

# UTi Rhodes Run Delivers Classic Day

## Local Runners Crowd the Podium

*"Keep your cold weather kit, you might need it"*

A warning repeated often before and during the pre-race briefing early on Saturday morning.

After a week of minus 17° the relative heat-wave of a wind still minus 8° at the start lulled many runners, both Rhodes veterans and novices alike, into a false sense of security. While it appeared to be a day for best times the organisers were anticipating inclement weather 'up top'. The clouds hovering on the Lesotho border were discounted by runners as it wouldn't snow, would it?

A few hours later the runners found out that it would, and did, snow. The delight and excitement of running in falling snow was ticked off on many bucket lists.

The saying 'Careful what you wish for, it might just happen' came to mind as a number of the runners realised that running in snow is probably best in other peoples' photographs.

The race itself was a gruelling affair with runners battling the bitter cold on the ridge section. Despite the warnings many runners had dumped their cold weather gear at the early Check Points and paid the price later in the day when the snowstorm struck.

Up front it was local runners who dominated the podium.

Well known top Barkly East runner, Sydney Speelman, was determined to gain a podium position this year. Sydney led the charge up Mavis Bank. Although truthfully it is a shuffle up that legendary slope even for the top athletes.

Sydney was followed to the DM Kisch Check Point at the top of Mavis by another local runner, Hylton Dunn and the 2008 Rhodes winner Johnny Young.

Claiming the prestigious accolade 'King of the Kloof' Sydney pushed ahead to be first over Hooggenoeg Point after the leg sapping ridge section. Passing the 'Walkerbouts' Check Point at the top of the Carlislehoek cement section the race for overall honours was reaching a gripping climax with all three leaders running hard and anyone could take the 2014 title.

Positions changed a few times on the run in and it was only on the outskirts of Rhodes that the final order was settled, but still by no means certain.

At the tape it was Johnny Young who ran a well-judged and well-paced race to take his second Rhodes title. Runner-up, for the second consecutive year, was local

Hylton Dunn while a brave Sydney Speelman was rewarded for his early front running to round off the podium positions.

In the ladies' race Capetonian and novice Rhodes runner Karoline Hanks took an early lead and was 'Queen of the Kloof' with a 5 minute buffer over second placed Helen Buley, also a Rhodes novice. The ridge section after the Quarry Check Point, manned by the Robertson and Tiffindell teams, proved an equaliser as Buley started to reel in Hanks as the sleet turned to gentle snow. However Hanks showed great strength to retain her hard won lead and keep a 5 minute gap over Buley to the finish.

Hanks finished 10th overall, and Buley 12th, tremendous efforts for novices.

Young and Hanks each also received the trophy and medal for being first in the 40+ age group.

While the early finishers relaxed in Rhodes, the bulk of the field had the thrill of running in falling snow. Snow fell heavily during late morning and early afternoon, and many 'selfies' were taken as gleeful runners captured the magical moment. For some the conditions proved too much and the Ford Ranger 4x4 support vehicles shuttled a number of competitors off the mountain.

Some of the runners comments-

*"Felt like I was getting married again with all the white snow"*

*"I just want to thank you for all the hard work you and your team have done throughout the year to make the Rhodes Run 2014 such a warm and friendly event! Everything seemed to happen effortlessly which is the sign of lots and lots of hard work."*

*"Huge THANK YOU for an extremely well organised & unforgettable Rhodes Run"*

*"Rhodes ticks all the boxes: its remote, is tough and absolutely beautiful!"*

*"Rhodes is great for the total lack of crowds. People are there when you need them with good cheer and humour. I enjoyed the lack of hype and fuss, the tight organization and the apparent simplicity of it for us as runners (for you as the organizers it is a HUGE logistical undertaking)"*

*"I wish to say a big and heart-felt thank you to you, your family and all the special people who have helped to make this an unforgettable experience."*

*"You and your team's attention to detail has helped to make it an awesome journey for each one of us in such a beautiful part of our country."*

Heartbreak story of the day was Mark Hunt, a five time Rhodes finisher, who had pushed hard throughout the day and ended a mere two paces on the wrong side of the finish line when Race Director Evie Raubenheimer, with her back turned in traditional fashion, blew the whistle marking the final cut-off at 4pm. A very emotional moment for all at the finish line.

Francois and Hannalie Nel continued their amazing spell of providing unbroken assistance at the run, hosting the first feed station for the 26th consecutive year. Tiffindell assisted at a check point near the resort and the 'Walkerbouts' check point above the cement section was crewed by Dave Walker and Vaasie and Margie Murray. The final feed station at 'Den Hagen' had the Jordaan's and Buitendags' providing sustenance to runners for the final spurt to Rhodes.

The UTi Rhodes Run continues to be one of the most aspirational events in the country, being on many outdoor enthusiasts dream list. The tight organisation not only drives the success of the event but also provides a significant platform for organisations such as UTi,

The North Face, Buff®, Inov-8, Ford Motor Company of Southern Africa, First Choice, DM Kisch Inc and the Rhodes Food Group to not only expose their products to the runners and local community but through their wider network to provide a vital shop window for local tourism.

The 26th edition of the UTi Rhodes Run saw medals awarded to 239 finishers, 30 of whom received their coveted Snowflake permanent number.

We congratulate all our local runners on their achievement.

Hylton Dunn 2nd overall  
4:43:00

Sydney Speelman 3rd  
4:44:00

Wessels Durandt 39th  
6:32:53

Sunelle Dunn 55th 6:51:20  
(8th Lady)

Marizaan Pieterse 209th  
8:38:45

**Results:**

1. Johnny Young . . . 4:41:00
2. Hylton Dunn . . . 4:43:00
3. Sydney Speelman  
..... 4:44:00

**Ladies**

1. Karoline Hanks 5:33:26
2. Helen Buley . . . 5:39:05
3. Ronel van Graan  
..... 6:19:27

**Full results:**

[http://rhodesrun.za.net/files/2014\\_UTi\\_Rhodes\\_Run\\_Final\\_Results.pdf](http://rhodesrun.za.net/files/2014_UTi_Rhodes_Run_Final_Results.pdf)