

Nedbank Runified Breaking Barriers 50 km Ultramarathon

26 February 2023



BREAKING BARRIERS

16 January 2023

Nedbank Runified Breaking Barriers 50km - Elite men's field best ever

The third edition of the Nedbank Runified Breaking Barriers 50km ultramarathon, which returns to Nelson Mandela Bay on 26 February 2023, has once again attracted a world class elite field, with fast times expected again.

In its first edition, Nedbank running club athletes Keteme Bekele Negasa and Irvette van Zyl both set new 50km world records with South Africa's Stephen Mokoka setting a new men's world record in last year's event.

Race director and former Comrades Marathon winner, Nick Bester, is pleased with the calibre of entries received for this year's event. "We have a strong, well-balanced international field for our race and we have received requests from athletes wanting to run from all over the world," said Bester.

Mokoka's name may not yet be on the current start list, but that may change given that American CJ Alberton ran a faster time than Mokoka's world record last year and Mokoka may want revenge. It must be noted that Mokoka's 2:40:13 from last year's event is still the official world record, with World Athletics still to approve the other mark. Whether Mokoka does decide to run or not, there is still a world class field that will be competing.

Running in the colours of Nedbank running club are no fewer than 4 previous Comrades Marathon winners in the form of Tete Dijana, Edward Mothibi, Ludwick Mamabolo and Claude Moshiywa. Dijana took victory at Comrades last year with training partner Mothibi taking victory in the last up run. Both ran last year, finishing 2nd and 3rd and it was the Nedbank Runified Breaking Barriers 50km that was a curtain raiser for the unknown Dijana who would go on to do bigger things.

"I will never forget last year's race because when I came 2nd it showed that not only do I have a big talent, but all my hard work was paying off and I was looking forward to a bright future," said Dijana. "We are all currently in the camp now preparing for the race and we have been since November last year so we are looking forward to a great race."

Team-mate and veteran athlete Jonas Makhele may be 41 years old but don't let that fool you as he finished 2nd in the first edition of the event in a quick 2:42:14. "I am a veteran and I turned 40 only a few months after that race so I would like to aim to beat that time and also set a new world age best," said Makhele.



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There is over R1 million up for grabs in prize money which includes prizes for top 10 men and women, world record incentives, world age best incentives and prizes to the top South Africans.

Ethiopian athletes may not be known for their ultra-marathon powerhouse status as they are in standard marathons, but this is slowly changing and there is a big Ethiopian contingent that will arrive in Gqeberha looking for nothing less than a World record. One to surely look out for will be Maxed Elite's Endale Belachew who destroyed a class field last year in the Totalsports Two Oceans Marathon with a devastatingly quick finish after 56km of running in which was his debut at an ultra. Likewise it was a debut back in 2021 for Bekele who ran off with a world record.

They will make the trip from East Africa with a very strong Nedbank running club Ethiopian squad. Daba Debele makes his ultra-marathon debut and will be coming with teammates Gadisa Gutama and Habtamu Mishamo. South African followers of the sport may recall last year's Soweto Marathon where Gutuma led out far only to be reeled in towards the end by Debele with the duo finishing 1st and 2nd in the marathon.

Zimbabwe's Ngonidzashe Ncube in the colours of Nedbank running club will be looking to keep the title in the southern region of Africa. Ncube also makes his ultra-marathon debut but has a very strong marathon pedigree and will be one of the fastest marathon runners lining up in the field. Ncube holds a marathon pb of 2:11:46 set last year and is said to be raring to go for the 50km.

The fastest marathon runner in the field thanks to a time of 2:09:24 in last year's World Championships will be local hometown hero Melikhaya Frans. Fans shouldn't get too excited though as Frans, just like last year, will have a big and bold PACE across his race number as he sets the pace for the runners over the first 30km at a world record tempo.

The Nedbank Runified Breaking Barriers 50km is a World Athletics Elite label recognized event. The stamp given to the best events, and the first ultra-marathon in the world to receive this recognition. Next week we preview a very exciting women's race which boasts a number of athletes who are capable at taking a shot at a new world record.

The race will be televised live on Super Sport for 4 hours from 5h30 to 9h30.

Visit the race website www.nickbsport.com or www.nedbankrunningclub.co.za for more info.

Race Office Queries: **012-5410577**.

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