

This n That

An Email Newsletter From Agape Athletics Club

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Comrades Edition

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Hi

Editorial – Comrades Edition

The focus is on Comrades this week and the exodus down to Durbs will well and truly get under way over the next few days. My best wishes for a great run for all those that are undertaking this awesome race. May our Lord grant you safe travelling mercies as you journey down to Kzn and back home again. As for the race itself, what better word from our Lord than Isaiah 40:31

**But those who wait on the Lord
Shall renew their strength
They shall mount up with wings like eagles
They shall run and not grow weary
They shall walk and not faint**

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Comrades Tent – Hennie Venter

Please note that only one of the Club Tents will be on the Comrades on site 16 and the tent will only be at local races again after the 5th of June.

I also want to take the opportunity to say Thank You very much to all the people that always join us at the tent and also a very BIG THANK YOU to the members that always help me with the tent to put it up and take it down.

Also want to say all the Best to members going to run the Comrades and may the LORD Bless you all on this big day in your lives. With all the preparations now behind you, there is only the test still to take.

Please note that the Zita Park time trail will also be closed for the Tuesday after Comrades.

Hope to see you all down in Durban, and that you have a safe and joyful drive down to the Comrades.

Please see attached for details on our tent site at the finish of the Comrades.

Comrades Hemde – Marietjie Venter

Die Comrades hemde is uiteindelik afgelewer. Nou moet ek dit net by julle kry. Ons vertrek Vrydag, 28 Mei 2010 na Durban.

Ek gaan by die volgende time trials wees:

- ❑ Zitapark, Dinsdag om 18:00
- ❑ Rietondale, Donderdag om 17:30

Comrades Greetings

Lizzie Barnardo

Ek wil graag vir almal wat Comrades toe gaan, alle sterkte toewens!

Lance Armstrong: "Winning is about the heart, not just legs! It's got to be in the right PLACE!"

"What I am is Gods gift to me! What I make of myself is my gift to God"

Marius & Nikki + Elize Adams

Ons wil graag vir my Swaer en Nikki se boetie; **De Wet De Beer** baie sterkte toewens vir sy 1st Comrades. Ons weet hy gaan sommer baie goed vaar. Jy is lekker fiks en voorbereid.

Jan Vreken

Michelle Jordaan stuur vir my die volgende aanhaling van 'n ene A.P.Cullen uit die boek "Run to Glory", die verhaal van Eric Liddell wat later verfilm is as "Chariots of Fire". Chariots of Fire? Lui daar iewers 'n klokkie?? Ja!!, 'n Comrades klokkie nogal:

"Sport is one of the most productive fields for Christian work, for it remains generally true that the man who is a real sportsman in athletics, who can play the game under all circumstances, fight against odds and disappointments without losing heart or temper, and knows how to take a beating – he is the man who is most likely to be a true sportsman in the greater game of life."

Die aanhaling laat my sterker voel oor ons klub se leuse "Running for the Son". Aan almal wat Comrades hardloop, baie sterkte mag dit 'n dag vol persoonlike belewenisse en sukses wees. Diegene wat wil maar vanweë omstandighede nie kan nie [soos André du Toit, TnT Saterdag 2010/05/15], teleurstellings is soms die sout wat ons nodig het om ons lewens teen smaakloosheid te beskerm.

Desiré Kantor

Comrades - good wishes, good running and good staying power to all runners, especially the novices and especially to all Agape members - I will be couch watching all the way.

God Bless

Trixie Jordaan

Aan al die Agapé lede wat aan die Comrades deelneem: ek wens julle alle sterkte en beseringsvrye dae toe en dat Hy elke sekonde by julle sal wees gedurende die Comrades! Ek bid vir 'n ieder en elkeen.

Comrades 2010

93 Members entered the 2010 Comrades. Looking through the seedings, we have 2 B seedings, **Gert Henning** and **Johan Lategan**. The rest of the seedings are made up as follows: C-8, D-18, E-4, F-13, G-12, H-15 and 21 are listed under 'Did Not Qualify'

Christa Mouton will be running her 10th Comrades while **Johan Lategan** will be running his 11th Comrades ... his first in a green number.

Our oldest male entry, **Jan Vreken** – 71, has done 25 Comrades so far. **Mavis Stadler** – turns 70 on May 27 and is our oldest female entry. Mavis failed to make the cut-off in her only previous attempt at the Comrades, so what better birthday wish for her than her first Comrades medal. The youngest entry is **Daniel Kettles** – 23.

At the bottom of this list is an item on frogs which I received from Gustav Brink - might be something for our members to chew on during those testing times on May 30.

