

Nel finishes her season with 3rd place in Zagreb

Wenda Nel, a finalist in the recent World Championships in Beijing, completed her marathon hurdling season last night (8/09) with a 3rd place finish in the 400-hurdles at the IAAF World Challenge Meeting in Zagreb.

Cassandra Tate (US) won in 55.16s and her compatriot, Georganne Moline, was second in 55.38s. Nel, who finished in 55.63s, was quite relieved that her racing season has come to an end.

“I would have loved to represent South Africa at the African Games in Brazzaville next week, but I think it would be foolish to do it. My Achilles heel has started to act up after last week’s Diamond League Meeting in Zurich and it again flared up last night. I think it would be foolhardy of me to keep on racing, especially considering the Olympic Games in Rio next year. The best I can do now is to ask the experts at the High Performance Centre (HPC) in Pretoria to find out what causes my injury. I am confident that they will be able to help me sort out the problem before I seriously start preparing for the Games.”

“As far as last night’s race is concerned I am happy with my performance. It was slightly better than my race in Zurich and I was competitive up to the last hurdle even though my legs showed signs of going on strike so that I had to battle to get enough lift to clear the last hurdle. I guess it was my body’s way of telling me that it was time to stop. Actually it will be nice not to spend hours on training every day and do the things that ordinary people do for a change.

Nel has good reason to be satisfied with the way her season played out and she certainly deserved the title of “Miss Consistency”. She improved her best time to 54.37 seconds, becoming one of the ten fastest hurdlers in the world during 2015. Myrtle Bothma (53.74s –1986) and Surita Febbraio (54.05s –2003) were the only two South Africans who were able to run faster times.

An interesting aspect of the Tuks/HPC athlete’s performance during the season is that she was able to run times faster than 55 seconds on no less than seven occasions. Last year she managed to do so on only three occasions. Of the 14 400-hurdles races in which she competed she won five, finished second twice and third twice - certainly not a too shabby record.