

## Sport

# Local hero rules Two Oceans

STEPHEN GRANGER

CAPE TOWN: Lungile Gongga turned back the clock to give Cape Town its first Old Mutual Two Oceans Marathon win in 44 years after a thrilling duel in the latter stages of yesterday's race.

The 37-year-old Khayelitsha marathoner gave his all in an epic battle over the last kilometres and was physically ill on the field, collapsing as he broke the tape in triumph, three hours, nine minutes and 43 seconds after the traditional fish horn sounded in Newlands Main Road.

Cape Town artist and poet Don Hartley took his second Two Oceans title in 1973 before upcountry and international athletes took control of the race, shutting out the locals – until yesterday.

The race will go down as one of the most memorable and exciting of all time, with six runners from five countries within a stride of each other at the top of Constantia Nek, 10km from the finish.

Lesotho athlete Warinyane Lebopo, 38, threatened to rain on Cape Town's parade, drawing level



THE SUNDAY  
**independent**  
APRIL 16 2017



ultra-marathoner in his

But dynamite comes in small packages and Gongga exploded from his rivals 9km from the finish to secure a life-changing victory.



"I think that was probably my biggest win," the soft-spoken G o n g g a under-stated after he had recovered.

"I must pay tribute to (former New York Marathon winner) Hendrick Ramaala. I have been training with him for some months in Joburg that laid the base for my win today.

"This more than makes up for my disappointment in Rio. The race went to plan – I just knew I had to stick to the lead pack and make my move towards the end.

"I moved to Cape Town from the Eastern Cape in 2009, and, although we still have strong links with Port Elizabeth, I regard myself as a Cape Town athlete now!"

Gongga's superb 2:11.59 second position in the 2015 Cape Town Marathon secured him a place in the Olympic marathon team last year, but a combination of illness and humid weather forced him out of the race before the finish.

Belarusian Maryna Damantsevich, *pictured*, gave up an invitation to race the London Marathon to be in Cape Town for Easter and lived up to pre-race expectations with an emphatic Two Oceans victory in the women's competition.

Damantsevich crossed the line in an excellent 3:37.13, given the breezy conditions which prevailed, to beat ultra-marathon debutante, Durban's Jenna Challenger, by a full 10 minutes.

But the apparent ease of her victory belied a dramatic and painful start, with the Belarusian landing face down on the pavement in the