

Nedbank Runified Breaking Barriers 50 km Ultramarathon

6 March 2022



**BREAKING
BARRIERS**

Nedbank Continues to Break Barriers at the 50 km ultramarathon

What was set to maintain running in South Africa and unite athletes through running in support of mental health, saw the men's 50km world record absolutely obliterated by South African athlete Stephen Mokoka at the Nedbank Runified Breaking Barriers 50 km Ultramarathon in Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality.

Once again, the 10 km loop on Marine drive proved to be a fast stretch of road as Mokoka in the colours of Boxer running club crossed the finish line at 02:40:13 to become a world record title holder in what was his ultramarathon debut. Once pacemaker and local Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality athlete, Melikhaya Frans stepped off the road at 35km with his job done, it was a 2:56km that followed by Mokoka that tore the field apart.

“Following the success of the first ultramarathon in 2021 and after months of planning, I put my neck out on the line to say that we would break a record for the second time, and that’s exactly what we did today,” says race Director and Nedbank Running Club National Manager, Nick Bester. “We took the learnings from last year and ticked every box to make sure that all procedures and rules have been adhered to in order for our race to meet World Athletics standards.”

The women’s world record which was set by Nedbank Running Club’s Irvette Van Zyl at the first Breaking Barriers race in 2021 was the target this year but a fast start saw the record slipping away in the last 5km after both van Zyl and Kenyan Shelmith Muriuki dropped back in the final stages allowing Nedbank running club teammate Amelework Boshu to take victory, just outside the world record. Her time of 3:04:58 just missed Van Zyl’s 3:04:24 world record clocking. With Muriuki in second and Van Zyl closing the podium in third, the Nedbank Running Club reigned supreme with a 1-2-3 finish female division.

“Today we witnessed world-class performances from our South African athletes, and we are proud to incentivize them for their achievements. Nedbank remains a proud supporter of running and the success of Breaking Barriers has set a high benchmark of what the Nedbank Runified series stands for and what is to come,” says Nthabiseng Matshekga.

Behind Mokoka, the Nedbank running club duo of Tete Dijana and Edward Mothibi ran amazing races to finish 2nd and 3rd, all taking their share of one of the largest ultramarathon purses in South Africa. With five Nedbank running club athletes on the podium in the men’s and women’s races, Nedbank donated R10 000 to SADAG.

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“We believe that sport has the unique power to foster unity, inclusion and stimulate nation building and it was so powerful to see participants wear their green ribbon and run-in solidarity to raise awareness mental health awareness. We are looking forward to working with SADAG to further allows us to build a support structure while raising awareness in our communities,” adds Matshekga.

Gqeberha is known as the friendly city, and this was the case today with the weather gods also coming to the party. “We are proud to have this event in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality where we are the forefront of hosting world class events,” said NMC Cllr Bassie Kamana. “Next year I would also personally like to be running so I’m letting the athletes know now they must watch for me on the podium!”

As Breaking Barriers ends on a high-note, Nedbank Running Club swiftly moves into its third year, Nedbank Runified is encouraging more runners to join the movement to better mental health under its new meaning, ‘runify’.

Between April and October Nedbank will host group runs across South Africa, and we encourage everyone to get involved. Sign up to the Nedbank Running Club on Strava for more information.

Nedbank Running Club is more than a club and welcomes runners of all fitness levels to unify through running. Let us runify in our support for mental well-being, and take our first steps towards a happier, healthier South Africa.

*While World Record Performances are accepted at face value, the WA World Records are submitted to the rigorous ratification process that includes certified course measurement, official timing, doping control and additional checks and standards. While times are still provisional, the success of today continues to put South African running on the map.

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