

A successful day at the races for Team Toyota

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Toyota reaped the benefits of its investment in road running with five finishes in the Top 20 for Team Toyota in this year's Comrades Marathon, well known as the ultimate human race. The race was run today, Sunday 30 May 2010 from Pietermaritzburg to Durban in KwaZulu-Natal.



The top performer of the day and third time Comrades competitor was Fanie Matshipa, who led the race right up until the 60 km mark. A warning was made earlier in the week by team coach John Hamlett, to look out for this man with a sub 2h20 marathon under his belt, and deliver he did, with a very impressive fifth place overall.

Next in was Gift Kelehe, brother of legend Andrew Kelehe and an accomplished athlete himself with several top 20 finishes behind his name. Gift finished a credible 16th, followed shortly by Two Oceans and Comrades gold medallist Frans Chauke and the ever competitive Joseph Maerman, all of them running in Team Toyota team colours.

Finely tuned athlete Andrew Kelehe, another member of Team Toyota's group of top professional road running athletes, won the men's legends category, beating Alan Robb, Shaun Meikeljohn and Bruce Fordyce.

Placed second amongst the South African ladies was Team Toyota's Lindsay van Aswegen (pictured here with Shaun Bartlett and Shaun Pollock).

Coach John Hamlett was delighted with the team's success: "Everyone finished properly after training hard. May this be the beginning of many medals to come from a great team of runners, backed by a superb manufacturer!"

It was not only the top runners that shone among the more than 90 runners that ran for Team Toyota. Several celebrities ran in the distinct Toyota colours as part of the company's efforts to highlight its multi-year vehicle sponsorship of the Comrades, but also its efforts to collect funds for the Comrade's Amabeadibead group of charities. Toyota has donated one of its South African built Corolla sedan's as final prize in the Comrade Marathon's sms-based competition.



On the celebrity side of things, Team Toyota again did themselves proud, with only one athlete, 94.7's Brad Brown, unable to complete the race due to injury. Football great Helman Mkhelela, ex-cricketer Doug Watson and SAFM and SABC sports presenter Kwena Moabelo all finished in great times after competing in the race for the first time.



Closely following each athlete's progress was Protea cricketing great and Toyota brand ambassador, Shaun Pollock: "Being a part of the Comrades is exhilarating. I've always relished the opportunity to get on the sidelines and enjoy the camaraderie between athletes and the energy or the vibe of the supporters. I've played many sports and commitment is always necessary for success, but there's something unique about the Comrades Marathon. I think it's the endurance factor which makes it almost super-human for these men and women to cross the finish line. I have the utmost respect for the training and sacrifice that gets them there and then to imagine the mental stamina they have to show to finish the race is compelling."

"Growing up in KZN, I've always been lucky to experience the race first hand and I've loved how this event has captured our

nation and stands alone in providing the ultimate 'goose bump' experience when the finish gun is sounded."

Toyota ambassador Shaun Bartlett spoke of his admiration for the athletes: "After recently completing the gruelling Cape Epic cycle race, I figured that cycling wasn't really for me - as that race was incredibly tough. However, after experiencing today, I know that the Comrades Marathon certainly isn't for me.

"Never before have I seen so many grown men cry and I have the upmost admiration for any athlete who competes in this event. The number of South Africans crossing the line gives a sense of pride closely aligned to that of a national team winning a World Cup trophy. This sport deserves more attention that it receives, because we truly do have something special here."

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