

A PROGRAMME WORTH SUPPORTING

The VOB development programme, also known as the Chairman's Fund, was initiated about 15 years ago when a few club members noticed the potential in developing athletes in Khayelitsha. Through charitable donations from VOB members, the development fund has been providing athletes with such things as a VOB uniform, entrance fees and lifts to races, shoes, help with academic endeavours, job placements and leadership opportunities. The real motive behind the development programme is aimed at enabling athletes who have limited resources and opportunities to fulfil their potential as runners and as members of society.

I knew very little of this programme at the beginning of the year, but all of that changed when I had the opportunity to join the VOB Development Sub-committee. As I remember, it was a manic, action-filled Monday afternoon in both our lives when **Roger Dickson** and I drove out to Khayelitsha. We slowly worked our way through the heavy traffic on the N2, as **Roger** fielded calls from individual runners on his much-maligned hands-free head set. He was sorting out all sorts of things: race dates, race times, lifts for athletes on the weekend, money allotment, even who was going to be attending that evening out at the track. Once off the N2, having turned onto Spine Road, we had directions to go past the military base, past a derelict open-air market, and snake through the encrusted, well-worn streets as we worked our way to Mandela Park.

On an immaculate athletics track in the middle of a dusty Nelson Mandela Park in Khayelitsha, coach **Graham Söderland-Moore** charges through a workout with on average 20 athletes every Monday evening. He serves as one of the driving forces behind the programme that VOB has determinedly been promoting in Khayelitsha to enhance our role in the community and give some less fortunate individuals the attention that they deserve

through running. This evening, he was planning on running us silly through the definitive training exercise after weeks of build-up. The development programme welcomes new girls and boys of any age from the area of Khayelitsha to attend Monday evening sessions on a regular basis, and to join the VOB running club. Once signed up, the VOB development programme provides them with a running vest and shorts, and a Western Province licence number. From there it's just down to some hard work and exceptional race results to earn the athlete valuable incentives such as brand new running shoes and great new kit.

That evening in Khayelitsha was an experience I will never forget, running with individuals who were less fortunate than me but brought together because we shared a passion for running. All of those runners out there that Monday evening brought energy to the track, brought passion and above all a devotion to become a better runner under the tutelage of **Graham**. On my way back from the training session I spoke to **Roger** about the need to keep this development programme going and to get the message out to club members that your money really is going towards something extraordinary. For those of you who have contributed to this fund, it's simply working wonders in Khayelitsha. There are some development athletes who are performing magnificently at the moment.

Through the development programme we have also brought on board some local sponsors who have been donating shoes and clothing to some of our top performing athletes. *New Balance* and *Sportsman's Warehouse* very generously donate running shoes and clothing. With some excellent knowledge and enthusiasm from the employees of both *New Balance* and *Sportsman's Warehouse* outlets, we were able to obtain a brand new pair of shoes and a variety of

A PROG WORTH SUPPORTING cont.

quality t-shirts for 11 of our top-performing athletes . On Sunday March 25th, we used the opportunity to award these athletes with this new kit at a 1.5 hours run through the hills of Constantia, followed by some food and refreshments. Roger and Graham aim to organise similar Sunday morning sessions every three months, bringing the Development Sub-committee and its athletes together in order to promote communication and to make various awards. It is also a great opportunity to distribute all the shoes and kit that VOB members generously donate to the fund. Our next run and breakfast will be happening on July 22nd and anyone is most welcome to join us on the slow recovery run starting at 8:00am. or instead sip on some orange juice with our development athletes after the run. Come and meet our development athletes on our own ground.

Geoff Bodnar

Running kit NEEDED

We need your running gear

If you have any new or old running shoes, running shirts, old VOB vests and shorts, even socks that you are not using, donate now! It's not much to give, but it will make the world of difference for a talented runner living in Khayelitsha.

The VOB running club is collecting running apparel for athletes in our development programme. Our aim is to work towards enabling athletes who have limited resources and opportunities to fulfil their potential as runners and as members of society.

If you can help us out, bring in and donate your running gear to any of the VOB committee members and we'll make sure they get placed on some fast athletes.



RevPrint
Designed to Print!

DESIGN, COPYING & PRINTING

*Anything from Business Stationery
to Plan Printing, Colour Posters
Training Materials and
Booklets like ... Imbaleki.*

**NEAR SPOTTY DOG,
299 MAIN ROAD**

Call: 701-4949

"It takes one drink to get me drunk. The trouble is, I can't remember if it's the thirteenth or the fourteenth."

~ George Burns