



*From having done almost no running seven years ago, to Two Oceans and Comrades champion.*

# RUNNER *Of The Year*

*Caroline Wöstmann, 32*

By Lindsey Parry

**▶ CAROLINE WÖSTMANN** became the first South African Comrades winner in 14 years, and she was only the second South African female (and fourth athlete overall) to win Two Oceans and Comrades in the same year. She also ran the fastest ever 'Up Run', if calculated in minutes per kilometre, only missing out on the record because an extra 800 metres was added to the route to avoid roadworks.

But it was the story behind Wöstmann's win – how she rose from having done almost no running seven years ago, to Two Oceans and Comrades elite runner – that catapulted her above all other South African athletes.

Wöstmann proudly admits that initially she took up running because she battled to get back to her normal weight after her first pregnancy. She learned as she went along, having to miss a few Comrades – first due to injury, and again during her second pregnancy. She finished in fifth place at the 2014 'Down Run', at the same time suffering from her second stress fracture.

Despite her full-time job at Wits University, the fact that she had to complete and submit her Masters, and her responsibilities as a mother to daughters Gabriella and Isabell, Wöstmann had an ideal build-up to both Two Oceans and the Comrades. She really has shown South Africa that you *can* have your Comrades cake and eat it.

Wöstmann's story has captured the imagination of the running nation, because she's humble, approachable, and in love with running. We can literally see her happiness when she's out running on the road, and she always has time for one more photo with a fan. She's not just a superhero: she's a real-life superhero. →

*(Lindsey Parry is a qualified biokineticist and full-time coach to some of SA's top runners and triathletes.)*

# A Normal Champion

By Bruce Fordyce

► **Wöstmann** was definitely one of the contenders to win the Comrades, but it was a surprise to me that she managed to win both *Two Oceans* and *Comrades* in the same year. Logic over the years has told us you can't do that, because *Two Oceans* takes too much out of you. But Wöstmann taught us that it's possible – and she's become an inspiration to women runners.

Her tactic of taking structured walk breaks was something I hadn't seen in a long time. They were definitely planned; they weren't forced. There's knowledge to be gained from that.

But I agree with Lindsey Parry – it's not just her performance that makes her worthy of this title. It's how she contributes to the sport. Wöstmann is a happy, intelligent and normal runner who takes toilet breaks during the Comrades, just like the rest of us. Whenever I've chatted to her I've found her accessible, and not in the least bit aloof. Though she had other responsibilities while she trained for the Comrades, which perhaps some of her opponents didn't have, she has an exceptional talent. Wöstmann is a great advert for the sport of running.