

## Van Zyl not happy with race result

Olympian marathon athlete Irvette van Zyl (Nedbank) was slightly disappointed when she finished second at the South African half-marathon championships in Port Elizabeth the past weekend.

Kenya's Sheila Chesang won in 1 hour 10 minutes and 58 seconds with Van Zyl second in 1:11:00, just two seconds behind her.

Lebogang Phalula was third in 1:11:35. Although she finished second Van Zyl still claimed the SA title.

"I would have been OK with finishing third, but finishing second was a disappointment," Van Zyl said.

This certainly sounds confusing, especially taking into account that Van Zyl missed out on setting a new personal best time by merely four seconds. But, confusing as it might be, the Nedbank athlete had reason to be disappointed.

Initially, the plan for her was to only use the championships as a last good tempo run before the Olympic marathon on 14 August.

"Lindsey Parry (coach) and I agreed that my aim should be to finish in about 73 minutes which ought to have been good enough for a top-three finish. After three kilometres I realised the pace we were running was too fast, so I dropped off slightly and focussed on running the pace we had agreed on.

"At the 16 kilometre marker I heard the announcer telling the spectators I was closing in on the race leaders. My reaction was that he was totally wrong, but seeing that I was feeling really good I decided to up my pace."

"I was not thinking about winning, but decided to lessen the margin by which I was going to lose.

"To my surprise I started to feel stronger with every stride. I accelerated even more and caught up with the race leaders at the 19km marker.

"Then I made a stupid tactical error. Instead of sticking with them, saving my energy for an attack on the last kilometre, I surged ahead hoping to drop everybody. But this did not happen because they stuck with me."



Irvette van Zyl in action.

Photo: Reg Caldecott