**Breaking barriers set to showcase the best of the best**

***After a successful 2020 which saw the Nedbank Runified series captivate the country becoming the biggest mass participation virtual series on the continent, the bigger and better Nedbank Runified series showcases on 23 May where Nedbank Runified: Breaking Barriers 50km takes place in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality.***

Besides a host of both International and Rest Of Africa entrants joining the best of the best South African runners, no less than 7 former Comrades champions will be toeing the line in the spectacle that aims at breaking the World 50km record in the process.

The time that the men will be aiming for belongs to the late Thompson Magawana who set a scintillating 2:43:38 en route to his still standing Two Oceans Marathon course record back in 1988. “The fact that Thompson ran that time over 30 years ago on a route that included climbing Chapmans Peak and Constantia Nek is phenomenal,” says Nedbank running club national team manager Nick Bester. “We have a very good field assembled for this race and the course is flat and fast so I confident that we can see something special on race day.”

The current official ratified World record time for the women over 50km belongs to Britain’s Alyson Dixon who broke South African Frith Van der Merwe’s record, clocking 3:07:20 when taking the World title in Brasov, Romania back in 2019 which was also her first swing at ultra-distance running. Following that, and also on debut, 2:22 American runner Des Linden recently lowered that record to 2:59:54, although this time is still to be ratified pending all requirements needed to be in place from IAU.

“Everything that is needed to be crossed off in terms of IAU’s requirements has been done for our event so that if a record is set, there won’t be any issues,” says Bester. With the involvement of IAU, the event has also been given a label, which is bestowed upon the best of the best. “I am happy to say that our event has been awarded an IAU Bronze Label, which is only afforded to two other events which was Comrades and Two Oceans.”

Comrades Marathon winner and record holder Gerda Steyn will be toeing the line but will not be going the distance as she focusses on the upcoming Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan, where she will be joined with fellow Nedbank running club teammate Irvette Van Zyl. “Both Gerda and Irvette will be in the race as pacemakers for the ladies’ field and they are both under strict instructions not to finish as this is preparation for the Olympics,” says Bester. “It is not only perfectly in their training schedule; bit gives them a chance to give back to other athletes looking to break barriers which is all this event is about.”

Other former Comrades winners in the ladies’ race include Charne Bosman who took the title back in 2016. In the men’s race, Comrades record holder David Gatebe will be joined by former winners Bongmusa Mthembu, Edward Mothibi, Modibe Ludwick Mamabolo and Claude Moshiywa.

“Besides a very strong International field, the guys to watch should be the former Comrades winners who have shown that not only do they have the experience on the big stage, but have since been improving their speed a lot in this pandemic of no races,” says Bester. Nedbank’s Edward Mothibi is a case of example. After winning the overall title in last years Cape Town Marathon in a new PB of 2:16:48 run at altitude, Mothibi has been in a training camp preparing specially for this event together with his coach Dave Adams. “I was in contact with Edwards coach and he is confident of something big happening,” said an excited Bester. “He feels that he is in his best marathon shape ever and sessions at World record pace have been feeling very relaxed.”

The event also will enjoy live TV coverage with Sabc Sport confirming that the race will be broadcast live. Stay tuned to the Nedbank running club website [www.nedbankrunningclub.co.za](http://www.nedbankrunningclub.co.za) as well as social media platforms as we continue to bring out more information on the event, as well as profiling some of the big names that will be competing.

