

THE QUALITY PAPER MERCOURY

Determined runners all set for Comrades

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THE Comrades Marathon is about sacrifices and challenges, overcoming personal hardships and showing the indomitable human spirit.

More so this year for four determined runners who have each overcome major personal obstacles just to make it to the starting line.

On June 16, Mr Donovan Wright, Mr Meshack Mota, Mr Estienne Arndt and Ms Khanyi Mlambo will be running to raise money for their respective charities.

It is in the true spirit of the Comrades to see a runner with an artificial leg cross the finishing line or one who had a brain tumour removed three months ago.

How about a runner who is struggling to survive unemployment and lack of resources - who can't even afford a pair of running shoes - and one who is juggling a high-powered career?

Last year's first South African across the line, Mr Wright, will be running to raise funds to promote awareness of the Cancer Association of South Africa.

In October last year, he was diagnosed as having a benign brain tumour for which he underwent radiation treatment in December.

Within a month, Mr Wright had started training again.

He said the race had become a home for his dreams.

"My greatest dreams and most memorable moments have been realised at Com-

rades. For all participants, despite diversity in background, we all aim to find ourselves on that long testing road.

"Once we reach the finish line, we find we are no longer different and we can share our experiences as one."

For Mr Mota, a 40-year-old veteran, taking part in this year's Comrades is a way of earning some money so he can set up a small business to ensure financial security for his wife and four children.

Retrenched from the mines four years ago, and unemployed since, he plans to buy a freezer, from which he can sell meat to others living in the informal settlement in Krugersdorp where he stays.

A spirited and positive person, Mr Arndt is a familiar figure to the many Comrades spectators.

With 12 Comrades' medals to his credit, he has completed the past three races with the assistance of a prosthesis, brightly festooned with a South African flag.

He lost his foot in a motorcycle accident in 1988 and will be running this year's race in support of the KwaZulu-Natal Conservation Trust wearing the now familiar 2kg prosthesis.

Despite the odds, Ms Mlambo has successfully managed to juggle a demanding career in a male-dominated industry and become involved in a number of community upliftment projects, yet still finds time for personal interests, of which running is only one.

In 1998, SABCA2 awarded Ms Mlambo the Lebone Woman of the Year award.



PICTURE: PATRICK MTOLO

THUMBS-UP: From left, Meshack Mota, Khanyi Mlambo, Donovan Wright and Estienne Arndt with Thokozisi Ntogo, 4, and Sihle Bhengu, 6, from the St Thomas Children's home in Durban, which is one of the beneficiaries of the MTN charity challenge which takes place during the Comrades Marathon.