RaceNo	First Name	Last Name	Gender	DOB	Seeding
38445	Johanna	Albertse	Female	25/09/65	DNQ
55451	Hendrik	Badenhorst	Male	17/08/70	G
58411	Elizabeth	Barnardo	Female	25/01/61	DNQ
27322	Ronel	Bekker	Female	01/06/72	DNQ
42804	Dorothy	Benadie	Female	14/10/66	F
33026	Folke	Berg-mathiassen	Male	01/03/48	G
36705	Stefan	Bothma	Male	19/02/74	H
49238	Beverley	Boyes	Female	09/04/65	D
17347	Andre	Breytenbach	Male	01/08/70	D
8709	Christo	Breytenbach	Male	31/03/60	DNQ
37783	Stefan	Brink	Male	05/07/70	DNQ
49046	Christiaan	Burger	Male	19/07/77	DNQ
41859	Marinda	Cilliers	Female	12/03/64	F
53734	Ignis	Claase	Male	11/09/78	G
9998	Deon	Conradie	Male	06/12/58	E
58773	Dewet	De Beer	Male	17/01/72	C
44540	Francois	De klerk	Male	29/10/77	DNQ
58403	Thelma	De Klerk	Female	04/07/80	DNQ
18753	Marietha	Dippenaar	Female	01/10/44	DNQ
6354	Frik	Dippenaar	Male	20/09/53	DNQ
24457	Izak	Du plessis	Male	15/07/62	DNQ
28995	Nicoline	Du plessis	Female	23/12/64	DNQ
15004	Andre	Du Toit	Male	04/05/56	D
29021	Edwin	Du Toit	Male	04/06/78	H
29053	Dale	Dutton	Male	18/05/69	C
5907	Marc	Fourie	Male	21/06/61	C
40773	Erika	Fourie	Female	24/04/67	G
36386	Yvonne	Fowels	Female	26/11/61	F
40571	Rudi	Greyling	Male	20/08/73	D
28697	Eddie	Hanekom	Male	28/12/67	C
59816	Marcel	Hattingh	Male	18/02/80	H
41218	Belinda	Havenga	Female	26/03/71	DNQ
42484	Gert	Henning	Male	10/02/74	B
41548	Mel	Horak	Female	18/01/74	F

14496	Regina	Hughes	Female	28/01/48	E
33746	Andre	Jacobs	Male	24/05/66	H
46458	Charlotte	Jacobs	Female	26/10/68	H
33058	Daleen	Jarrett	Female	21/06/65	D
45910	Norman	Johnson	Male	02/07/60	H
21901	Michelle	Jordaan	Female	09/11/74	H
43561	Cornelius	Keogh	Male	05/08/79	H
57515	Daniel	Kettles	Male	26/10/86	G
21428	Elsche	Koekemoer	Female	07/06/80	H
45357	James	Kruger	Male	17/11/73	C
45559	Erica	Labbe	Female	10/12/75	F
19727	Johan	Lategan	Male	26/05/72	B
41697	Roald	Le Roux	Male	31/10/54	H
45887	Nigel	Lowe	Male	03/06/59	G
32294	Lucas	Mabena	Male	27/12/76	F
58192	Mari	Malan	Female	15/08/58	D
47778	Alfred	Manganye	Male	06/08/57	F
21172	Albert	Marais	Male	09/07/61	D
58454	Ramputu	Mashiane	Male	03/06/73	C
2837	Christopher	Mellamphy	Male	03/04/65	H
56187	Walter	Meyer	Male	05/02/69	F
51238	Lester	Mills	Male	19/07/63	G
53791	Deon	Minnie	Male	25/05/65	H
58455	Lekwanyane	Moeketsi	Male	23/04/80	D
31621	Louisa	Mostert	Female	18/05/79	DNQ
46513	Christa	Mouton	Female	25/11/56	D
54392	Werner	Muller	Male	21/09/73	DNQ
13006	Jonathan	Nash	Male	15/04/56	DNQ
49447	Wesley	Nash	Male	26/03/80	DNQ
25713	Koos	Nel	Male	01/04/53	DNQ
44966	Johann	Niebuhr	Male	01/04/74	C
27806	Kagisho	Pienaar	Male	27/01/71	G
17095	Lucas	Pieterse	Male	14/05/51	E
14150	Annabelle	Pretorius	Female	12/02/64	G
58659	Tshifhiwa	Ratombo	Male	14/02/78	F
50540	Gert	Smith	Male	26/08/67	D
56775	Mavis	Stadler	Female	27/05/40	H
34405	Kobus	Stander	Male	01/12/60	D
35653	Maryna	Steinmann	Female	14/07/58	D
14802	Blackie	Swart	Male	16/01/52	G
4976	Ben	Taljaard	Male	06/04/56	DNQ
46594	Ingrid	Trusler	Female	02/03/59	H
59370	Shane	Trusler	Male	07/10/83	DNQ
34846	Hanlie	Ungerer	Female	15/03/71	F

34923	Willa	Van Den Heever	Female	16/12/71	F
30689	Mandrie	Van Der Walt	Male	04/10/71	G
12858	Marius	Van der Westhuizen	Male	17/03/62	DNQ
40702	Etienne	Van Heerden	Male	08/08/62	D
46694	Petro	Van Niekerk	Female	12/06/71	D
34123	Pieter	Van Schalkwyk	Male	28/07/70	D
56398	Hendrik	Van Schalkwyk	Male	23/02/73	D
13267	Hendrik	Venter	Male	04/08/59	C
59477	Jacobus	Venter	Male	23/11/54	D
39595	Marietjie	Venter	Female	12/09/59	H
19920	Henning	Visser	Male	04/06/79	D
5435	Jan	Vreken	Male	12/02/39	E
27551	Andrew	Wanjohi	Male	09/04/72	F
31097	Rudolph	Weakley	Male	20/08/75	G
54012	Henry	Wickham	Male	16/05/70	F

Frogs Received from Gustav Brink:

