



THE ULTIMATE HUMAN RACE

I've always wanted to run the comrades marathon "The Ultimate human Race", which is traditionally run between Durban and Pietermaritzburg, covering a distance of 89-90 odd kms.

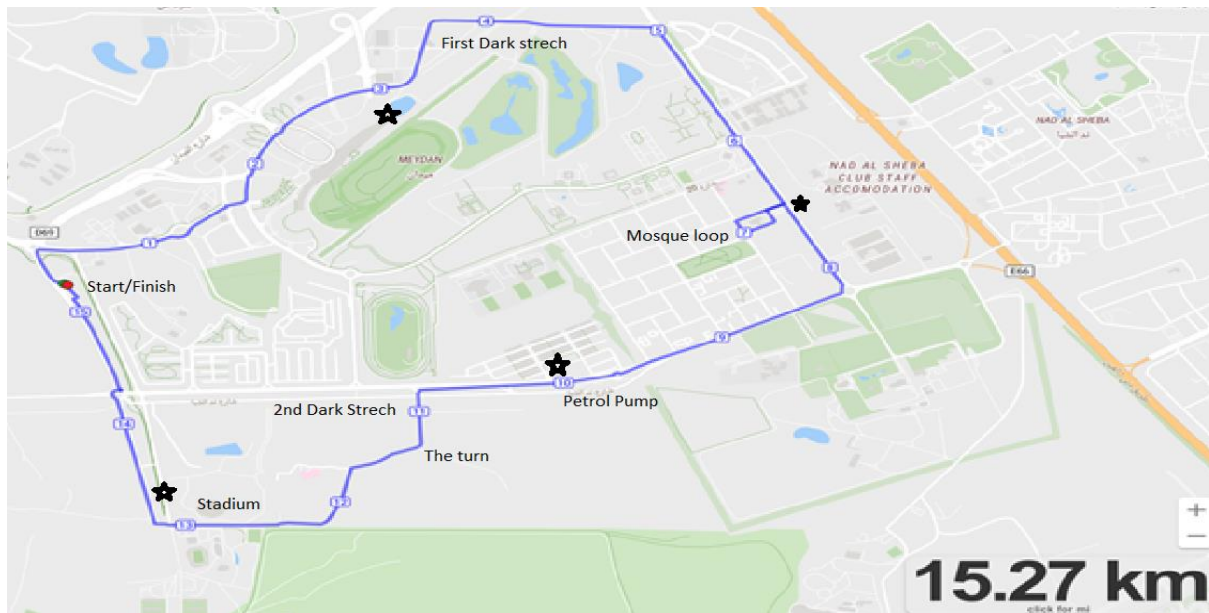
This year the race was celebrating its centenary.

And when Nic mentioned the Comrades Centenary race, and that it can be done virtually, I did not think twice and registered for the 45 K version of the race. 4 options were available 90K, 45K, 21K and 10K.

Later when it dawned upon me that the timing couldn't possibly be worse, due to the high humidity and the extreme heat even in the night, it gave me the cold feet, but there was no stepping back now.

I had made up my mind to run it with a feel, to stick to a pace with no pressure of time, to hydrate well, and complete it, even if it meant walking. I trained for around 5 weeks with a consistent increase in distance with a maximum of 32 K.

Come race day, I woke up at 00:15 with very little sleep from the previous night but well rested, the legends doing 90 K started at 0:01 while I started the race at 1:30. Thanks to Nic, we had a planned route with 4 water stations and the 90 K runners doing 6 loops, 45 K runners doing 3 loops and 21 K runners doing 1 loop and a few extra kilometres.



The water stations are star marked and the stretches are as described in the story ahead.

I started the run, with the group that came back from their first loop, with Saleh for company, the weather was already showing its true colors, the dry heat could be felt right away. The team was maintaining a steady pace and we fell in line straight away. 5 K into the race and I realized that the pace that I was going at was not what I had planned for. I gave a shout to Saleh and decided that we should be slowing down.

We got into a stretch of the route, where it was not lit up, and Saleh having worn Vibrams feared stepping on a stone or sharp object. We took a very careful approach and continued on our journey treading carefully. Thanks to the amazing volunteers who welcomed us with so much cheer, they had sacrificed their sleep to make things easier for us, what great souls, God Bless, we refueled and set off on our journey to complete the rest of the route.

10 K down, past the lone car parked at the petrol station which served as the water station, we reached a turn which we were not 100% about since I did not do the recce of the route. Soon appeared 2 runners doing their 2nd loop to guide us in the right direction, again a stretch of darkness, adding to the peace and serenity that running gives you, me-time as you could call it. This stretch though was a bit confusing as there were quite a few roads to pick from. Heading in the right direction, thanks to the 2nd loop runners we followed them to cross this hurdle and we ran past the new stadium and some private property and noticed a devout gentleman roll out his prayer mat and set himself for prayer. I estimated the time should be around 3, and I turned to Saleh and said, "Isn't it too early for the morning call for prayer?", and he replied saying, "Maybe he missed his prayer last night.", that is dedication I would say.

