



Comrades 2026

LESIBA SETHOSA'S STORY

From 94kg to 85.77km: A Journey I Never Saw Coming

The Beginning: Some people find running. Others accidentally fall into it and somehow end up convincing themselves that running 89 kilometres is a perfectly normal life decision.

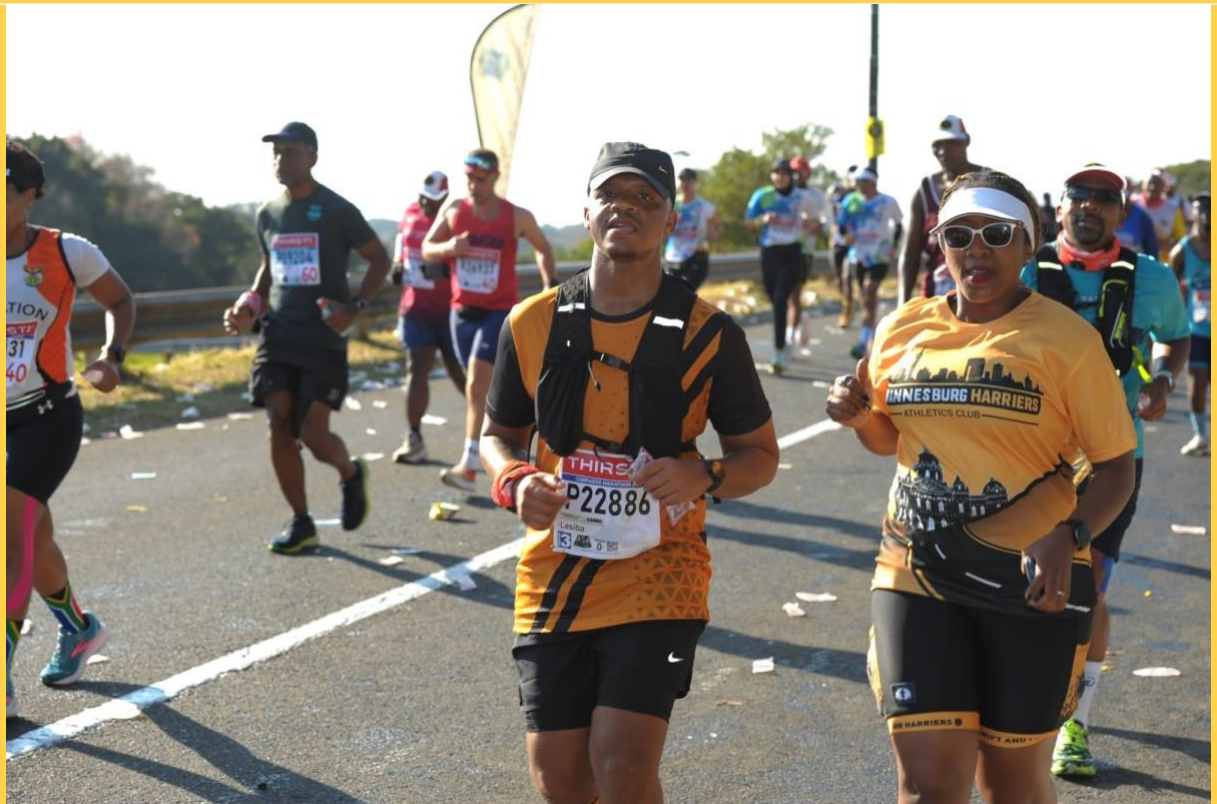
This is not a story about someone who was always athletic or naturally fit. This is a story about starting from zero; or should I say 94kg. From struggling through 5km runs, carrying all that weight, and questioning every life choice on the road... to standing at the Comrades Marathon finish line less than a year later with a medal around my neck.



Early Struggles: My running journey began in August 2025, with absolutely zero fitness. I weighed 94kg and honestly, even running 5km felt like climbing Mount Everest. But I wanted to challenge myself, so I registered for the Rand Water Vaal Half-Marathon in September. And boy oh boy... I finished that Half Marathon. My time? **3:43**. I'm pretty sure Peak Timing had already started packing away their mats. I however did not let that discourage me; guess what? I registered for a full marathon in November - the Jacaranda Marathon. And crazily enough, I had already convinced myself that I was running Comrades Marathon 2026! 🏆

Becoming a Marathoner: Race Day arrived. In my mind, a marathon was just two half marathons Back-to-Back. Six hours and fifty five minutes later, I crossed the finish line. Barely survived, but I did it. Looking back now, I laugh - that's literally someone's Comrades Marathon time.

Nonetheless, I was officially a marathon runner. But still far from a qualifier. Since I clearly love suffering, I also ran the Soweto Marathon that same month. Rainy, cold, and brutal hills - but I shaved almost an hour off my Jacaranda time and finished just under six hours.



The Turning Point: After Soweto Marathon, people told me, "Bro, you need two years to prepare." Maybe they were right. But I said, "Nah... let's see."

The new year came, and this is where the real work began.

- * I quit alcohol

- * I controlled food portions

I also ran like a headless chicken with Team Vitality. My first race of the year was Johnson Crane — **5:08!** Hope was alive.

Pretoria Balwin humbled me next, and my weight dropped below 90kg. Progress.

Then I joined Johannesburg Harriers Athletics Club (JHAC). Time trials, recovery runs, hill training — all new to me. And that was the missing puzzle.

The Qualifier: I ran Johannesburg City Marathon in a time of **4:53**. Finally, a Comrades qualifier and at home! I then unfortunately picked up a knee injury from hill training at AfriSam. I was out for three whole weeks ☹️- a painful setback, but patience paid off.

Then came MiWay Wally Hayward Marathon in May, I ran with the sub-5 bus- easy pace, confidence restored.



2026 MIWAY WALLY HAYWARD MARATHON



The Big Day — 14 June 2026 Comrades Marathon.

The strategy: walk the hills, run the flats, finish under 12 hours. Somewhere along the route, I met Matilda Tihagadi. We carried each other through the famous hills. With 10 to 13km left, I did runner's maths and bronze medal was possible. I sprinted like a madman, and I didn't even notice Polly Shortts ... until she reminded me exactly who she was. 😊 I walked the entire hill, regrouped the pushed again – **11H24** minutes later — I crossed the finish line. A Comrades Marathon finisher. 🏆

The Transformation: From 94kg with zero fitness, struggling through 5km runs... to 73kg with a Comrades medal around my neck. What a journey.



A huge thank you to the Johannesburg Harriers Athletics Club for the training, support and guidance. Joining this club changed everything. Without this club, I'd probably still be somewhere singing "walk the hills" at the 5km mark. 😊 Instead, **I became a Comrades Marathon finisher.**

Oh, and dear Polly Shortts — we will meet again!!!



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