

**MODERN**

# **athlete**

AUGUST 2021 | ISSUE 144

SA's Biggest Running Publication  
[www.modernathlete.co.za](http://www.modernathlete.co.za)

## **Henry Cock**

133 x 21.1km a day  
for a World Record  
& Mental Aweh-ness

## **Harriet Kruger**

Fighting Cancer in  
Her Running Shoes

## **Marioné Fourie**

Triple Hurdles Champ  
Has Eyes Set on Glory

## **Abbas Harris**

From Zero to 21.1km  
in One Crazy Week

## **Natascha Van Zyl**

A Mother's Promise to  
Run for Her Daughter

## **Driveway Running**

Running Mann Revisits  
His Lockdown Therapy

**Treasure Hunt Prize**  
R2000 adidas Voucher

Cover Image: Courtesy Henry Cock

# Eyes on HER GOALS

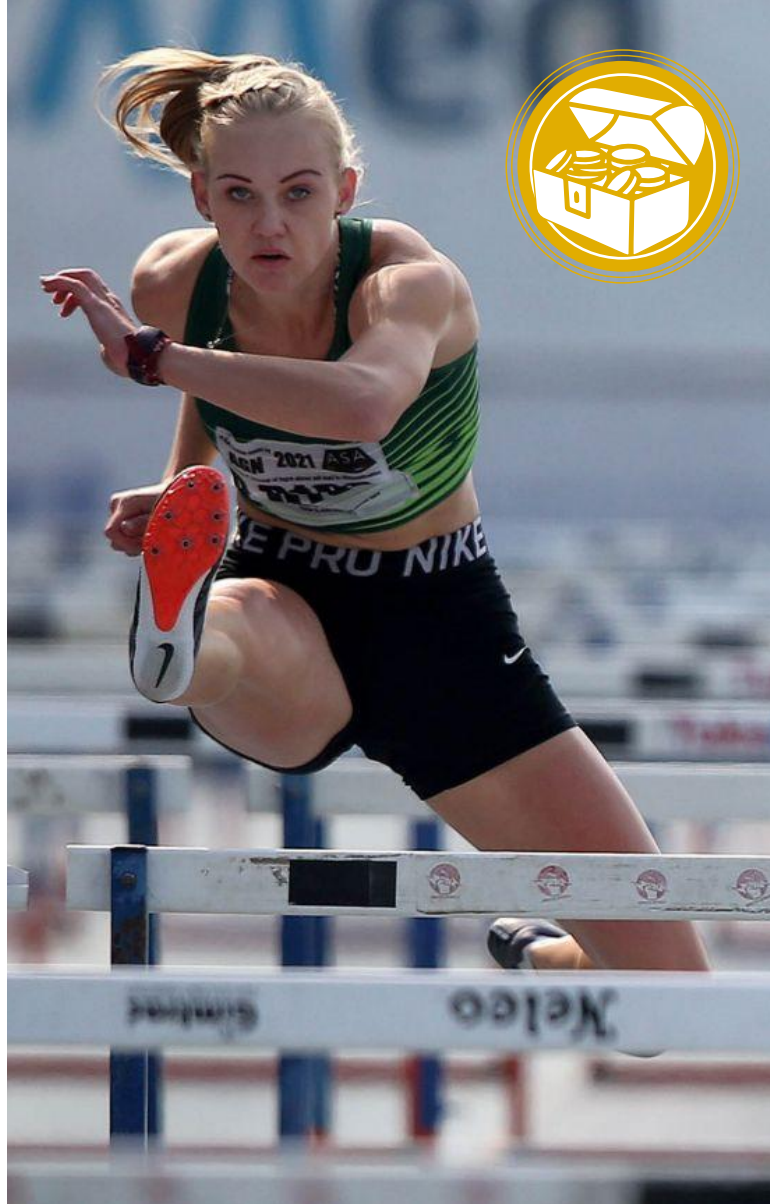
Having already overcome some challenging hurdles in her youth, triple SA Champion Marioné Fourie is enjoying a golden year on the track. We caught up with the young hurdler just before she left for the world Junior Champs in Kenya. – **BY SEAN FALCONER**

