalane Flanagan as well as this year's Boston Marathon champion Des Linden.

What makes Steyn's inclusion in the elite field of this famous race even more remarkable is the fact that she only started running about five years ago.

In 2017 Steyn, who is part of the Nedbank Running Club's (NRC) Green Dream Team, surprised herself and others by finishing 4th at the Comrades Marathon. She followed it up with a win at this year's Two Oceans Marathon and a second place finish at the Comrades Marathon.

Her rise in long-distance running has been nothing short of remarkable.

She has been guided and coached by Nick Bester, a former Comrades winner himself as well as the national manager of the NRC.

Steyn, who is well known for complementing her running with a lot of cross training, took a good break after Comrades in June, and only started getting back into the mix of things in July.

"From there on I started building up slowly, and just enjoyed running on trails and hiking in the Alps," said Steyn, who does a lot of training in France.

She will be heading back to South Africa in September for her final stretch of marathon preparation.

"I have had a fantastic time in France but now I am looking forward to enjoying the warmer weather back in South Africa. I will also be doing some shorter distance races leading up to the marathon," she concluded.



Gerda Steyn finishes first in this year's Two Oceans Marathon with a huge smile on her face.