

TAC runners' reflect on the Comrades 2012: from comrades to Comrades

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The Treatment Action Campaign's (TAC) running team, Runners for Health, have successfully completed the 2012 Comrades Marathon. Seven of the runners finished the race in time to receive a medal - six managed to get bronze medals. Read what team members had to say about their experience of the marathon here.

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Tantaswa Ndlelana finished the race at 10:59:37, making it just in time to receive a bronze medal. Tantaswa said, "I started first by going to gym but I never thought that I would run again, not until Vuyiseka introduced me to running in 2010. The Comrades Marathon is not an easy task, it was tough, the route was hilly, windy and long, but I finished and made it just in time for a bronze medal."

Lumkile Sizila finished the race at 10:39:11. Lumkile said, "When I got my first medal it was such a motivating factor for me and I wanted to do more. Running the Comrades Marathon had never crossed my mind until I started running with the TAC runners for health comrades."

Vuyiseka Dubula, TAC's General Secretary, finished the marathon at 10:48:59. Vuyiseka said, "Doing the Comrades Marathon came up as joke a between me and Mark Heywood after he learnt that we were starting a running group at TAC in Cape Town. The marathon was the biggest test to my will power to fight, my solidarity with other comrades, and not to underestimate my mental and physical ability. The TAC "HIV POSITIVE" bib did the talking because people alongside the road were calling "go HIV, go HIV!" and some came closer to say "we are proud of you, thank you". The support of our families, friends, and people of KwaZulu-Natal was amazing."

Mark Heywood, who was running the comrades for an impressive 13th time, finished the race in 10:48:58. Mark said, "This Comrades was probably my most enjoyable. Running with a team is better than the loneliness of a single runner. Running with comrades is better than running with a team! This race is inspirational. It's the best of the diversity of democratic South Africa all packed into a day. I have now done this race 13 times. I will be happy to take another TAC team on my 14th."

Below are the finishing times for all of the runners in TAC's team:

Lumkile Sizila: 10:39:11

Vuyiseka Dubula:10:48:59

Mark Haywood: 10:48:59

Thanduxolo Mngqawa: 10:54:59

Tantaswa Ndlelana: 10:59:37

Mosuli Qhaba: 11:05:29

Akhona Dutyulwa: 11:52:26

Sharon Ekambaram ran for an impressive 10:02:37 with a backache and had to pull out of the race eventually.

TAC's participation in the race would not have been possible without many people who supported the TAC runners for health, namely, Cynthia Tshaka. Cynthia, from HIV Sports Heroes, supported transport and accommodation for all of the runners.

We would also like to thank the following people and clubs for their donations: Emi Maclean for providing running gear from America; the ATC club for providing running gear and shoes; and, the Varisty Kudus running club who raised R3300 to support the TAC runners. Additionally, we cannot forget the amazing support that we received from Faizel Slamang. Faizel kept all the TAC runners for health's supporters informed through his updates on the 'runners, walkers and cyclists for health' facebook page.

The objective of the Runners for Health group is to encourage other activists and ordinary people living with HIV to take up running and other forms of exercise. HIV does not have to stop you from living your life.

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