

# Holy (FAST!) Matrimony

In the last month or so we've celebrated both Mother's and Father's days, and at the Murray & Roberts Running Club, we thus thought it a good time to look at two of the most successful, durable and quick couples ever in South African road running. Without doubt, the Netshifhefhe and the De Oliveira couples are top contenders for this title.



## Murray & Roberts

**Joyce and Bethuel Netshifhefhe**, residents of Polokwane, have a list of impressive performances over the whole range of distances, starting with Bethuel's astounding 10km PB of 28:46, which he set at the National Championships in 2000. The 48-year-old also boasts a 1:01:41 half marathon and a 2:11 marathon, incidentally also set at the SA Champs. His finest hour, however, was in 2007, when he won the Two Oceans Marathon title in 3:08 and broke a three-year Zimbabwean stranglehold on the title. He was also victorious at the City to City 50km in 2006, and clinched a coveted Comrades gold (ninth place) in 2009.

Joyce is an ultra-consistent performer and her 2011 Comrades, where she just missed out on silver by a mere 57 seconds as she secured 20th place, is one of many standouts. The mother of Phopi (19), Vhugala (11) and Bethuel Junior (5) is speedy, too, and her best over the 21,1km distance is a quick 1:19:04. Coupled

with her 2:50 marathon best, it's not difficult to see why she has been so steady over so many years, claiming a string of victories, podiums and accolades, including four top 10 placings in the City to City.

### Pride of KZN

As for **Grace and Eloi de Oliveira**, there is not enough space in *Modern Athlete* to list all of their superb achievements, and they may well be the finest couple ever to have graced road running in this country. Grace is a multiple national representative, ranging from four World Half Marathon Championships to wearing the green and gold at the World Athletic Marathon Champs, World Cross Country Champs and in the World Champs 10,000m! The 58-year-old mother of Daniella and grandmother of 19-month-old Alessia, boasts eight gold medals at Two Oceans and five at Comrades, with a best placing of second in the 1999 Comrades in 6:34:53.

Hubby Eloi, who is bound to clean up in the grandmasters section now that he has hit the 60 mark, has no less than 27 Comrades marathon medals to his credit, with a gold in 1993 (ninth) when he ran 5:53 as well as a mind-boggling 23 silvers, including 22 consecutive sub-sevens! His Two Oceans record is equally impressive, with two golds and 18



silvers, with a best placing of third in 1989. Eloi's range is astounding: From a 2:01 for 800m through to a 2:18:30 marathon PB, the man from KZN is multi-talented.

### Part of the Family

We do not know of many more brilliantly quick couples out there in this vein, and we at the black and yellow club are immensely proud of these two stand out families. When these couples made their wedding vows and promised to be "true to each other in good times," they meant it! 



Images: Courtesy Murray & Roberts

