

What is your motivation? – Cobus Kruger



A monthly Christian sport column by Cobus Kruger, a professional triathlete who is passionate about evangelism, leadership and community development through sport.

This, for me, is always an exciting but difficult time of the year. It is as if everybody wants to do all the things they didn't get to do in the year, but it is also the time of the year when the body is tired and just needs that break over Christmas, which is so close but yet so far. So at this time of the year I'm always taking a look at what my motivation is for doing what I'm doing.

Do you feel the same about this time of the year? If so or even if not, the question that I want to ask you today is: what motivates you?

Recently my wife and I assisted Athletes in Action with their Ultimate Training Camp. One of the principles that we use on this camp is the "Inside Game" principle.

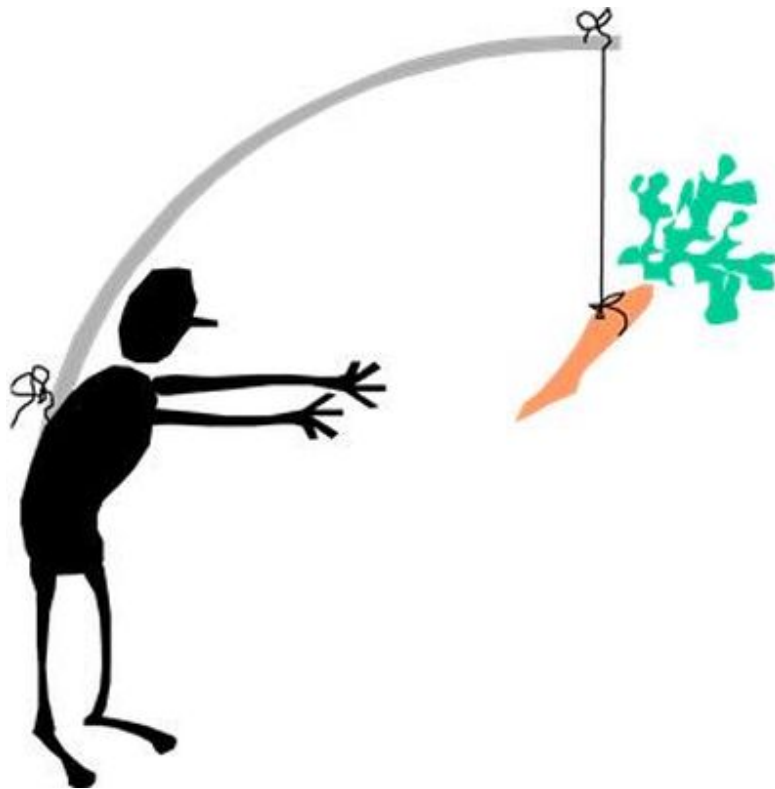
We help sports people work through the theory and practicality of this principle. The purpose of this session is that the athletes take a look at their lives and sport to discover what their motivation is.

If the athletes truly understand their identity in Christ, then His love, grace and truth would fuel and form an entirely

new motivation for competition and life.

Let me explain

If we look at the sport world then we see many different motivations that drive sports people pursue their ultimate performance, but these motivations are not everlasting. These motivations can only drive you to train and perform in certain conditions and periods of your life and sport career. These motivations can be fear of failure, revenge, recognition, pride, accomplishment, anger, coach, parents, friendships, money, winning – and there are so many more outward motivations that are not everlasting.



(IMAGE: [Lynn Albro](#))

For example

A practical observation that I have made as I have worked with athletes through the years is that when we play a game just for points and teaching purposes of the principles, then the intensity changes from low to moderate and back during the game. It is not constant. But as soon as we play the final game where we have a big prize for the winning team, then

suddenly the intensity level goes much higher in the game.

The question that I normally ask after the game when we evaluate the players' motivation points is: Why did our intensity suddenly go up? The answer normally is because there is this prize that motivates us to play harder.

Here is my point

If Jesus – His love, His grace, His presence – who gives us life to the full from the inside, is our motivation, should we not then always play with full intensity for the sake of His Glory, and in His Grace, whether there is a prize or not? Should our intensity level not stay more constant then? Something to think about...

So at the end of this year, when you are maybe tired and frustrated, think of what or who your motivation is for what you do.

God's love moves us from fear into freedom – let's walk into this inside motivation as we do what we do in the freedom of glorifying God without the fear that our outward motivations could give us.

May Jesus be your way, truth and life!

Have a blessed Jesus Fest over December!