Soon we were on the main road, and another set of lively volunteers greeted us and with the sugary energy from the Coca-Cola, we reached the end of our first loop, 15K done, 30K to go. With a quick change of clothes, a few dates, and a bottle of a hydrating drink, we were ready to go. We started with a small walk and then defaulted to the rhythmic pace of over 7 min/km. Now, 4 K down the second loop and we ventured again onto the same dark stretch when Saleh suggested I go ahead as he would require some more time.

Therefore, I continued on my journey, now as a lone wolf, chugging along the route. When I reached the mosque, this is where I could say I was halfway done at exactly 22.5 K. The water station to water station breaks were a bit compromised, especially the stretch leading to the petrol station when the station looked so near yet so far.

26 K done and once again I reached the stretch of unknown turns, this time alone, with no one in sight. Returning to the conversation during the previous loop, I took the correct turn, still a bit unsure. It was only once I recognized the sign at the end of the dark road that I was relieved to have taken the right turn. A few more walking breaks to the water station and a small chat with the volunteers. The time suggested that I would finish the 2nd loop in just about under 4 hours. Finishing the 2nd loop and 30 K done, with a fresh pair of clothes, my favourite DCS shirt, a few dates, and a bottle of Gatorade, I set off on my 3rd loop, learning that the 21k group had just left for their endeavours.

Once again, past the 1st water station with quite a few breaks, I had to make the call to control the spontaneous breaks and put more of a stable structure to the running pattern. So I decided that I would walk for 250 M and run for 750 M, bringing in a new equation, putting my mind to work, concluding that I would finish the run in 6 hours.

Having done 700 M more than planned at the end of loop 2, I decided to miss the loop of the Mosque, at this point met Mohandas who was on his 4th round. I ran with him for a while but stuck to the plan of walking for 250 M and running for 750 M. Passing the mosque and realizing how strong the sun had gotten in just some time. With the remaining distance being under 10 kilometres the counting back had started and was filling my mind.

Now, 8 K to go and the stretch after the mosque was empty, a speeding trucker honking continuously, I am sure sending out good wishes.

7K to go and I was again looking at the petrol pump which would just not come any closer.

6K to go, past the petrol pump water station, now quite a few cars were speeding on the road but with no sidewalk, I decided to run on the sidewalk being made, jumping over a barricade and back on to the road.

5K to go and reached the dark lane which was now well lit up with the sun shining down hard and sharp. Voicing a good morning to the laborers working on the stretch, I kept moving with the hope to have it achieved within 6 hours and as per my previous calculations, I would have 4 minutes to spare.

3K to go and I was passing the stadium and the private property for the last time with a quick wave to the security guard, who was the witness to the toll this team was going through.