Once upon a time there was a bunch of tiny frogs..... Who arranged a running competition.
The goal was to reach the top of a very high tower .
A big crowd had gathered around the tower to see the race and cheer on the contestants... .
The race began....
Honestly, no one in crowd really believed that the tiny frogs would reach the top of the tower .
You heard statements such as :
'Oh, WAY too difficult '!!
'They will NEVER make it to the top '.

or :

'Not a chance that they will succeed.. The tower is too high '!
The tiny frogs began collapsing. One by one
Except for those, who in a fresh tempo, were climbing higher and higher
The crowd continued to yell, 'It is too difficult!!! No one will make it '!
More tiny frogs got tired and gave up...
But ONE continued higher and higher and higher
This one wouldn't give up !
At the end everyone else had given up climbing the tower.
Except for the one tiny frog who, after a big effort, was the only one who reached the top !
THEN all of the other tiny frogs naturally wanted to
know how this one frog managed to do it ?
A contestant asked the tiny frog how he had found the strength to succeed and reach the goal ?

It turned out

That the winner was DEAF !!!!

The wisdom of this story is :
Never listen to other people's tendencies to be negative or pessimistic. ... because they take your
most wonderful dreams and wishes away from you -- the ones you have in your heart !
Always think of the power words have .
Because everything you hear and read will affect your actions !
Therefore :

ALWAYS be
POSITIVE !

And above all :
Be DEAF when people tell YOU that you cannot fulfill your dreams !

Always think :
God and I can do this!

In The Mailbox

Norman Johnson - Zita Park club run – Sat 22 May

What a delightful run it was 1 week before some of us aim to do the Comrades marathon! This morning's run took place at the Zita Park time trial route weekly gathering area. You could just hear some of the first timers for Comrades sharing their concerns for the race. "Are you not afraid?", they asked. "Fear will not be helpful; fear could so well be paralyzing! Be cautious; that's wise, but do NOT fear. Because of Christ, I REFUSE to fear." So we encouraged one another. It would just be so different trying to do it all on your own, with the Comrades marathon so close. We took great comfort in one another's sweet fellowship.

As for the running; it's actually quite funny. What seems like just an easy run now, would at other times of the year seem like a big deal. All of the training for the BIG one is eventually paying off. The uphill feeling like a mountain after winter now seems almost awkwardly quite flat. The hills has definitely lost quite a bit of their sting. It was an amazing race on this cool sunny winter's morning.

So so grateful for Hennie and Marietjie for their faithfulness in arranging and setting up things that we could enjoy our run. Thanks also for Elbert that popped in although he did not plan to run. That gave Hennie the opportunity to run this morning.

One request with next week in mind. Could we set aside time daily for the next 7 days to pray for those running the Comrades? Think what a great difference God could make for all of us if our participation in the Comrades could be saturated in prayer!

Stay blessed!

Rita van der Merwe - Comrades Accommodation

Two of my guys have pulled out of Comrades and I have accommodation in Pietermaritzburg for Friday and Saturday. It is at a school hostel, it is one room that can sleep 4 people.

Please can you send out a mail to find out if anyone is still looking for accommodation. Cost R150 per night

Email Rita at jjvdm@absamail.co.za.

Internet Articles From Colin Billau - Magnolia

Drive The Comrades Route Or Not? - by Brad Brown

That is the big question that's bugging me with just over two weeks to go to Comrades.

Ask any experienced Comrades runner if you should drive the route before the race and the answer is invariably yes. I was at the Rockies Road Runners Comrades panel talk last week and that was one of the things [Bruce Fordyce](#) spoke about. He said to want to do it just to make sure you're suitably scared enough going into the race. The problem is I'm suitably scared, as he puts it, before I've driven the route.

My dad has completed 11 races and I remember going down to Kwazulu/Natal every year to support him. I also recall driving the route with him when I was a child and I can remember the infamous Fields Hill. Inchanga was unbelievable. Cowies Hill also looked quite intimidating. Even though it was more than twenty years ago I still have those memories. I asked my dad this weekend whether or not I should drive the route the day before. His answer was also yes.

He went on to remind me of a family friend who in the mid-eighties decided he was going to run [Comrades](#). Bear in mind those were the days when to qualify you needed to run a marathon in under four and a half

hours. Some would say those were the days when the men were men and the women were also men. He had qualified, done all his training and arrived in Durban the day before the race fit and raring to go. After collecting his number from the expo in Durban (it was an up run that year) he decided to drive the route before they checked into their hotel for the night in Pietermaritzburg. He drove up Cowies, twisted up Fields Hill, through Hillcrest and up to Drummond. He kept on winding his way up Inchanga, over Harrison Flats and by the time he got to Little Pollies he was having serious second thoughts. He kept on going and at the top of Polly Shorts, legend has it, he looked at his wife and said "they have got to be crazy to think I'm going to run that tomorrow". He continued driving and didn't stop until he was back home in Joburg!

I still haven't decided whether or not I'm driving the route beforehand. But it's stories like that that make me have serious second thoughts about driving it the day before.

Official Distance of the 2010 Comrades Marathon

The official distance of this year's Comrades Marathon is 89.28km which is 110 metres longer than previous years. This is due to a deviation in the route.

After completion of the official measurement of the Comrades Marathon race route by an International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF) and Association of International Marathons (AIMS) accredited Course Measurer, the official distance of the 2010 Comrades Marathon was confirmed as 89.28km.

