

Mothibi and Steyn make it a local affair at the Comrades

Gerda shatters
down-run record to
bank R1,2-million

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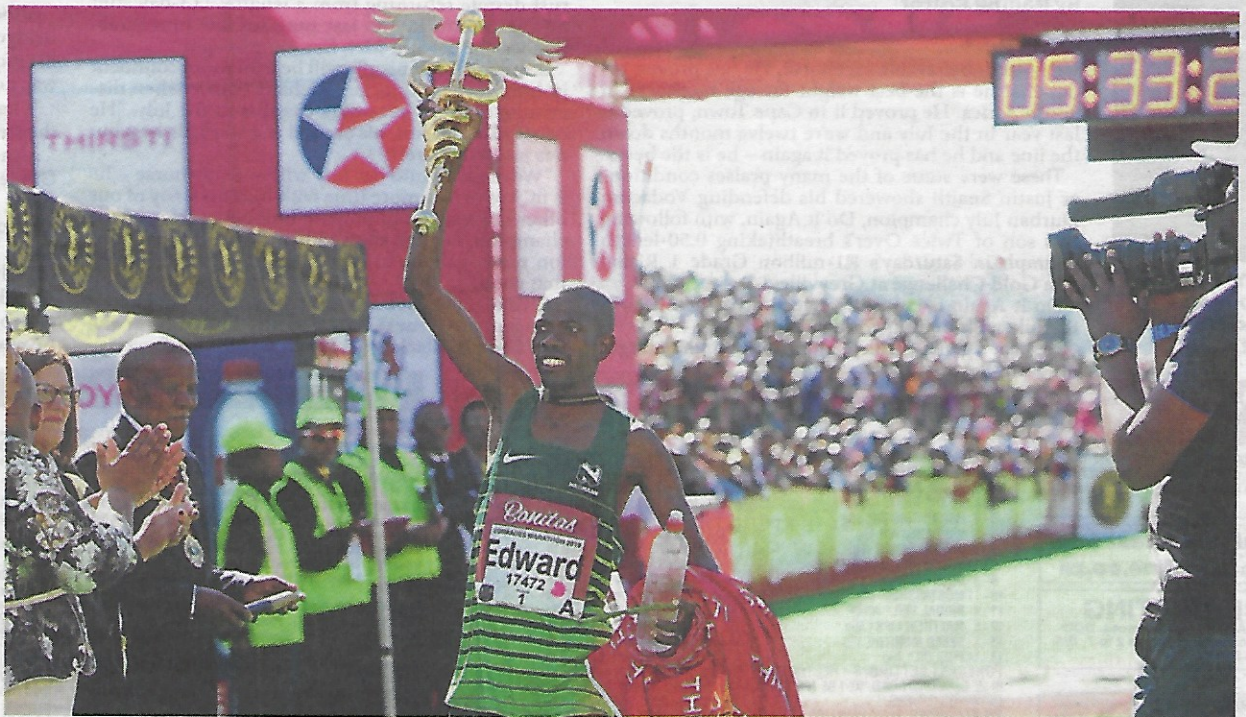
Get a red letter day, green as the colour in Pietermaritzburg when athletes Gerda Steyn and Edward Mothibi were the toast of the 94th Comrades Marathon.

Steyn's winning time of 3:53 shattered Elena Nurieva's 2006 record of 3:59.24 to smithereens.

Mothibi battled hard to take off defending up-run champion Bong'musa "The Power Bullet" Mthembu to win his maiden Comrades in a time of 5:31:33. Both athletes were with Nedbank Running Club.

While the men's race was exciting, with the contest being decided at the infamous Shuter's Short's climb, the ladies race was a no-contest as soon as Steyn, 29, took the lead at the Winston Park marker.

From there the two-time Comrades and Oceans Marathon winner took consummate control with every marker, her lead increased and so did the distance between her and her competition. Her efforts earned her R1.2m. She got R500,000 for her victory, R500,000 for breaking the record and R200,000 for being the first South African woman to cross the finish line. "I can't believe what hap-



Edward Mothibi staved off Bong'musa Mthembu to win the Comrades. / PHOTOS/JACKIE CLAUSEN



Gerda Steyn smashes the 2006 ladies record with her victory yesterday in the Comrades Marathon.

and everything went well. It was only towards the end when fatigue started to set in, but I could smell the finish line. I thought the record was

for it. Halfway through the course, I knew I was on course for the record," said Steyn.

Early pacemakers Canisius Nyamutsita and TK

Drummond.

Down-run record holder David Gatebe faded at Camperdown and for a time, Mothibi also looked like he lacked the necessary power. The likes of Gift Kelehe and Joseph Mphuthi also faded but Nao Kazami (third - 5:39:16), Justin Kemboi, Mothibi and Mthembu formed a quintet that controlled the race.

"When Bong'musa went past me, I told myself no, this can't happen because that meant he was going to take the race.

"When I came back, I was strong and I could see he was backing down ... That's when I knew it was my time," Mothibi