

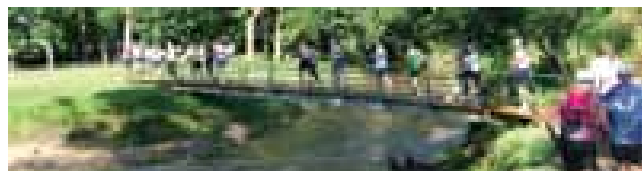
# Stop-start in IRENE

With camera in hand and a faint idea of direction, *Modern Athlete* Editor Sean Falconer took a scenic run around Irene in the Irene Half Marathon. After 20 or so photo stops, his camera battery was pretty much flat.

## LIQUIFRUIT IRENE HALF MARATHON, 10KM& 5KM, IRENE, GAUTENG NORTH, 14 NOVEMBER 2009

For years I have heard about the fantastic Irene Half, with its scenic course through the farmlands and its excellent organisation and atmosphere. Well, now that I have finally run it, let me just say that this 'Stellenbosse Boy' from the Cape may have been searching for a wee bit more oxygen at times, but I'll put this race on my 'to do again' list for sure.

It was wonderful to see the size of the field. There were just over 1 900 finishers in the 21km and 2 250 in the 10km,



plus a whopping 1 300 in the fun run. I wanted to get a good photograph of the starting line-up, so when I spotted a photographer on the roof of the building next to the start line, I decided to climb up as well. And that's where I was when the race started, taking pics.

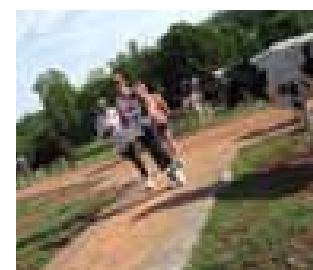
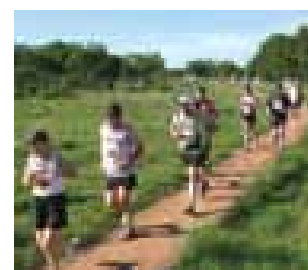
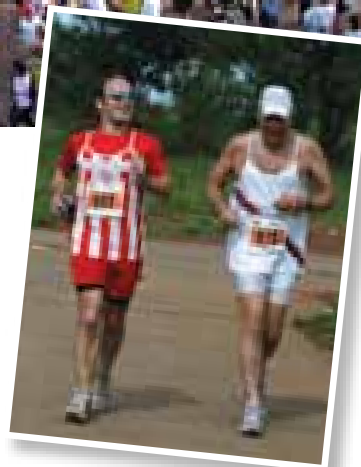
When I eventually got going, I found myself running next to 80-year-old Des Robins, one of the Timeless Warriors featured in our October edition cover story. I loved the fact that he was not only chatting to me while we ran, but he was passing much younger runners too. What an inspiration.

As much as I enjoyed the route, I had absolutely no idea where I was most of the time. Being from out of town – and not having a nice big, 1 000-metre high, flat mountain to give me a convenient reference point – I found the winding, twisty course totally disorienting. Not that it mattered, though, because I was thoroughly enjoying the run, chatting with fellow runners and stopping to take photos about 20 times (which also meant I overtook the same people about 20 times when I got going again. Apologies if anybody got a bit tired of seeing the same red and white vest going past them again).

### ELITE FOR A DAY

The funniest thing for me was when I pulled up next to Mike from RAC in the last two kays. He saw my name tag on my club

vest and asked if I was related to two other runners named Falconer. The first was a local businessman – no direct relation to me – but then he made my day. He said the other one was also named Sean, a Springbok athlete who used to write a number of articles about running. "Umm, I think that's me you're talking about – but I'm definitely no Springbok athlete!"



# Tough... Tougher... Tough One!

MY EXPERIENCE

Mention the Tough One and most runners start smiling nervously. Those who have run it know that this race is not for the faint-hearted. Just when you think the hills are done and dusted, another few await... Despite this, the turnout usually exceeds 6 000 runners. Cathie van Rooyen, a runner from Discovery Athletics Club West Rand, told *Modern Athlete* about her race.

## RAC CITY LODGE TOUGH ONE 32KM AND ASICS 5KM, JOHANNESBURG, CENTRAL GAUTENG, 22 NOVEMBER 2009

I was nervously facing my second Tough One and thought about cancelling due to the very unusual wet, freezing weather the week before race day. Unfortunately, I saw on the weather forecast that the sun would return on race day, so I had no excuses left.

The thought of 32km made me nervous, especially because I don't have as much running experience as my running buddies. I got flashbacks of my first few 32km runs. The first, in Boksburg, almost saw me committing serious bodily harm to my sister, who was only trying to help me through the bad patches. My second was in Pretoria and had me cursing up and down the hills. All this baggage was messing with my head!

I met up with my friends at Old Parks in the early hours of the Sunday race day. The start was crowded and I secretly prayed for the gun to go off before I changed my mind and stayed behind. Slowly we made our way up the first hill. My sister, Debbie Egan, had been resting after her run at the Mont-Aux-Sources 50km Challenge and she decided to take it easy and run with me. This was a nice change, as she usually gallops off with the faster runners.

Only later did I realise that she was actually hanging back because she had no money on her and wanted to join in on

our annual Tough One ice cream tradition. This tradition was started a few years back when our late running friend, Joe van der Merwe, and Karien Carstens decided the Tough One needed something nice to look forward to. Everyone would stop and have an ice cream late in the race! I had never been fast enough to join the ice cream feast, so this time I carried money to make sure I didn't lose out.

The marshalling was excellent and when the water points seemed to pop up much sooner than normal, I realised that I was walking far less than in other races. I was not wearing my watch and it was nice listening to my body instead of a watch.

At around the 26km mark, I hit a bad patch. My calves threatened to cramp and I decided to walk. My sister kept a watchful eye on me and 1km further, I had sorted myself out. As we neared the Randburg CBD, we got closer to our ice cream stop and I felt a new surge of energy. With our ice lollies safely in our hands, we took on the last 3km. There was one nasty little hill before the end and we walked it, enjoying the crowd support from the roadside.

My finishing time was 3:41. Much to my surprise, I had improved my time by around 30 minutes! The Tough One didn't seem so tough this year – maybe I should promise myself an ice cream in every race from now on. Well done to RAC for a superb day.

A BUS FINISHING THE TOUGHEST OF THEM ALL!



WE DID IT! CATHIE (MIDDLE) WITH HER SISTER, DEBBIE (FAR LEFT) AND FRIEND, ANITA BOTHA (RIGHT).



## RAC CITY LODGE TOUGH ONE 32KM AND ASICS 5KM, JOHANNESBURG, CENTRAL GAUTENG, 22 NOVEMBER 2009

RUNNING FRIENDS FROM DISCOVERY ATHLETIC CLUB WEST RAND.

DEBBIE (LEFT) AND CATHIE RELAXING AFTER THE RACE.

