


Elana Meyer will be remembered best for her courageous run at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics where she finished second to her biggest rival Derartu Tulu. She however had a long and extremely successful career. The major highlights being Silver medal performances at the 1992 Olympic and 1994 Commonwealth Games. She was also the World Champion over 21km in 1994 and broke the world record over that distance in 1991, 1997, 1998 and 1999. Elena also made a successful transition to Marathon running claiming a 3rd place in 2:25 at the Boston Marathon in 1994.

In 2013, Elena Meyer launched Endurocad; this is a distance running academy with a difference. Endurocad is a charity organisation which through sponsorships and sharing of expertise, experience and passion is inspiring South Africa to run. The medium to long term goals are to become the leading running academy in Africa and to inspire a new generation of athletes to be international champions from the track to the Marathon.


With the hpc and Tuks Athletics launching their own school athletics academy with very similar goal, it made perfect sense that the hpc and Endurocad should set up a working relationship. After a very positive meeting, it became clear we are working towards the very same goals with the same ideals. The subtle difference is that we want to work with the athletes from a school going age and Endurocad would support athletes who have left school. The hpc and the tuks athletics academy are therefore very proud of the fact that Elana Meyer has agreed to be an ambassador for our programme. For the young athletes to have someone like Elana to look up to and ask for advice is a unique gift and opportunity.

Like Elana, we at the hpc also


believe SA CAN RUN!
I was very fortunate to spend some time with this incredibly talented athlete, ambassador and Mom. Here are some of the questions I put to her:

 **What inspired you to take up athletics?**

I was first inspired by the performance of Nadia Comaneci at the 1976 Olympic Games where she received the first ever perfect 10 for her performance. Back then I just wanted to become a gymnast, but the fact that I come from a very small town that was never an option! When they announced at our school that we will have a Fun Run that sounded like a great opportunity and the thing to do! I started running on the farm in preparation for that and fell in love with running straight away!


 **How old were you when you really started to train hard?**

I really enjoyed running the longer distances since I was very young. I loved the fact that I could explore while running on the farm, I love the fact that I owned it. I joined a school group in primary school, but always had a huge curiosity to learn more. In high school I went to a boarding school in Robertson where I got my first coach, Charles Faasen where I started training harder on a specific programme. I was 14 years old and in Standard 7

 **When did you realise you could compete internationally?**

I attended an athletics camp when a coach told me that I can become a Springbok athlete, that became a dream and when I was 18 years old I achieved that. Ever since that day I wanted to race internationally but because SA was banned it was not an option. I missed out on the 1984 and 1988

Olympics and finally had the chance to compete in 1992

 **Did you have any heroes/ idols in athletics growing up? If so who?**

Sarina Cronje (mother of Johan Cronje) was an inspiration for me when I was young. She broke SA records for 3000m and 1500m when I was young. Then Zola also inspired me. Even though we are the same age, Zola was world class at 15 and I kept on improving over many years to eventually beat her

 **Who were the people who had the biggest influence during your career?**

My parents allowed me to live a dream, they supported me and their unconditional love gave me the opportunity to never fear failure or success. My school coach Charles Faasen taught me everything I know about running, he coached me as a person and not only an athlete and certainly laid the best Foundation I could have asked for. My senior coach Pieter Labuschagne took me from being a good national athlete to an Olympic medallist and world record holder. Dr Ron Holder was my GURU that helped me throughout my career. He sadly passed away 2 years ago but was a healer, mentor and friend for many years.

 **Finally who were the competitors you most feared/enjoyed racing?**

As a junior racing Tanya Peckham was always hard – she had a devastating kick and I always had to get rid of her if I wanted to win the race. Zola on the other hand was for many years in a class of her own, even when I eventually managed

to beat her, she was always a factor especially in cross country! On international level Derartu Tulu was such a great competitor at Championships and could run a sub 60 last lap of the 10 000m, I beat her most of the times that we raced but coming to a championships it was always hard.

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What new passions do you have during your "retirement"

I have always loved nature and endurance and if you can combine the two you have a winning recipe. I climbed Mount Kilimanjaro and hiked to Everest Base camp after retirement and it was great experiences to me. But more than anything else I really enjoy having kids – the greatest gift or medals I have ever won!

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How do you feel about the excitement generated by you doing Two Oceans?

I am excited about the opportunity to run for a much bigger reason than myself, to raise funds and awareness for Endurocad and talented SA Runners that deserve some support and opportunities

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How do you feel you can contribute not only to the development of our young talent, but to getting South Africa to focus on athletics in the same way they do the Comrades/Two Oceans?

It is going to be a challenge, but I believe that South Africans have always loved athletics. Over the last decade there were not a lot of opportunities for supporters to get behind the runners because there were not a lot of big track meetings or any other events apart from those two.



LEGEND

Elana Meyer

*Lindsey Parry: Technical Director: TuksAthletics Academy
Image: Reg Caldecott*