It's been quite some year for 19-year-old Tuks first year Sport Science student Marioné Fourie. After a full year of no racing due to COVID in 2020, she returned to the track in 2021 and proceeded to win nearly everything. At the Gauteng North Champs on 27 March she won the 100m hurdles title in 13.80 seconds, and added a second place in the 100m dash with a personal best 12.18. Then she claimed the hurdles gold at the ASA Under-20 (Junior) Champs in Paarl on 10 April, clocking 13.71 in the heats and a new personal best 13.47 in the final, beating the 13.49 she ran in the ASA Athletix Invitational Meeting in Roodepoort on 30 March.

Exactly one week after the Junior Champs, she lined up in the ASA Senior Champs in Pretoria and powered her way to the gold medal, with another 13.71 in the heats and a winning 13.54 in the final. But still she wasn't done, adding the USSA (student) Champs title in 13.60 in mid-May.

**“I would not have believed it if someone told me that I would win three national titles this season.”**

**This is a season of collecting championship medals!**



“I would not have believed it if someone told me that I would win three national titles this season. Before this, I did not win that often - not in major races, anyway – but I have really seen a big improvement since I joined coach Jaun Strydom. He has given me a new programme that includes gym and strength work, and my body has reacted well to that, which has saw me improve from 14.8 to 13.8 at the beginning of this season,” says Marioné.

## Record Potential

Taking a whole second off her time was already a big breakthrough, but much more was to come for Marioné in this golden season. On 19 June, she clocked a scintillating 13.26 in an AGN League meet Pretoria, finishing just 0.03 seconds behind SA Record-holder and former SA Champ Rikinette Steenkamp. This would have given Marioné a new SA Junior Record, beating Taylon Bieldt's mark of 13.35 run in Poland in 2016, but the time was wind-assisted, with a following wind of +2.4 metres per second. The legal limit for a record is 2m/s, but Marioné is nevertheless getting closer to improving the record.

While Marioné is not yet at the level of running sub-13 seconds, and thus did not hit the required Olympic qualifying mark of 12.84 to go compete in Tokyo, her results this season have seen her qualify for the World Junior Champs in Nairobi, Kenya, scheduled for the end of August. To prepare for this meet, where she will line up as the ninth-ranked athlete in the world in the under-20 age category, she headed to Italy in July for a training camp, with Jaun and other athletes from his training group. While there, she competed in three meets, clocking another three sub-14:00 times to bring her tally for the year thus far to 14.

“It was my first time outside the country, so it was very exciting to get a different view of competition and experience, and learning about other people's cultures as well,” says Marioné. “The World Junior Champs will also be first time running for South Africa, so I am very, very excited about that. I will admit that I am very nervous, but I will do my best, and I hope I can make the podium and beat Taylon's record.”

**“I would like to coach athletics someday and stay in the sport, but for now the focus is on my own athletics career.”**

### Facing Challenges

It seems appropriate that hurdling has proven to be Marioné's strength, given that she has faced challenges from a young age. Her parents divorced when she was still young, and she was raised by her grandparents in Vanderbijlpark, with her grandmother standing in as the mother-figure in her life. Marioné began running in primary school, initially taking part in the sprints, but then in Grade four she began hurdling as well. “I wanted to try something different and found the hurdles very compelling,” she says.

Her natural talent was soon spotted by a local coach, who invited her to join his training squad and coached her to her first SA Schools Champs meet in Grade five, where she finished second in her age category. “I competed in the SA Schools Champs from Grade five to Grade 12, and from Grade seven onwards I also went to the SA Youth and SA Junior Champs. I finished second or third in most of my races in those years, and in 2019 I was fourth at SA Schools, but second at SA Juniors.”