This is 110m longer than the 2009 distance of 89.17km. The change in distance is as a result of a decision by the Comrades Marathon Association (CMA) to change the exit route from Pietermaritzburg. The change was effected to facilitate an easier and faster flow for the 23 000 athletes expected on 30 May 2010.

"One of the key objectives with the route change was to ensure a quick and safe exit for the runners from Pietermaritzburg as it is still pitch dark at 05H30 in the morning when the race gets underway. In addition to this consideration we also wanted to keep the race distance as close as possible to that of the 2009 race, which was also a Down Run", said Gary Boshoff, General Manager.

On Friday 7 May at 12H00 19 300 of the 23 500 athletes who entered for the **2010 Comrades Marathon** have registered their qualifying details with the CMA. This is 83% of the entered field! With approximately 4300 entry details still to be confirmed, the CMA is confident that final confirmed race entries will grow to well over 20 000 over the next few weeks.

The CMA is delighted with the overwhelming response from aspiring and devoted Comrades Marathon athletes. The confirmed entries of 19 300 is already the second biggest field assembled under the Comrades banner in the 85 year history of the event! This bodes well for the CMA's attempt to be included in the Guinness Book of Records as the Ultra-Marathon (80km and longer) with highest number of finishers.

What makes this achievement even more remarkable is the fact that 26% (approximately 5000) of these are Novices – a development that augurs well for the future growth and sustainability of this, the world's biggest Ultra-Marathon.

"This achievement is a huge vote of confidence in Athletics and Road Running in particular. It is fantastic to see the commitment from both local and international athletes to South African sport in general, but more importantly, to the Ultimate Human Race, South Africa's premier road race", said Johan Van Staden, Race Director.

The Comrades Down Run Denis Kennedy

Hello again, I am writing this with a great deal of trepidation as the 2009 down run may well be my last. After 19 Comrades and over 150 marathons, the old under carriage is creaking and tweaking and just plain saying "enough already" Well we will see?

For those of you who have read my tales of the up run, you will recognize a lot of what follows; that's because it is the same race in reverse, right! Wrong.

The down run might be over the same stretch of road but it is a totally different race and you will see why if you read on.

Firstly, here are some of my observations on the Comrades:

* About 350 000 athletes have successfully run Comrades over the years, of these less than 100 have won and less than 1000 have achieved Gold (top 10) and about 7-8% of the field achieve silver (sub 7:30). At the same time, in the 2008 up run, about 20% of the starters did not make the 12 hour cut-off.

So, for most of us, Comrades is not a race, it is an adventure of the mind, body and spirit.

It is about the smells, sights, sounds, thoughts, finding yourself, cursing yourself and above all enduring memories. Here is but one example: Once you have run the Comrades (specially the up run) and you smell a chicken farm again anytime anywhere you will forever remember how far the chickens are from the end of Comrades, how you were feeling and exactly where the watering point is. The same happens forever when driving on the motorway between Durban and Maritzburg and seeing a stretch of the route, you will say to yourself "I have run there, that's where I met the pony tail or followed those great legs".

If you approach Comrades understanding that the day is very personal (you are not running for your family or anyone else, that is just BS) and is a pure self indulgent adventure, you will have a good day and have a precious Comrades medal that you earned the hard way.

- * No-one apart from you actually cares about your finish time.
- * Unless you are an Olympic standard walker, it is not possible to walk Comrades within the cut-off time.
- * It is quite possible to run Comrades on nothing but Coke and water. I have very successfully run 5 or 6 Comrades on Coke and water only diluted 60/40, taken every second feeding station. To me the lesson is that you should consume only what you have trained with and take care not to consume too much fancy stuff.
- * I have never eaten solids on the run and do not know of anyone who does (apart from Wendy who eats jelly babies). Your body simply cannot take solids due to the prolonged jostling of your innards and its natural tendency to void the stomach and bowels as your body re-directs its resources to your muscles. This is also why Comrades runners tend to pay a lot of attention to what they eat and drink in the days immediately preceding the run. (and also why distance runners visit the bushes)
- * You will be sore during and after the run, particularly on the down run, everybody is. Do not take pain killers on the run if you can avoid doing so, although many, many athletes do. This is because your body is stressed enough and probably dehydrated, without adding to the kidney's task of dealing with more chemicals.
- * You will recover quicker if you do not take pain killers on the run
- * You will have one or more bad patches; every runner has them from first to last. Accept that this happens but know also that you will recover, just keep moving forward
- * Massages on the run from the well intended therapists actually do not help apart from the respite during the rub. To me you feel worse afterwards, so save them for the finish
- * The occasional walk is normal and good. We have even seen some gold medallists walking up the dreaded Polly Shorts, so walk briskly if you need to; most of us do.
- * Always have a plan B, sometimes a plan C is also needed!
- * About 50% of the field finishes in the last hour, so hang in and avoid the bail bus
- * Make friends and chat to the spectators, it helps a lot.
- * The recovery drink of choice post Comrades comes in a can or bottle and is amber in colour! Enjoy

Now then, to the Big C

If you decided to run the Down as your first Comrades because it is easier, WRONG! Here is why:

