

Dall 11/12/10

DONE

Matthews Batswadi



First Black Springbok athlete and one of South Africa's most promising runners, Batswadi a Tswana was born in 1950. He had a tough, unhappy childhood. His parents died when he was three years old and he and his 2 brothers and two sisters were cared for by an aunt. His youth spent at Vryburg was uneventful and full of hardship. He went to school for a few years only and in 1970 came to the Rand to work on the mines. During the years preceeding his arrival at the mines and the end of his schooling he did nothing as there was nothing to do in Vryburg. Once on the mines he began to play soccer and to cycle and it soon became obvious that he had a natural talent for sport.

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cartoon - Batswadi cycling on arriving to work on the mines.

2. His decision to take up athletics came in 1974 at a time when Titus Mamabola had won the SA title for the 5000 m. Mamabola's achievement inspired Batswadi and one day after a long training cycle to Parys and back Batswadi went to Joe Leserwane and said that he also wanted to run. He trained for a month or two and in his first competitive run it was only Mamabola who could beat him. In 1975 he won a SA title at Maraisburg when he beat Koos Keyser and the British runner Mike Tagg. By 1976 he had the fastest time in SA for the 10,000 distance and 3rd fastest for the 5,000m and 3,000 m. On the 16 April 1977 with dazzling tactics he beat Ewald Bonzet in the 5,000m and made a spectacular finish as he crossed the finish with arms outstretched at the SA track championships at Cape Town. He has since won many races of the 5,000m distance. One of his latest achievements was at the 1978 track championships held at Germiston on the 7th April when he broke the Transvaal record coming first in the 10,000m with a time of 28;46,8.

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What time?
Why does he then wish to break the 10000 record?

cartoon - Batswadi winning the 1977 5,000m at the Cape Town open SA track Champs - picture in 'top sport' May 1977

3. Batswadi is fortunate that he is given a lot of time off to train by his employers 'Western Deep goldmine' near Carletonville where he works as a postal clerk for the department of welfare sport and recreation. There is keen competition between the mines in the field of sport. Batswadi is aggressive on the track and very determined. He wishes to break the SA records for the 3,000m the 5,000m and the 10,000 m. He was recently given Springbok Colours and became the first Black Springbok athlete,

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cartoon - Batswadi in Springbok colours.

List of races one over last few years:-

- 11 Sept 1976 SA open Cross Country Champs. Durban - he came 1st.
- 19 March 1977 SA Bantu Champs Welkom 5,000m He came 1st - (14;13,8)
- 28 March 1977 Trek Inter Provincial Track league final 5,000m - He came 1st.
- 9th April 1977 SAColgate Invitational track meet - 5,000 he came 1st.
- 16th April 1977 Cape Town - SA Track championships - 5,000m came 1st (13;54,4)
- 17/9/1977 SA open Cross Country Champs Maraisburg - he came 1st.
- 7th April 1978 Germiston SA Track Champs 10,000 came 1st (28;46,8)
(Transvaal record).

Full page picture of Batswadi in Jan 1977 edition of 'Top Sport'.