

Running 4 Elephants!

Wow. What a crazy, wonderful, laughter and pain filled weekend as the STE-SA team hit the mountain pass between Sabie and Lydenburg for our Running for Elephants project. Friday evening found us coming from the Timbavati, Akornhoek, and as far afield as Johannesburg and Klerksdorp and all meeting up the night before. Had you been a fly on the wall you would have seen us all squishing into my folks beautiful and cosy Sabie home, with beds in the lounge, and running shoes and numbers everywhere. Dinner of course was a delicious carbo-loaded spaghetti bolognese to get us ready for the race in the morning.



Our “team” consisted of Grant and Richard Murphy who ran the 56 km race... (And are actually FIT!!) Doing the 21 km race was us Timbavati crew - Michelle, myself (Sarah) and Prince, and we were joined by two amazing runners Andrew, and Deon from the Klaserie Hawks, a local running club. Supporting us in the 5km race happily were Robbyn, Inge, Ian (Robbyn’s dad) and

Jock (Michelle’s Dad). The dad’s didn’t join us for our pre-race slumber party, but were there in the morning with spirits high... (Or so I’m told... as we were dropped off at some random misty mid point of the mountain to start our race)



Morning dawned... well to be honest, we were up BEFORE the dawn as 4 am the house woke up, shoes laced, faces washed, and heads and hearts prepared. (And of course, me not being a serious runner... had my life-saving morning cuppa coffee! Aaah... now im ready for anything!) Setting off in convoy with “Good luck” “Good luck” resounding! And then.... BAM!! The clouds burst--- and our morning was flooded with bucket after bucket of torrential rain... And while im prone to exaggeration, here I am truly not being



dramatic... we got SOAKED just running from the car to the bus – which was arranged to take us to the starting point... Sodden through; with rain dripping off our beautiful makarabas we huddled in the bus and watched the misty morning mountain scenery go by! Must say as we drove the pass we were all very glad not to be doing the 56 km! Sorry Grant and Rich, but its true... We think you are very brave!! (Crazy, but brave...) Way to go! We don’t choose to mimic you... but we admire you!

We got dropped off exactly 21.5 kilometres from Lydenburg town...and with a crowd gathering in the cold morning, our excitement and spirits started rising. It was amazing! It was contagious. And we couldn’t wait to get started!





And then... we we're off... the boys obviously sprinting to the lead with ambitious goals of winning! Michelle and I hung to the back, not wanting to get in the way of the more serious scary-type runners... But even being a non-runner per se—it was a truly wonderful experience. Running for a cause that you believe it... with wonderful company, on a canvas of nature's most beautiful scenery is not something to turn one's nose up at! It really was so special.

Mish and I set a good pace, and enjoyed most of the race—taking full advantage of the great organisation of the race's free water stalls, and mini cokes, lunch bars, and music to keep you going! Pain set in for us around the 12 km mark, with Mish having BAD BAD shoes... (I'll spare you the details... but suffice it to say, she is waving 4 toenails goodbye... the things we do for ellies!) and my ligament in my leg pulling slightly. But that's when, I believe, Resilience Quotient kicks in and its pure determination and desire that keep you forcing your body to be strong and keep going. It was with every step that we willed Save the Elephants – South Africa to keep going and succeed. Like my personal motto: Passion...with a Purpose!



Inge and Robbyn, Ian and Jock already having finished their race – saw them with elephant makarabas on, and smiles shining as they waited at the finish line for us... And Prince, and Andrew—our heroes for the cause, ran back the last km to meet us, which was great, because we truly were almost spent. Hand in hand, arms raised with new strength, we ran the last few metres with the crowd applauding... I will remember that moment for a long time... Andrews chants of “elephants, elephants” as we near the finish line... their more will to push ourselves on. A true solidarity finished with a time of 2 hours and 50 minutes. (Not bad!! Our goal had been 3h40... so we're confident that should we not have our injuries bit better!) And have our injuries bit better!)



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The boys had of course done amazingly well. (my heart swells like a mamma chicken as I say this!) Prince with hardly any training other than his soccer games got a brilliant time of 1 hour and 50 minutes. Andrew and Deon were shining stars coming 2nd place and 6th place respectively, with times around 1 hour 4 minutes. Well done!! Truly a tribute to human ability! Thank you for Running for Elephants!!





Then it was time for us to get our medals, bandage Michelle's feet. (yup OUCH... as I mentioned before... BAD SHOES—and POOR POOR TOES!!) and then sit in the beautiful sunny day and wait for Grant and Rich to finish their race. 56 kilometres is a long way, but they came running in strong and proud, with Makaraba's on... side by side with Prince and Andrew who had met them for the last km to run in with them...!!

High 5's and congratulations were in order... and with the sun shining just as brightly as our spirits, we waited for Andrew and Deon to receive their golds, took some group photos in our makarabas (much to the delight of the crowd) and then headed home, going our separate ways.



WELL DONE STE-SA TEAM!! WELL DONE...

"In running, it doesn't matter whether you come in first, in the middle of the pack, or last. You can say, 'I have finished.' There is a lot of satisfaction in that."

-Fred Lebow, New York City Marathon co-founder