- The down is about 2K longer than the up
- The start of the down is desperately cold, usually minus 2 or 3c
- The down start is narrow and more congested than the up so you can lose significant time in the first 10K
- The first half of the down run is a very tough marathon with lots of hills (up ones that is) and is certainly not "down"
- The pain of the down particularly in Pinetown is horrible and you will learn the meaning of "jelly legs" whether you want to know or not.
- The last 13 or so Kay's are on the motorway, hot, long, boring, no spectators and you can see the sea on each rise.
- The after race pain is a great deal more severe than the up run. This will be cemented in your mind on the morning after when you go to the loo - firstly you cannot get down, but desperation helps, then you cannot get up without a long suffering mate giving you a hand with your undies around your ankles) If you still do not believe me, try walking down the airplane steps when you fly home, you will find it easier, if somewhat embarrassing, to walk down backwards) Chill, you deserve it!
- If you have not had a pee within 24 hours of the run, go straight to the hospital. Not kidding, go now; your kidneys are not happy.

So, to the race

1 Comrades minus 3 (days)

The training is done; nothing more you do now will improve your fitness or your time. You will just get injured or tire your legs if you run now. Your body needs recovery time. Many runners are so hyped up at this point and need to be doing something so will stupidly play football or touch rugby. This is the best way to get injured; because you are fit and hyped, you tend to push too hard at whatever you are doing. So, here is list of things to do on this day:

- a. Increase carbohydrate intake.
- b. Increase water intake.
- c. Stop all alcohol (Except for Mark who knows for sure that a day without beer is a wasted day)
- d. Eat only what you would normally eat, preferably fresh and uncooked, other than increasing Carbs. Avoid all take-a-ways and fast foods like pies and stuff.
- e. If not normally eaten, avoid energy bars and all dairy products
- f. Have a good massage by a sports masseuse
- g. Stay away from people if possible, colds and flu will be around, so if you have to meet someone, ask about them having a cold, they will understand.
- h. This is the day I start my Carbo-load diet and for me is the time to mentally fine tune the race; from preparation to start to all the target points and times and of course crossing the line on time feeling like a champion.
- i. Tell your seconds what your (realistic) times are at various points. There will be a timing mat at half-way from which your supporters can get your times via SMS. Tell them to multiply your half way time by 2 and add 1 hour by which time you will be having your first beer on the field at the finish. Unless of course you blow completely! If this happens, do NOT look for the bail bus, it is not a nice place. Fight on and you will finish, you will not be the first to walk the last 30k's nor will you be the last.

2 Comrades minus 2 days

For reasons best explained by the experts your body tends to operate in a 48 hour cycle, particularly in athletes. What you do and eat today will impact more on race day (2 days time) than the immediately preceding day, so:-

- a. This is a critical day
- b. See one above and continue in the same vein, but rather "graze" all day much as a cow would do, as opposed to having a big meal. Marie biscuits are great for this type of grazing, chocolate is not!
- c. Your largest meal should be a late lunch rather than dinner. Water intake must be such that despite all the vitamins, your pee is totally colourless and transparent
- d. Do not run, and if you need to, walk around the block easy
- e. Rest is best, feet up, read a book, watch a video take your mind off the run.
- f. Go to bed early and relax as much as possible. You should feel full and well hydrated with no aches and pains
- g. Beware the virtual cold or sore knee at this time. Many runners, including me, get virtual flu around now. Your nose is sniffy and your throat scratchy and you are convinced that you will be unable to run. Unless you are actually coughing with a deep wheezing chest, ignore it and believe that it is just that, a virtual cold, you will be just fine at the start. The only time to properly assess if you are too sick to run is when you are at the start at 05h30 on May 24th, not before; so stop worrying.

3 Comrades minus 1 day

This is always a long day, which drags, rest as much as possible, avoid walking on the beach as it strains your calves/Achilles tendons, avoid diuretics such as alcohol, tee and coffee.

- a. Go and register if not done so already and feel the Comrades vibe and look around the museum and the expo. You will surely recognise some of the worlds great distance runners
- b. Watch what you eat as today can do more harm than good from a dietary point of view if you are not careful as you can negatively influence your run rather than contribute to it, by getting an upset tummy, or diarrhoea or overeating/drinking
- c. Graze most of the day; drink a lot (of water!)
- d. Last big meal at lunch time
- e. Set out all the stuff you will need in the morning; clothes with your numbers pinned on, Vaseline, sun block, cap, watch, running chip, dark glasses, throw away T-shirt, shoes, plasters, gels, and breakfast.
- f. Pack your bag to leave with your seconds or to place in the tog bag truck. Remember, if you have a slowish run, it will be cold at the finish, so take a towel, change of clothes, tracksuit, a pair of sandals with open toes as you may well have blisters or black toe nails (Comrades is not for sissy's!) and you will have to walk to the car. (This is the worst part of running Comrades).
- g. Despite having the best seconds in the world, I still prefer to send my tog bag with the tog-bag truck, so that I know for sure it will be available whenever I finish. The finish is probably more stressful for your seconds than it is for you; with limited parking, blocked roads, a field full of athletes broken and bent, tents and fences and bridges and things, and if you have a slow one, it will be dark as well, so they may not be where you need them and at least you will have your post race gear while you await them.
- h. Agree precisely where you will meet your seconds. The finish is a very crowded place. Tell our seconds that whatever time you finish, you will wait at the designated spot and they must find you. If you are not where you should be, they must go to the medical tent
- i. Set two alarms
- j. More mental racing and preparation. Know that you will go through bad patches and you will be sore, everyone is. But believe, because it is true, that you will get through the bad patches and you will only be

sore for a few hours. Remember it hurts more and forever if you give up just because of a few aches and pains.

