

Champion Sibisi wins again

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He destroyed the Two Oceans field in 1986 and now he has beaten cancer

STEPHEN GRANGER

SHORTLY after 8am yesterday, a compact 61-year-old Johannesburg athlete crossed the Two Oceans Marathon finish line at the UCT Groote Schuur Campus after completing the 11km Trail Race in a few minutes over the hour mark, well up in the first half of the field.

Likely his thoughts wandered back 29 years.

The finish of the 1986 Two Oceans was some kilometres away at Brookside, and the finish gantry a touch smaller, but Thulani Ephraim Sibisi could not help but recall his day of glory in Cape Town when he kept his promise to his benefactor and won the Two Oceans 56km Marathon.

Sibisi had trained hard, but had been unable to find travel support until he convinced Johan Rupert of the integrity of his cause.

"The only time I ever beat Thulani was in the 1985 JSE 50km Marathon, but having him in our club meant we were never beaten in the team competitions!" –



“I am going to win the Two Oceans,” the bold 25-year-old runner emphasised to Rupert.

Sibisi ran a superb tactical race, taking the lead from Lesotho star, Ben Choeru 1km from the top of Constantia Nek to race home to victory in 3hr 09min 30sec – at that stage the third fastest time ever recorded at Two Oceans.

Running for the Rand Athletics Club in the company of runners such as Bob da La Motte, Bruce Fordyce and Mark Page, Sibisi continued in a successful marathon and ultra-marathon career as a senior and master before becoming involved in sport administration, managing the South African men's marathon teams at the 1992 and 2004 Olympic Games.

But then a challenge tougher than any ultra-distance race struck Sibisi, when he was diagnosed with stage three prostate cancer in 2012.

“I was told it was very serious,” Sibisi said. “I knew there was a chance I would not make it. My urologist gave me two options – to receive a course of injections over a long period of time, which would slow the cancer at best, or to have my testicles surgically removed, to arrest the cause of the cancer.

“Although I had thoughts that my manhood was under

threat, I was determined to defeat the cancer and so opted for surgery.

“It has been a long process to slowly rid the cancer from my body and without the strong support of guys like Bob (de la Motte – who placed second in the Comrades Marathon

on three occasions) and Johnny (Halberstadt) and also the Two Oceans team, I don't think I would have made it.

“So being back running at Two Oceans is something special. This was my first ever trail race and first time in Newlands Forest... I'm sure

RUNNING COMRADES: Thulani Sibisi – who ran yesterday's Two Oceans Trail Race after surviving cancer – met up with former running mate and ultra athlete Bob de la Motte who rallied support that helped Sibisi receive medical treatment .

STEPHEN GRANGER

Two Oceans trail results

Devils Peak

Men: 1 Thabang Madiba 1:52:39; 2 Eric Ngubane 1:52:40; 3 Mapepane Mahlangu 1:58:19; 4 David Saaleh 2:01:43; 5 Christiaan Greyling 2:02:25; 6 John Rocke 2:03:03; 7 Nicholas Rupanga 2:04:40; 8 David del Fante 2:06:59; 9 Julian Atkinson 2:07:18; 10 Dion Middelkoop 2:07:44;

Veterans: 1 Rupanga; 2 Middelkoop; 3 Alberto Tombini 2:19:08; 4 Noel Ernstzen 2:23:08;

Masters: 1 Mark Preen 2:19:08; 2 Noel Ernstzen 2:23:08;

Women: 1 Landie Greyling 2:20:08 (winner Sonia Beard Trophy); 2 Leilani Scheffer 2:27:06; 3 Lerentia Strydom 2:31:54; 4 Caitlin Francis 2:33:11; 5 Marie Wessels 2:37:40; 6 Estie Brits 2:38:10; 7 Rykie Jonck 2:38:36; 8 Alisha Myers 2:42:50; 9 Penelope

Taylor 2:45:06; 10 Sarah Conyngham 2:45:42

Veterans: 1 Lewis; 2 Rachel Manyathi 2:56:38; 3 Natasha Kask 2:59:26

Masters: 1 Maxine Reilly 2:57:25

Two Oceans Trail Race 11 km Newlands Forest

Men: 1 Tranquil Gumbo 45:33; 2 Craig Burns 46:01; 3 Jarryd Dunn 46:51

Juniors: 1 Dunn;

Veterans: 1 Henk Sweers 58:14

Masters: 1 Simon Taylor 59:51

Women: 1 Annamart Laubscher 53:59; 2 Hayley Preen 55:36; 3 Mairead Rocke 58:24

Juniors: 1 Preen

Veterans: 1 Pauline Lewis 1:04:28

Masters: 1 Lollos Rodseth 1:11:22

I'll be back next year!”

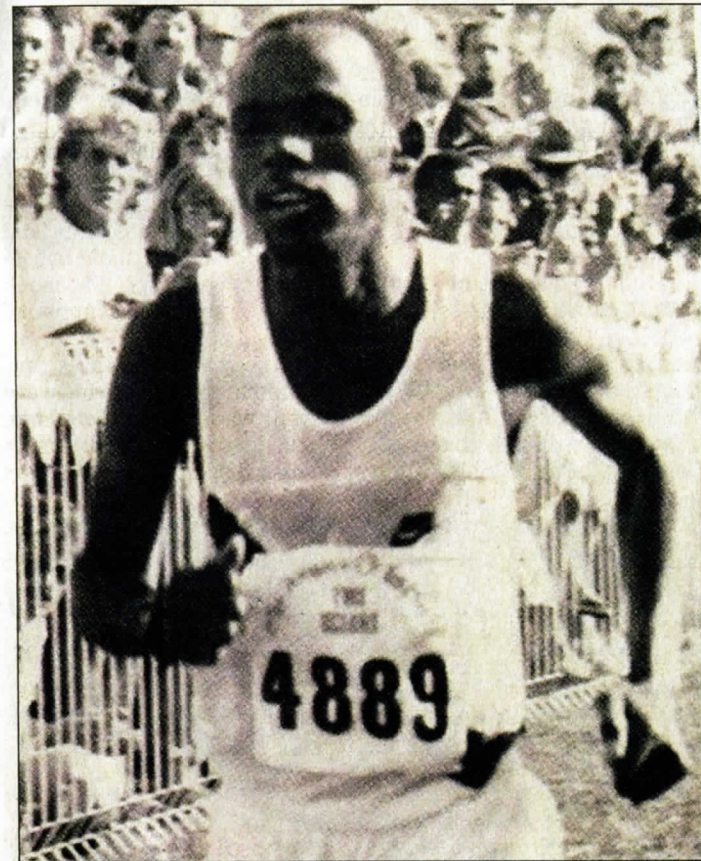
“He was a formidable athlete, a true champion,” said De la Motte, visiting the Two Oceans from his current home in Australia.

“The only time I ever beat Thulani was in the 1985 JSE 50km Marathon, but having him in our club meant we were never beaten in the team competitions.”

Sports scientist, Kathy McQuaid-Little, a Two Oceans board member, reflected on their journey with Sibisi.

“Bob de la Motte advised us of his illness and the board took a decision to support him financially to secure his medical treatment.

“We are delighted that we have forged a strong relationship with him in the past few years. Steffie Schultzen [marketing manager of Two Oceans] introduced him to the SABC, for whom he now does Zulu commentary for the Two Oceans. Although he was still in a weak condition last year, he still participated in our ‘Design to Run’ workshops and we are delighted that he is so much stronger this year.”



KING OF THE OCEANS: Thulani Sibisi wins the 1986 Two Oceans Marathon.

TWO OCEANS MARATHON