In 2020 Marioné was unable to compete due to the COVID pandemic, which allowed her to focus on her matric schoolwork at Hoërskool Driehoek, and she collected an academic award to go with all the sporting awards earned during her school years. Having matriculated, she began studying Sport Science at the University of Pretoria, after turning down a full bursary to go study and compete in the USA. “I decided that I wanted to stay in South Africa, and I plan to go into biokinetics once I finish my studies. I would like to coach athletics someday and stay in the sport, but for now the focus is on my own athletics career,” she says.

**Taking a whole second off her time was already a big breakthrough, but much more was to come for Marioné in this golden season.**

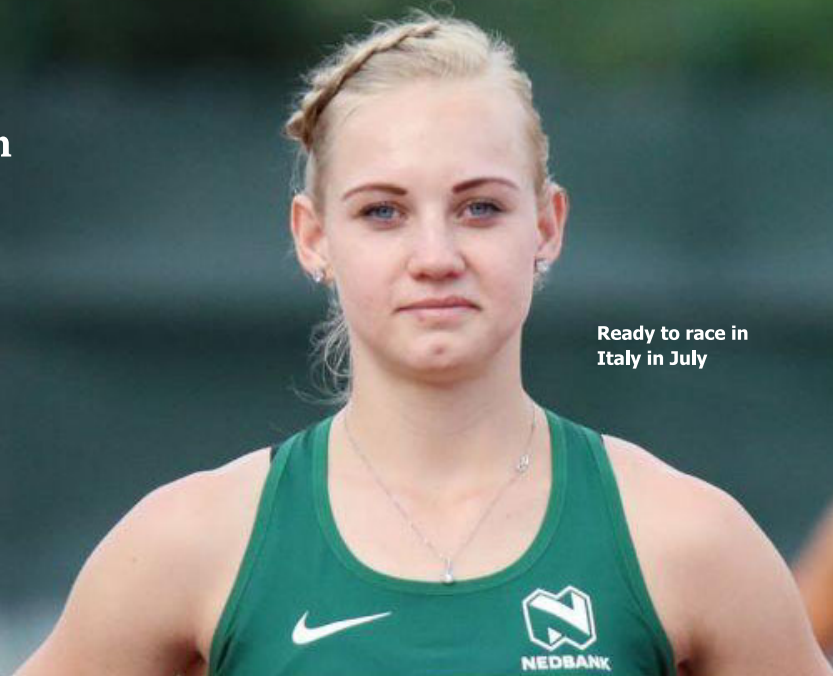
### Chasing Goals

Looking ahead, Marioné says she has set herself both short-term and long-term goals in her running career and her studies. “Obviously, short term is the World Junior Championships, but to also continue working on my technique, and also to focus on my studies. Long term, I want to become an Olympian and be an expert in sports science. In terms of my hurdling technique, with the help of my coach, we have put everything into perfecting everything needed to be the best, and it is my main event that I want to focus on, with the Paris Olympics in 2024 my main goal. Another big stepping stone to get to Paris will be the World Student Champs, once they are back on the calendar.”

“I have been fortunate to have great support from various people that have helped me get this far. My grandparents, my boyfriend Tristan and his family, who have taken really good care of me in Pretoria, and my coach,” adds Marioné. “I am also so grateful for the assistance of the Nedbank Running Club and the clubs sponsors who have provided me with so much assistance and always make sure I have everything I need. Now it is up to me to see how far I can go, but one of the most important things I have learnt is that you must have discipline, otherwise you can't succeed. And I want to succeed in everything I do.” *AK*

### Marioné in Action

CHECK OUT THIS VIDEO of Marioné in action in Italy in July, running a 13.85 and finishing second, in spite of hitting two hurdles. As she says, hurdling is all about getting your technique right, and she is still working on that in order to reach her maximum potential, with the goal of reaching the 2024 Olympics as her biggest incentive.



Ready to race in Italy in July