- k. Sleep may be difficult, no matter! Sleep tonight is not important, rather than toss and turn, watch a video or read

4 Getting to the Start

All hotels and most B&B's are very Comrades friendly and will put on a good pasta dinner the night before, a buffet breakfast at 04h00 and most will take you to the start if needed, do not stress about it just organise all this the night before. The best place to stay if you can afford it is the Protea Hotel a few 100 meters from the start as you can stroll out the hotel to the start.

- a. The Start is a very stressful time for first time or inexperienced athletes.
- b. Eat as soon as you get up to allow for digestion. My favourite pre-Comrades meal is 2 slices of toast with honey, 1 banana and a cup of strong black coffee with honey, but eat what you have planned.
- c. Be liberal with the sun cream and the Vaseline (you will chafe in places the sun never shines)
- d. Pietermaritzburg is truly cold at 5am so put on one or two long sleeve throw away tops and wear gloves or old socks on your hands, it is THAT cold
- e. Get dropped off as near as possible to the start about 04h30 to 04h45.
- f. Take your tog bag to the truck and hand it in.
- g. Use the toilet if needed. I try to avoid these smelly places if at all possible, there are many toilets and trees along the road
- h. Grab some water; there will be refreshment stations before entering the pens and listen out for the minor birds who make an incredible racket as they are woken up by the noise and lights and seem quite annoyed at all the activity
- i. I always carry a bottle of diluted carbo-load drink with me for the first 10k's as the tables are busy and crowded. This also helps psychologically as I feel that I am still "fully loaded" after 10k's
- j. Get into your pen about 25-30 min before the gun. Despite the organisers best efforts there is usually a crush at the pen entry points. Runners are stressed and anxious and push and shove and climb the fences. Go with the flow you will get in before the gun, as with about 15 min to go, all pens are opened and the athletes surge forward to the line as if they are migrating bison in the Serengeti. The entry gates free up and you can join in. This is not the start so chill for a bit more
- k. In the pens there will be more space, so relax and above all take in the atmosphere. If you can find a place to sit, do so
- l. Remember that being stressed out or cold simply uses energy, and you will need every bit of all your energy later in the day. Try to keep calm and warm. Take deep slow breaths and chat to the runners around you
- m. The start at Comrades is extremely emotional, stretching nearly a kilometre, surrounded by 12 000 odd
- n. Athletes all fit and ready to go, with a common purpose:- get to the finish in one piece and who cares about the time, it's the medal that matters; the smells; colours; banners; TV camera's; nervous tension; banter and sheer terror pervades all, with "Chariots of Fire" playing, the National Anthem sung by the choir, ShoshoLosa ringing along the field and so on. I defy any first timer not to have a tear or two. This is your day!
- o. When the cock crows, start your watch, this gives you a few added seconds. In fact I start my watch a minute before based on the town hall clock which you should be able to see, you forget about this minute along the way and if you happen to be chasing seconds to achieve your goal, you suddenly remember the bonus. Check your watch after the first K or so as it is often bumped off in the crush and you will need to re-start your time.

5 The Gun goes off

- a. Comrades is a gun to mat race, so actually crossing the start line is only for timing chip notation, not for start times, but the finish mat is for finish times.
- b. The down run is congested and slow and can be frustrating.
- c. Do not try and push through for the first 1-2 K's use them to warm up, it will be dark so take extreme care with your footing, there will be many discarded bottles, T-Shirts, black bags, water and so on.
- d. Weaving in and out the crowds is pointless, you will make little progress and simply waste energy.
- e. Having regard to the above, however, do not dawdle; you can waste up to 20 minutes crossing the start line and in the first 10k's if you get stuck with the slow runners pace. Get into your rhythm as soon as practicable and keep an eye on the pace/time. If you are planning a steady 5min/k you should do the first 10k in about 55/60 minutes. (65/70 min for the sub 9hour runners). This will easily be caught up later so not to worry.

6 First bit

- a. The road is narrow and twists and turns in the dark. Watch your footing and go with the flow, the road is not smooth.
- b. As it starts getting less dark you will reach the top of Polly's at about 7 K. Treat her with respect because on the up run she will surely take revenge. This is a good place for a pee which you should need if you have hydrated properly.

