

Bosman triumphs in Comrades women's race

If sport is entertainment then the Comrades women's ultra-race was the ultimate drama. In the end, after 385 minutes of running, it was Charné Bosman (@Nedbank Dream Team) who prevailed to at long last fulfil her dream.

Last year's champion Caroline Wöstmann (KPMG) finished second, but what a second place finish it was. It is hard to remember when last, if ever, the last 20 kilometres provided such a theatre of deliberation, pain and agony.

No wonder an elated Bosman said: "It is amazing to win at long last. It is a dream come true. I am very happy but all credit to God who gave me the talent to run."

Wöstmann set out as if she had another appointment later the same afternoon. At one stage she had a lead of almost 12 minutes on Bosman and it looked like a forgone conclusion that she would win. Unfortunately for Wöstmann her own words turned out to become true in a way she might not have envisioned.

In an early interview Wöstmann, who trains at the High Performance Centre (hpc), said: "Comrades is a tough race where nothing is guaranteed. You can be in the best shape of your life but come race day you realize, right from your very first step, that it is going to be long hard slog."

And that was exactly how it turned out. A very long hard slog. Wöstmann started cramping after about 20 kilometres. Having a brief altercation with a motorbike at a water point certainly did not help matters, but Wöstmann refuses to use that as an excuse.

From Cowies Hill Wöstmann started to walk more than she was running and it became abundantly clear that she was getting into more agony with every step. But a grimacing Wöstmann refused to give up.

In contrast Bosman, who also trains at the High Performance Centre (hpc), just became stronger and stronger behind her.

“I started hearing from spectators that Caroline was cramping but because I was still 10 minutes behind I realized that I should not get over excited. It was important to just stick to my race strategy,” the Nedbank-athlete said.

Towards the end of the race she was running almost 90 seconds per kilometre faster than Wöstmann which enabled her to pass the defending champion with about 3 kilometres to go. She ‘blitzed’ past Wöstmann without giving her a second glance.

“When, at long last, I saw Caroline I just said to myself that now is the time to run like never before.”

Bosman’s victory is definitely due to the fact that she was able to stick to the race plan she and her coach, Lindsey Parry (head coach at Tuks/HPC) agreed upon.

The Nedbank-athlete was full of praise afterwards for the way Wöstmann bit the bullet to finish.

“She is an amazing athlete. One thing is certain, she will be back next year stronger than ever.”

Interesting about Bosman’s victory is that she has never before managed to complete a Comrades ‘down-run’ (Pietermaritzburg to Durban).

In the 2014 down-run she collapsed during the race because of a dysfunctional thyroid. She was unconscious for a few minutes and had to ‘finish’ her race in an ambulance.

Sweden’s Kajsa Berg (@Nedbank Dream Team), who competed in her first Comrades, was third in the women’s race in a time of 6:39:04.

The men's race, won by David Gatebe (TomTom Athletics), was a class act. He won in the record time of 5:18:19. The previous down-run record (5:20:41) was set in 2007 by Russia's Leonid Shvetsov.

Ludwick Mamabolo (@Nedbank Dream Team) was second 5:24:05 and Bongmusa Mthembu (Arthur Ford AC) third in 5:26:39.