

Engineered Excellence, Times Three!

At the Murray & Roberts Running Club, we look back on some fine performances in the early part of the year. Here we profile three of our stand-out athletes who provided these highlights.

Murray & Roberts



Tayla Kavanagh

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Tayla is the current national junior women's cross country champion, a mean feat considering the abundance of talent in this category in South Africa right now. This gave her a walk-on spot in the national team to represent the country at the African Cross Country Championship in Togo in April.

The KwaZulu-Natal lass only ran her first 10km race just less than two years ago, but now boasts an impressive PB of 34:18, which she set in Durban in February. She has competed in 18 road races to date, and remarkably, has been on the podium at every single one of them. She also holds several course records, as well as the best time at the Ashburton parkrun, and has more often than not shown up the senior women on the roads.

The 19-year-old runner is currently studying a higher certificate in Fitness, but to us at Murray & Roberts, it seems as if she's already achieved higher fitness... and she's just starting out!

Caroline Josten

It's not often that someone records a sub-three-hour finish in just their second marathon, but that's precisely what Caroline Josten did in the 2019 Sanlam Cape Town Marathon. Less than a year later she



Caroline Josten

claimed the women's title at the 2020 Om Die Dam 50km ultra-marathon, to continue the astounding improvement she has shown in the last 24 months.

The Om Die Dam victory in 3:33 (4:17 per kilometre) proved that the 39-year-old commercial manager at a chemical company has what it takes to hit fast times, and the big time in long distance running. Her standard marathon best has tumbled to 2:48:15, run at Kaapsehoop in November 2019, and there is clearly more where that came from. When asked what motivates her, Caroline quotes US Olympian Shalane Flanagan, who said: "If you're lonely at the top, you did it wrong. High performers focus on pulling others up along with them. They are generous as they rise and create a tribe."

Meanwhile, lockdown has given Caroline the opportunity to work on her speed, as a recent 5km time trial of 17:38 confirms! That's just part of why the Murray & Roberts team believes that this mother of two busy boys will be a force to be reckoned with when racing in South Africa resumes again. Hopefully that's sooner than later!

Philani Buthelezi

Go down to the blue oval Tuks track in Pretoria, and you are bound to see Philani Buthelezi circling the tartan at close to 60-second 400m pace, with his coach Lindsey Parry calling splits. The 30-year-old's



Philani Buthelezi

name is forever written into the 'history books' as the first race winner for the newly launched Murray & Roberts Running club last year, with a rapid victory in the Dis-Chem Half Marathon in Johannesburg.

That's a unique distinction this dedicated athlete will be able to claim forever, but it was just the start of a superb year. He went on to win the national 10,000m title at the SA Champs, adding a silver medal in the 5000m, and ended the year on another high as he won the Tough One 32km.

Says Philani: "Within four months of starting to work with Coach Parry, I could feel that my running was improving. I appreciate everything Coach Parry has done for me, and my win in the 10,000m at the 2019 South African Athletics Championships is just the start of great things to come."

The flyer from North Gauteng has a personal best of 1:02:44 for the half marathon distance and 2:18 in the marathon, and was busy sharpening up for a fast marathon in the United States, in the 2:12 to 2:14 region, when the COVID-19 pandemic put paid to that, for the time being. Philani's versatility is jaw dropping, from 5000m on the track to the marathon distance on the road... and if you happen to go down to Tuks and you see him putting in the hard yards, you'd understand why. /A

Images: Jetline Action Photo, SMacPix & Courtesy Murray & Roberts



Tayla Kavanagh



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