- c. You will be warming up and tempted to start discarding clothes. Keep the tops on as believe it or not it gets colder as you descend into the valley to cross the little white bridge near Ashburton. It has been known to drop to minus 5 or 6 in this valley
- d. The first climb up the back of little Polly's, you should be running easy and it is less crowded. Rather than chasing time concentrate on getting your rhythm and you can off load the excess clothes.
- e. The sun will be rising and there are great views over the misty valleys
- f. Down little Polly's under the motorway and past the Lion Park turnoff. You will smell the Chicken farms even if you do not see them
- g. Pop back under the motorway and a short sharp biting hill, on to Umlaas Road the highest point on the run (19 down 70 to go phew!) Do not be fooled that does not mean it is downhill after this! Back under the motorway
- h. Meander through Cato Ridge and Camperdown. Good support, mainly flat but some undulations. There is always a refreshment station in Cato ridge manned by a religious group (you may need some divine help at this point and they willingly oblige with a blessing).
- i. You should be feeling good, in your stride and enjoying the cool morning

7 Second quarter

- a. Coming out of Cato Ridge once again under the motorway past the Nagle Dam turnoff and on to the start of the Harrison Flats. Done 32 only an ultra left, easy?
- b. A pretty flat and somewhat boring section with no spectators. Draw some power from the overhead Eskom lines
- c. Running easy and relaxed, you should be well into your pace and making up a bit of time (but careful, not too much)
- d. As you come off the flats, a series of down hills, you will come to the sports centre. (Watch for local kids trying to nick your hat or glasses). You are in the heart and soul of KZN.
- e. Here is my favourite place in Comrades, let me tell you the absolutely true story about the Ethembeni home for physically disabled children.

Wanderer's Club runners (of which I am a proud lifelong member), together with our neighbours and friends from the Rocky Road Runners club, have a quiet secret, about which we never really speak. On the Comrades marathon route, at the foot of the mighty Inchanga, near the land mark of Bayat's Store is a school for physically disabled children from the local community called Ethembeni. In the mid Nineteen Eighties, my mates and I and a couple of guys from Rockies, used to carry with us as much cash as we could afford and dish this cash out to the Ethembeni kids as we passed by, every one of whom was physically disabled. In those early years, the school was a few mud huts with no water or electricity, where the kids lived, ate and were schooled. Their equipment was pathetic with broken wheelchairs, sticks for crutches and so on. Yet, every race day, these kids and their minders lined the side of the road and cheered, shouted and clapped (some with no hands still clapped their little stumps like mad). We runners slowed and handed out the cash to the kids, some in wheelchairs, some with no legs or crippled grotesquely by polio, some with no arms, and then proceeded to thank our maker that the only thing wrong with us was sore legs and exhaustion.

You see, we could stop and end the suffering, those kids could not.

Anyway, after a few years, the Comrades Marathon Association became aware of what we were doing and made the Ethembeni School one of the charities that they (and of course the runners) supported each year. Then when the country was freed, the Nelson Mandela Foundation also became aware of what both the Comrades Association was doing and what the runners were doing and adopted the school. Nowadays as you run past, the kids are still cheering like mad, but all have proper equipment, uniforms and a great brick school with water and electricity and beds and teachers and food and stuff.

- f. We still say thank you for our legs every time we pass by and know for certain that one little act of thoughtfulness by an unknown runner lead to all this, you see each of us, even by running, can and do make a difference
- g. After this you just breeze past Bayat's Store and are half way up the first Inchanga climb before your eyes are dry.
- h. Up and ever up, you are on the mighty Inchanga, long and steep and lonely. Is this really the Down run you may ask?
- i. DO NOT RACE UP THIS HILL. In fact no hill with a name is raced in Comrades either up or down – this is one of those)
- j. You have a long way to go and climbing the longest, steepest hill is just plain stupid. It does end eventually so keep grinding your way up and over.
- k. Whilst I do not race up these hills, I make a point of passing someone on every hill, even if they are crawling and I am walking, I must pass someone (and steal their energy!)
- l. The organisers of the London Marathon usually man a table at the top, think about doing it one day, after Comrades a little marathon is piddle sticks

- m. Plunge down the other side, you have not succumbed to the Mighty Inchanga, feel proud.
- n. There before you lies Drummond, half way but no medals yet
- o. Comb the hair, do your make up; there are lots of TV cameras and great spectators and timing mats, and balloons and stuff. Enjoy the moment
- p. Check your time. A nine hour runner should be at halfway in about 4h15, (about 5 hours for an 11 hour finish and 3h33 for a silver runner) much more and you will be chasing; much less and you will hurt later on. Rather be marginally too slow (vs. your planned finish time) than too quick.
- q. For every minute you pass halfway faster than planned, you will lose at least 6 minutes in the second half. Believe this it is true
- r. As far as I know there has never been a Comrades winner who also went through halfway in the lead.
- s. The rule of thumb is to double your halfway time and add 30 minutes for a nine hour runner; 60 minutes for an 11 hour runner and 20 minutes for a silver.

8. First half of the second half

- a. Just past Drummond is a little white bridge and the start of a long, long climb of about 8K's. You will be forgiven if you thought this was a down run as no one told you that Drummond is in a deep valley?
- b. This section has many twists and turns and is often pretty cold in the shade
- c. Along this stretch is the famous wall of honour where Comrades finishers place their names and numbers on plaques built into a huge wall. It is so important to some, that several former athletes have had their ashes placed behind their plaque so they may forever watch Comrades; such is the nature of this mighty race.
- d. Shortly after the wall is a niche cut out in the rock on the right side of the road heading to Durban. This is Arthur's seat, where Arthur Newton, the first winner of Comrades, sat and rested during his long training runs. You will see tributes placed in the niche and legend has it that if you greet Arthur on the way past, you will have a safe and comfortable second half. Hey, you got nothing to lose so keep the tradition!
- e. You will pass by the large Alverstone Radio mast high up on your right. This is where the TV commentators are based and from where the entire TV coverage is managed and controlled
- f. Look out for the Rob Roy hotel on your left (another great pub)
- g. Eventually after a long grind (remember to keep the head up and the arms pumping to ease the strain on the legs) you pass Kearsney college with the uniformed boys cheering you along to the top of Botha's hill (they pronounce it strangely there)
- h. Easy does it down Botha's, this is where you start damaging your legs
- i. After taking a hammering to your quads, yet another climb out of the village but with good support, lots of noise all the way through Hillcrest
- j. Past the Inanda dam turn-off (Duzi paddlers know the dam well) and back under the motorway into Winston Park, 56 done only 32 odd left, easy, we've all done lots of 16 milers(that's 32k's) in training.
- k. Three quarters behind you one quarter to go, start digging the race is about to start.

