

South Africa are literally against the ropes going into their fourth match against West Indies at the Rose Bowl Ground today (11.30am).

They need to win, if they are to live to fight another day.

"If we have a good week next week and win a couple of games, then the whole thing changes.

It's only us that can change it," rea-

soned Gibson.

"I have every confidence in the players in the dressing room because they have done it before."

Derailed by a frustrating 15-run defeat to Australia, the West Indies will be looking to get their campaign

Mothibi says he'll pay off his house, as Steyn smashes record

By DANIEL MOTHOWAGAE

SOUTH Africa today has all the bragging rights after two of its ultra-distance runners – Edward Mothibi and Gerda Steyn – won the Comrades Marathon up-run yesterday.

The two Nedbank Athletics Club runners beat a quality field of about 21 000 highly enthusiastic athletes who had to manoeuvre a gruelling 87km race in KwaZulu Natal.

North West province produced yet another Comrades champion in Mothibi who clinched the up-run edition in 5 hours 31 minutes 33 seconds.

His team-mate Steyn was the big winner, completed a double victory for South Africa with a record-breaking victory in the women's race and in the process bagged R1 million in total prize money.

After the race the 34-year-old from Mogogoe Village in Mahikeng said he nearly gave up after people cheered at last year's winner Bongmusa Mthembu.

"The people of KZN love Bongmusa," said Mothibi.

"They kept cheering for him and that almost played on my mind. And when he pulled away from me, I thought it was the end of me, but I just kept on coming.

"If your mind is not strong, then you will lose it. You have to be mentally strong to run this race.

"This is the highest amount of money I have ever won, I want to pay off my house with my winnings."

He beat Mthembu to the finish line who settled for second spot in 5:31:58.

With his victory, 34-year-old Mothibi not only pocketed the R500 000 grand prize but he emulated his hometown boys from Mahikeng, Gift and Andrew Kelehe, the last from the mineral rich province to win the world famous ultra-race.

Mothibi edged Mthembu on the incline of Polly Shorts in Camper-

down, the unforgiving hill that is known to separate the boys from men.

The two had gone toe-to-toe with 20km to go after they had unshackled themselves from the big chasing pack that initially had 2015 winner Gift Kelehe and 2016 champ David Gatebe.

Not lagging far behind to complete the top three was world 100km record holder Nao Kazami of Japan, who was running his first Comrades race yesterday. Kazami clocked 5:39:16.

Entsika Athletics Club coach John Hamlett had expected his accomplished charge Kelehe to make the top three but it was Gordon Lesetedi and Siya Mqambeli who sneaked into the last gold medal spots at ninth and 10th spots, respectively.

Steyn reached the finish at the Scottsville Racecourse in Pietermaritzburg in 5:58:54, eclipsing the 6:09:24 set by Russian Elena Nurgalieva in 2006.

"I'm grateful for a great day," she said.

"I have trained hard, and last year I learned a hard lesson. I was so focused on running a plan but this year I just ran to the best of my ability and tried to enjoy the race

"I didn't think I would break the record, it was in the back of my mind but it certainly wasn't my number one goal."

■ *Mothowagae was in Durban as the guest of Entsika Consulting at Comrades*



Comrades Marathon champions, Edward Mothibi and Gerda Steyn (bottom), have represented South Africa with courage in KZN yesterday.

