



What an incredible race, says Linda Doke of Himalayan 100 Miler

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Kachenjunga, the world's third highest peak, provides an imposing backdrop to Linda Doke competing in the Himalayan One Hundred Miler Stage Race. Photo: Himalayan Run and Trek

After the best part of a year in an injury-enforced running wilderness, leading South Africa ultra-trail athlete Linda Doke is back in business.

She won the Cederberg Traverse 100km last month, and produced a solid performance in the annual Himalayan One Hundred Mile Stage Race, which took place along the Indian-Nepal border last week.

Doke now has her sights set on the Drakensburg Ultra-trail 100 miler next autumn leading up to a potential international event later in the year.

And she is looking to regain the form which has taken her to victories in the Run the Rann 100 miler in India, the Fish River Canyon 100km in Namibia, the Kalahari Augrabies Extreme Marathon, the Aussenkehr Desert Extreme, the Namib Desert Challenge and the Lesotho Wildrun.

Doke overcame a deficit of training and high-altitude preparation and stomach problems to hold on to second position behind American Angela Meyers, when the five-day event ended in Maneybhanjang on Friday.

British marathoner Phil Martin clinched the overall title, completing the gruelling five-day high-altitude race in 19 hrs 13 min, to win by 50 minutes ahead of Scotland's Fraser Smart.

The five-day 160km Himalayan race attracts runners from all corners of the globe, seeking adventure on the slopes of the world's highest peaks and follows the route allegedly pioneered by the great Indian ruler, Aga Khan, in the early 1900s.

It affords breathtaking views of "the Four Giants" – four of the five highest mountains in the world, namely Mount Everest, Kanchenjunga, Lhotse and Makalu.

The first Himalayan 100 Mile Stage Race was held in 1991, attracting just 13 athletes, but the event has now grown into one of the world's premier mountain races, and has become a bucket-list item for global trail runners and adventurers.



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The highlight of the five-day event is the 42km Mount Everest Challenge Marathon, completed by the athletes on the third day at altitudes close to 4 000m.

Meyer's strong running saw her finish the stage race in record time of 20 hrs 00 min, improving her compatriot Cathy Blaine's mark by 15 minutes.

A relatively recent recovery from a long-term foot injury impacted on Doke's ability to challenge for line honours, her training build-up significantly less than would have been required to take on an athlete of Meyer's ability.

"What an incredible race," exclaimed Doke at the finish of the final leg over 27km. "It's such a privilege to have been here to experience this unique event. And congrats to Angela on her record – she ran superbly."

Himalayan 100 Mile Stage Race Results

Men: 1 Phil Martin (UK) 19:13, 2 Fraser Smart (Scot) 20:03, 3 Chris Smith (UK) 20:29.

Women: 1 Angela Meyer (USA) 20:00, 2 Linda Doke (RSA) 22:16, 3 Heidi Blair (Canada) 22:33.

 [@StephenGranger3](#)

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