

SOWETO HAT-TRICK FOR YINESU!

By **BUSISIWE MOKWENA**

ETHIOPIAN long-distance athlete Sintayehu Yinesu has made history by becoming the first runner to win the Soweto Marathon three times in a row.

He held the back-to-back record with Elijah Mutandiro, who won it in 2002 and 2003.

Yinesu beat Lesotho's Tshepo Mathibelle, who led the race and looked to be running away with it, while his fellow-countryman, Seutloali Khoarahlane, came third.

He crossed the finish line in 2:20:44, debutant Mathibelle followed in 2:21:46 and Khoarahlane crossed in 2:23:22.

The Ethiopian said that although the new route was tougher than the previous one, he was glad to have defended his title.

He said he was struggling with a hamstring injury while preparing for the race.

Said Yinesu: "This is my second home now. I'm happy to have won the race three times, especially since I had an injury just a few days before the race. I had to work hard and run on a lot of hills to get ready. Thanks to my coach for helping me get ready in time."

Mathibelle said the steep hills were where he felt more relaxed and pushed himself harder. He said he was pleased with his time in his first-ever Soweto Marathon.

Said Mathibelle: "I am really proud of my time in my first Soweto run. I used to watch it but I'm glad I have finally taken part. Hopefully I will be back again next year. Maybe I can do better!"

Meanwhile, Selam Alebachew from



Sintayehu Yinesu (left) is the 42km men's Old Mutual Soweto Marathon winner, while Selam Alebachew won the women's event. Photos by Trevor Kunene

Ethiopia won the women's race, followed by Chelitu Bogale Asefa in second place and South Africa's Irvette van Zyl third.

Van Zyl, who missed the Olympic marathon due to a foot injury, said her ambition to take part in this race had paid off.

She said she only decided to compete in the race four weeks ago.

Said Van Zyl: "I was overeager when I made the decision to run the race, coming back from the injury I had. I think my training time was too short for this kind of marathon, but I am happy to have come third. I would have loved to win it, but my tactics didn't work today."

SOWETO MARATHON RESULTS

Men's 42km

- 1 Sintayehu Yinesu (Nedbank Running Club): 2:20:44.
- 2 Tsepo Mathibelle (Phantane Athletics Club): 2:21:46.
- 3 Seutloali Khoarahlane (Maxed Elite) in 2:23:22.

Women's 42km:

- 1 Selam Alebachew (Nedbank Running Club): 2:42:32
- 2 Chelitu Asefa (Nedbank Running Club): 2:45:22
- 3 Irvette Van Zyl (Nedbank Running Club): 2:46:32

Men's 21km:

- 1 David Manja (Nedbank Running Club): 1:07:01.
- 2 Joel Mohau (Nedbank Running Club): 1:07:56.
- 3 Hatasi Mthimkhulu (Sibanye Gold Athletic Club): 1:08:04.

Women's 21km:

- 1 Onnele Dintwe (Nedbank Running Club): 1:19:41
- 2 Dinah-Rose Phalula (Boxer Athletics Club): 1:20:17
- 3 Christine Kalmer (KPMG Running Club): 1:23:00

Men's 10km:

- 1 Namakoe Nkasi (Cool Running): 30:17
- 2 Desmond Mokgobu (Boxer AC): 30:28
- 3 Thabang Mosiako (Nedbank Running Club): 30:31

Women's 10km:

- 1 Chery-Lee Schoeman (KPMG Running Club): 38:45
- 2 Lyndi Roelofse (EC Active): 38:59
- 3 Keneilwe Sesing (KPMG Running Club): 39:46