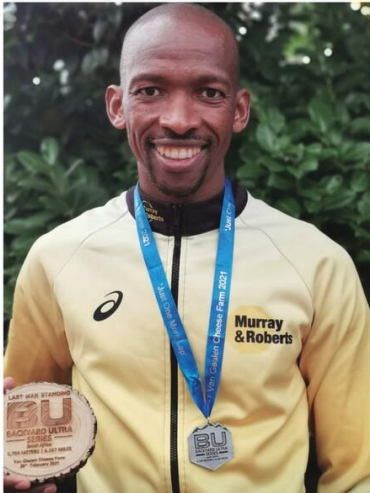


Murray & Roberts

Last Man Standing

The BackYard Ultra (BYU) requires athletes to run 6.7 kays every hour, on the hour, for as long as possible, until the last man standing is the winner. Murray & Roberts' **Wandisile Ngodlwana** did that for 31 hours non-stop, winning the title of the inaugural event in the new series at Van Gaalen's Farm in the Magaliesberg, on a testing route. That meant he covered an astonishing 208.63km, and what made the performance even more astounding was that the thermometer passed the 36-degree mark at midday... not once, but twice! No wonder the pay-off line for the race is "One More Lap!"



MA: What made you want to enter the BYU?

W: Firstly, I didn't know anything about it until a friend of mine, Khuliso Mulaudzi, told me and some of our running friends that he would be doing it, with the aim to raise funds for Kusini Water. He said he planned to do 15 laps, which would be 100km, so I thought I would support him, as I am passionate about community upliftment. However, after donating to his cause, I and some of our running mates decided to go further than just donating, and run with him. (By the way, details for the project are here: www.givingain.com/cc/khuliso-mulaudzi-runs-for-h2hope/.)

MA: How did you prepare for it?

W: I actually did not prepare for it specifically, I just did my normal training. However, I decided to use BYU as a long run for AfricanX, which is the overall aim.

MA: What was the route like?

W: The route was fairly runnable. It was off-road, but not too technical. About 700m from the start, there was a swinging bridge across the river, and that made me slow down every time. Then you ran in between trees along the river, with a few small bumps. We made a U-turn and ran along the fields for about one and a half kays, before we got back in between the trees. Then as we proceeded up towards another river crossing and back to the start, there was the merciful shade of the reeds covering us.

MA: The heat was blistering?

W: The heat started becoming terrible every time around midday to late afternoon, with temperatures above 36 degrees. On the Sunday, around lap 26, at about nine it was very hot again. At least I finished about lunch time, when I called it a day.

MA: Did it help to have the Black and Yellow club chairman Ed Jardim there, also participating?

W: It was so awesome to run with Ed. He finished ahead of me on some of the laps, and when he was done with his laps, he stayed and supported me. On Sunday morning, he was one of the people who were there till my very last lap. He would come to me after every lap with that infectious smile of his, and say: "Wandi, you are such an inspiration, keep it up. Just keep going" He was the first person to congratulate me when I finished my last lap. He is a champ and a leader of note!

MA: Second-placed Riaan Barnard from Born2Run (30 laps) obviously pushed you very hard?

W: I have massive respect for Riaan. He speaks little, smiles a bit, keeps his head down and just keeps going. He is a machine with a diesel engine. Honestly, I had given it to him by lap 28. I think every person who was there, cheering us on, helped to encourage me, but if it wasn't for Riaan's competitive spirit – and mine – I don't know how much sooner we would have called it.

MA: When was it the darkest and hardest for you?

W: It must have been about lap 27, from 180 to 187km. That was the hardest for me, because the outer side of my right quad was so sore. I can't say it was a cramp – I honestly do not know what it was. I'd never gone that far before, so I guess that's it. Had it not been for my incredible team that looked after me, I would have rung that bell... a-la the US Navy Seals, who ring the bell to signal that they've given up. Overall, the deep dark night was not too bad. It was about managing my body temperature as the ambient temperatures dropped, so I just took 'naps' in my sleeping bag when I could. You must remember that I only had about 15 minutes to catch some shut eye at any one time.

MA: How do you top this experience?

W: Firstly, I would like to thank 32Gi for fuelling us during the event. Their G-Shot kept me awake and alert when I needed it most, at night. A massive thanks also to the team that looked after me with nutrition. I would not have done this without them. But while it's a great feeling to win BYU, it was truly all about contributing to the livelihood of those communities. It was about challenging myself as well... but more so for them, and I thank God for such opportunities, even in these trying times when there are no races. //



You can find more info on the Murray & Roberts Running Club via our [Facebook](#) page.