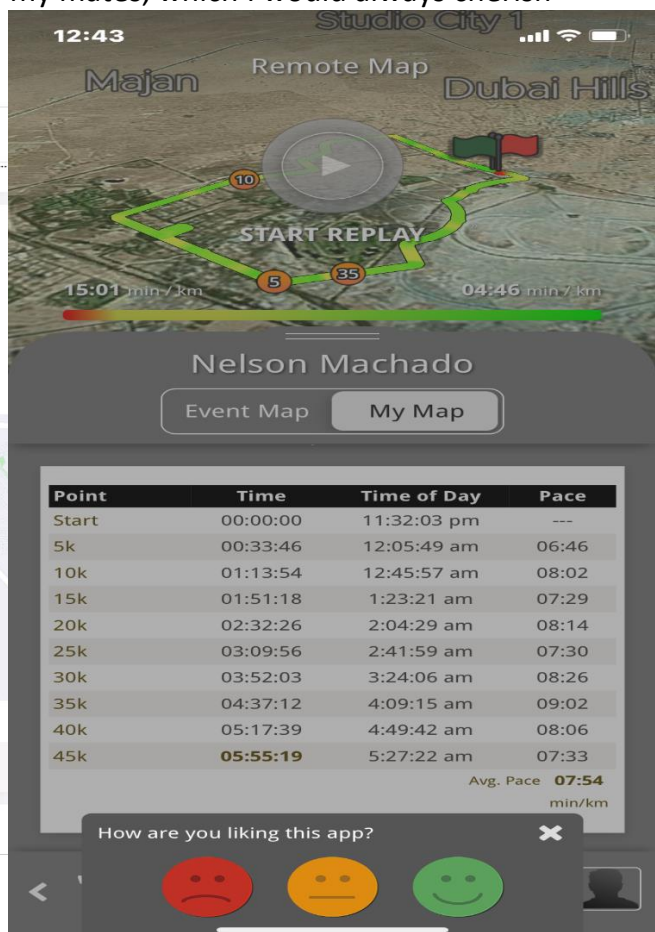
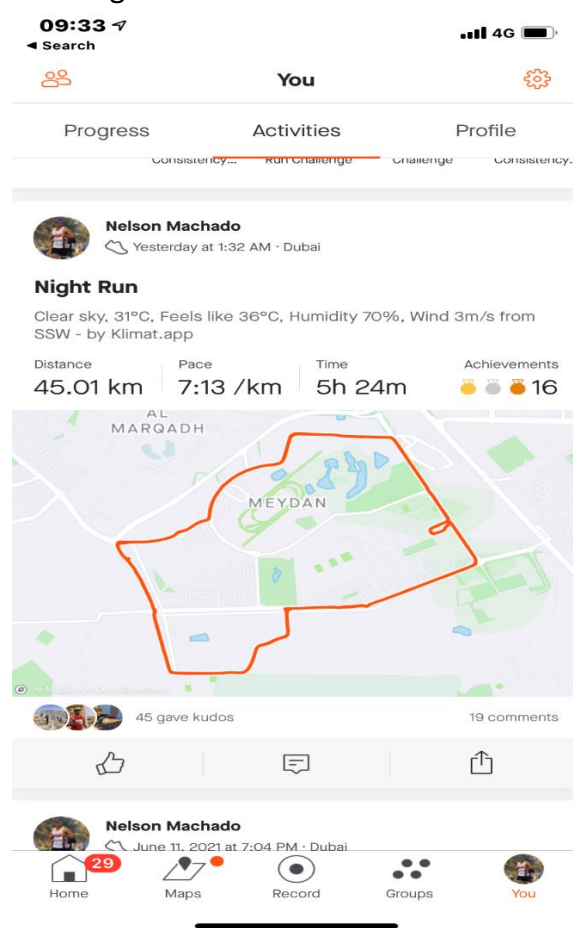
2K to go and passing the last water station that was now moved, the volunteers had made sure to inform us that they would be changing the position and to plan accordingly. The sun was getting stronger as was the need for a water break, but I could not stop, I pushed forward.

1K to go and I reached the final roundabout which was much busier with cars driving through. I reached the smiling and cheery volunteers, and with a quick sip of Coca-Cola and some water, I was off to the finish. I reached the parking entrance to be welcomed by Savita and Shweta who were finishing their 21 K. I finished the race together to the cheer of the DCS mates with a time of 5:55.

What an awesome event this has been, the biggest for me has been that I did not mention the word cramps in the detailed

description of my run. A big thank you to Nic and the team for organizing this, it would not have been possible to have done this on our own, or maybe not even registered.

Race log from Strava and comments from my mates, which I would always cherish



You Discussion

- Dinesh Somani · Yesterday
Respect 🙏🙏
- Sapna Choudhary 🇮🇳 · Yesterday
Congratulations!!!! You are amazing!
- Capt. Rajan · Yesterday
Congrats... we should start together next year at Pietermaritzburg.
- Mihir Desai · Yesterday
Congratulations Nelson 🙏
- Arti Agiwal · Yesterday
Phenomenal 🙌🙌 Congratulations 🎉
- Shilpa Akula · Yesterday
Congratulations Nelson! Was struggling to finish my 21 🙏
- Remesan Tharal · Yesterday
Congrats 🙌🙌
- Remesan Tharal · Yesterday
Congrats 🙌🙌

You Discussion

- Remesan Tharal · Yesterday
Congrats 🙌🙌
- Remesan Tharal · Yesterday
Congrats 🙌🙌
- Jino Jose · Yesterday
Well Done Nelson. Congrats
- Deepak Dalakoti · Yesterday
Amazing bro 🙏
- Sachin Gehani · Yesterday
Insane man...you are made up of something else....well done !!
- Arun Kumar · Yesterday
Respect Nelson! 🙌🙌🙌
- Chirag Shah · Yesterday
Legend **Nelson Machado**

You Discussion

- Night Run**
Nelson Machado · Yesterday · 📍 45.01 km
👍 45
- COMMENTS 19
- Sachin Padekar · Yesterday
Hats off !!!
- Jaxy Makwana · Yesterday
Koti koti pranam... rockstar
- Prashant Bhatia · Yesterday
Congrats
- AJIT KARUNAKARAN · Yesterday
Superb!
- Pranahod Shetty 🇮🇳 · Yesterday
Congrats Nelson...
- Neelay Shah · Yesterday
Legendary sir. Hats off.