9 The final Quarter

- a. Ease into Gillits. Great support and note the neighbourhood rivalry. (One year there was a sign that said to keep Kloof clean, spit in Gillets!)
- b. This section is relatively flat and fast, cruise along happily, criss-crossing the motorway.
- c. Some nice pubs in this area for afters
- d. Look for the last refreshment station in Gillits (just before you get onto the Motorway in Kloof) it is always manned by formerly abused girl children who stay in a protected environment in the area, supported by Comrades and the runners. Thank your maker that you did not have to endure their suffering
- e. Running high and easy slight down through Kloof (The locals pronounce it as if they had never heard Afrikaans before)
- f. Off the motorway, back on and then you are on top of Fields Hill. In the valley lies Pinetown
- g. I would rather run up Fields after 22 K than run down Fields after 65K. Again, take it easy going down Fields, it is long and steep and for logistical reasons has no watering tables, so is also hot and dry
- h. Left at the bottom and onto the flat of Pinetown. Jeez, what happened to my legs? If you are inclined to cramp this is where it is likely to happen; so take whatever precautions you need before you get there. (I have ended up in the storm water ditches on the left with both quads and both calves cramping, boy it's a long walk from here to Durbs)
- i. You have just found out about the fundamental difference between the up and down runs, it's all in the Quads (note to self for the next down run, do more cycling or leg raises in the gym)
- j. The run through Pinetown is actually pleasant once your legs have stopped wobbling. Tip: keep jogging on the jelly legs; do not stop whatever you do, they will recover.
- k. Amazing crowd support, lots of noise, the race has started; everything up to now has just been to soften you up for the real racing
- l. At the end of Pinetown, darn, another hill. This is Cowies and there are camera's at the top so shape up. You will not be alone walking up here, rent a mate and chat your way up, it is pretty steep but not so long.
- m. Then comes a great stretch of gentle downhill through shaded 'burbs and cheering crowds. Here you can make up a lot of time if you have the inclination and the juice.

- n. Two climbs to come, but first an endless pull along the motorway with little support and lots of heat It is easy to lose it on this stretch, keep going it actually does end (eventually!). Dig deep and repeat the childhood mantra of the Little Red Engine: "I think I can; I'm sure I can; I know I can: I will", over and over until you get through.
- o. Think of how fortunate you are to have the mind, body and soul needed to even take part in this race and be grateful that you can experience the greatest race on earth. The pain goes away and you will be left with good memories.
- p. At about 9 to go (yes single figures) you hit the Polly's of the down run, 45th cutting. Not really what you need or want at this point. Head down tunnel vision and get up as quick as you can!
- q. A nice down to recover and pick up a bit of time lost on the walk up, then right under the motorway and immediately left up the on ramp. I bet you never realised how steep on-ramps can be? This is a real nasty, short and sharp, 7 to go.
- r. Gentle down, but at this stage up, down, flat, round who cares, you are sore and tired and grumpy and it is embarrassing walking downhill?
- s. Last hill coming up, Toll Gate (yip it was a toll road back in the day) with a watering point on the right of a left hand bend. They could have put it on the left it would be a bit shorter. This is just your sense of humour failure, hustle over the top.
- t. 5 to go you can see the stadium- all downhill from here; expect some wind in your face. It feels like a gale but is not, just power on.
- u. Into Durb's; 2 and bit to go along Pine street. Gosh never knew this street was so long!
- v. Left into Walnut plenty of support, through the barrier fencing, a quick right and left. It is strange how you cannot lift your feet high enough to get onto the pavement? Never mind they usually build a ramp to get onto the pavement, you see the organisers have been there done that.
- w. Into the stadium, but be very careful not to relax in this final stretch. Many runners collapse on the grass within site of the finish as they mentally relax and the body seizes and cramps. You are not finished until you cross the line, then you can collapse
- x. Smile for the finish photo's looking like you just had a quick walk, cross the line. Cry if you want, most first timers do.
- y. Take the medal, hang it round your neck as it is too hard to carry and say thank you, you have just run Comrades; something very few in the world will do and your personal achievement that can never be taken away. Enjoy every second, but never ever say you have conquered Comrades, it will come back and bite you one day when next you run feeling a bit too confident.
- z. This would be a good time for pain killers washed down with a few cold ones

PS After my first run, which was a down in 1986, I threw my shoes out the window, told my wife I had done what I needed to do and was ready to move on. Then, you know, the next day, well maybe, done the down, surely you need to do an up run as well otherwise you are incomplete as a runner. Be Careful, because Comrades grabs you and I am about to do my 20th run

God Bless
Ken