

# CAPE MARATHON DEBUTANT'S VOWS!

## Olympian promises to shock a quality field

By **MATHEWS MPETE**

**SHE finished the 2021 Tokyo Olympics women's marathon in position 15, and now she wants to win this year's edition of the Sanlam Cape Town Marathon.**

This, believe it or not, will be her first 42,2km distance in South Africa. Gerda Steyn is determined to make her presence felt on Mzansi soil, where she will be up against top competition from Ethiopia, Namibia and Kenya on Sunday – but she vows: “I’M READY!”.

A gold medal at this year's Sanlam Cape Town Marathon is a priority considering it will be the first race to be open to more than 1 000 runners lining up in the Greenpoint streets, since Covid-19, as an anticipated 9 000 road runners are billed to line up for the race.

The race will start and end within the vicinity of the DHL Newlands Stadium on Sunday from 6.15am, with 9 000 divided in 30 groups to avoid congestion and adhering to Covid-19 protocols on social distancing.

Speaking to *SunSport* yesterday, Steyn, who has been using the Spar Women's 10km Grand Prix to loosen up tight muscles after the Olympics, said she's in great shape and looking forward to the race.

Her last race was the Grand Prix at the Agricultural Research Council Farm in Irene, Centurion in Tshwane where she finished third in 34.17.

According to Steyn, these were just preparation races for the testing Cape Town Marathon, which was last held in 2019 and was cancelled last year due to the deadly pandemic.

She's basically been away for six weeks without straining herself competitively, and will be back for this, where she promises to show her competition flames from her shoes.

“I've missed the Grand Prix (in Gerberha) last weekend because I was saving myself strength for Cape Town, and it was the right decision,” said Steyn, who finished the Tokyo Olympics Marathon in 2:32:10.

“I will be giving it a solid challenge to win the Cape Town event.

I'm glad I came back from Japan, and in all the other races, injury free. The two Spar races helped me a lot.”

She will be heading back to Dubai after this race where her husband works, before coming back to South Africa for more action before end of the year.

But she admits her fellow race partners in Dubai and in Joburg helped her a lot.

“It's always not easy living at altitude in Joburg and compete at sea level in Cape Town.

“It will be tough, but it's a challenge I'm ready to take,” she added.

This is the woman who won both the Comrades Marathon and Two Oceans in the same year, a feat that has never been repeated since 2019.

She went about setting the Comrades Marathon up-run record in the same year of 5:58:53, becoming the first woman to run sub-6 hours for that race.

She is among impressive company – facing five athletes who have run faster than 2:29 in 42,2km distance, and the competition is at a similar level to her.

Fastest in the field is Kenya's Lucy Karimi with her 2:24.24 (3rd Geneva Marathon, 2021).

2019 Sanlam Cape Town Marathon runner-up, Nurit Shimels is also back, boasting a best of 2:27.40.

Namibia's Beata Naigambo, who has represented the county on 11 occasions, had a best of 2:26.57 to her name.

Ayantu Abera Demissa and Beje Bekelu Geleta of Ethiopia complete the line up with bests of 2:29.30 (Padova, 2019) and 2:27.50 (Sevilla, 2020), respectively.

Gerda Steyn says she's ready for Sunday's Sanlam Cape Town Marathon.  
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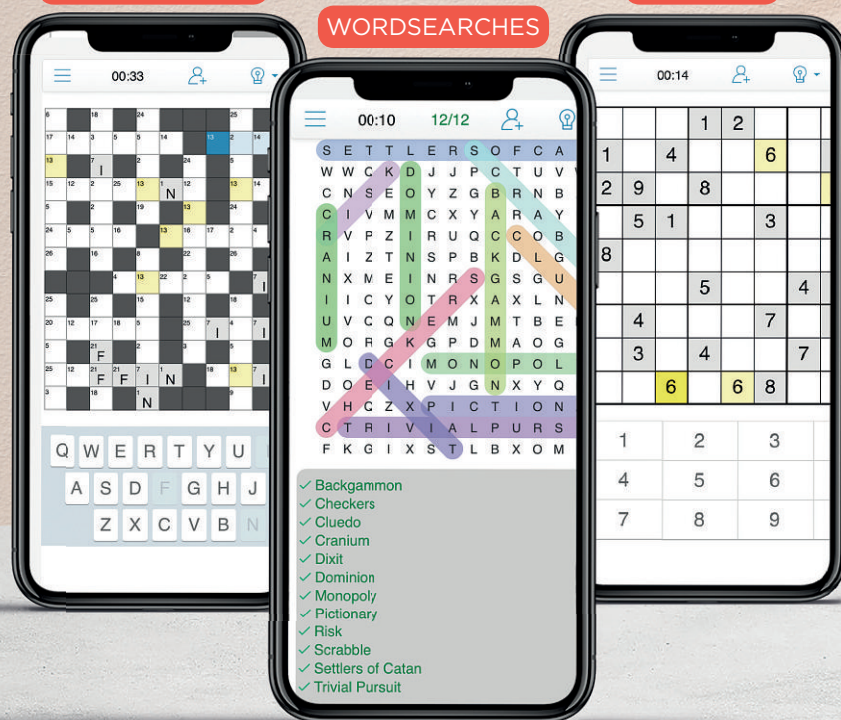
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