**Nedbank Breaking Barriers 50km sets World first**

***After a record breaking event last year that saw two World best times ever in the men’s and women’s only race with an additional 4 World best age group times, the Nedbank Breaking Barriers 50km looks set to continue that record breaking run to be held in Gqeberha on 6 March 2022 after the event was awarded a label status, the first of its kind ever for an ultra-marathon.***

World Athletics (WA), the governing body for international athletics, gifted Athletics South Africa (ASA), Eastern Province Athletics (EPA) and the Nedbank team a World first as the first ever ultra-marathon to receive a World Athletics label status. By virtue of this prestigious status, the event is now recognized by World Athletics as one of the leading events in the World.

WA define the label status as: Denoting “high standards in event organization, safety and runner experience, application of the World Athletics Competition Rules, support from public authorities to the event and a financial commitment to anti-doping.” Additionally, the label system “Categorizes elite competitions, with implications on ranking points available to international elite athletes, and Olympics and World Championships qualification slots offered by the highest-categorized competitions.”

Not only is this the first Ultramarathon to earn WA Label status, but also was it awarded after only one edition of the Nedbank 50km.

Normally it takes two years to be eligible for Label assessment, with the label awarded on the third year.

This swifter recognition may well have been because of both, the well-established technical and organizational team, and the fact that the 2021 edition provided exceptionally high standard of performances including World Records for Nedbank running club duo of Ketema Negasa in the Men’s race (2:42:07) and Irvette van Zyl (3:04:24) in the woman only category.

There were also four age group bests from Jonas Makhele 2:42:14 (35-39) Claude Moshiywa 2:54:59 (45-49) Charne Bosman 3:24:04 (45-49) and Poland’s Dominika Stelmach 3:10:27 (35-39)

That’s an impressive outcome for any first edition and all have been ratified by both WA and the IAU.

Previously performances at this distance were only officially recognized by IAU as World marks and WA would acknowledge them as unratified ‘best known performances.’

Earlier this year, WA council took the decision to add the 50km to the list of World Record distances as of 1 January 2022 which means both Negasa and Van Zyl will be the official Inaugural World Recordholders in 10 days’ time.

South Africa has a long top-notch history with the 50km distance, including the marks of both Thompson Magawana and Frith van der Merwe who raced through the certified 50km in 1988 and 1989 recording times of 2:43:38 and 3:08:39 respectively.  These stood for over 30 years!

The 50km distance has become and exciting and keenly fought distance and the 2022 Nedbank Breaking Barriers 50km is fast becoming the leading event on next year’s ultra-calendar, attracting higher level marathon runners in search of a share in the R594000 on offer.

Given the new status and additional measures added, there is every chance that Nedbank’s 2022 edition will result in another re-write of the World Records that will be rewarded with R150000 incentive and the probability of more age group marks is very high.

The Nedbank Breaking Barriers 50km will be a by invitation only elite race in 2022. For more info, please contact Nick Bester: nickb@lantic.net

Kind regards,

Nick Bester