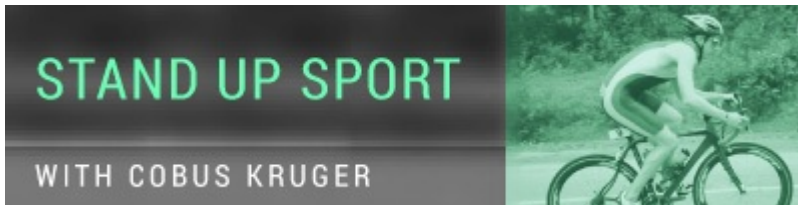
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It's all about SHAPE – Cobus Kruger



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Today I want to talk about the coaching side of sport.

As an athlete and coach myself, and as a pastor that is involved with the coaching of coaches in sport and life, so that they can coach holistically for a lot of years, I picked up a few common mistakes that coaches are making as they coach. It is interesting that we as believers also fall short in a lot of these aspects in our mission to reach the world and work as a “coaching” team together for the growth of God’s Kingdom.

Let me explain. This past weekend I attended a workshop on spinning instructing. (For you that don’t know, I have been a spinning instructor for a lot of years in gyms, as a ministry tool to reach people for Christ.)

In this workshop the facilitator went through some important things that we as spinning instructors should take note of.



A spinning instructor leading the class by example. (PHOTO: [Mom in the city](#))

Coaching principles

Firstly, it is important that you know what you want to achieve in the class. Do things with an outcome in mind for that class. This actually goes for any coaching. If you, as a coach, pitch up for every session and drill in the training, it should build up to what you want to have as an outcome at the end of the session.

It is important that you know what you want to achieve in the class.

The second thing is that if you are a spinning instructor, you should make sure that you do what you want your class to do correctly, because they will follow how you do it. And the fact is that you as instructor should therefore be in shape, so that you can do things right so that people can follow you and also do it right.

You should make sure that you do what you want your class to do correctly, because they will follow how you do it.

I personally feel really strong in all of my coaching that I should do illustrations of drills and movements correctly, because the athletes that you coach will follow what you do. That is why I normally will let somebody that can do it better than me do the demonstration if I coach

sports that I'm not mastering myself. Like when I coach high jump or long jump at schools, I will coach well because I know exactly what I want them to do, but when it comes to the illustration I will go through the coaching points with an athlete who can do it well, so that he or she can do the illustration. Or I will even show a video clip with the correct illustration if needed. Even when I coach something like swimming or running that I do well, but as the coach I'm not able to be in the water or in the correct clothing to illustrate, I will then let an athlete that is in the water, and who can do it well, demonstrate. Why? Because the athletes will do what they see, not what they hear.

And the third point that stood out for me is that you should keep on educating the class on the fundamentals of how to cycle correctly, while you showcase it in the class, so that the members also can get into shape.

You should keep on educating the class on the fundamentals.

These three points are some basic important things for a coach to understand and do if he or she wants to get the athletes that he or she is coaching to their optimal SHAPE and potential.

The coaching principles in our lives as believers

In the same way, we should apply these three coaching principles in our lives as believers.

- We should always spend time building relationships with believers and non-believers with an outcome in mind, with a purpose. Jesus illustrated it well for us when He was on earth. He was always clear with His goals and purpose on this earth, and He also showed love and brought change in every person that He touched. Then, after He rose from death, He gave us as believers the

authority to do the same and more than He did on earth. So we should do what we saw Him do. Love people, not for the sake of our own ministry, structure, denomination, business or sports team, but for the sake of God's Kingdom to grow on earth as it is in heaven.

- We should be in shape and practice the fundamentals and truths of Christ in every action and thing we do in daily life. We are ambassadors for Christ on this earth and as we love and share Jesus as the main fundamental of Christianity, and start to coach them to walk and live in this truth, we should make sure that we are in SHAPE. Why? Because people are going to do what they see, not what they hear from you.

Are you in SHAPE? Here are some coaching points for us to look at to evaluate if we are in SHAPE:

S – Spirit Filled – Did you accepted Jesus as Saviour? Are you Spirit filled? Why? Because we receive power to walk in this earth in Jesus through Him, and fulfilment in His Spirit. Read John 1:12 and Acts 1:8.

H – Honest – Are you honest with yourself, and your life? Is Jesus your leader? Do you do what Jesus showed us to do in your daily life?

A – Accountable – Are you accountable to Jesus Christ as Head of the Church, and His Body, the fellow believers?

P – Practical – Is your faith and belief practical? Or is your faith without action? It should be faith in action.

E – Evangelical – Is your life evangelical? Is Jesus so real to you that you cannot stop living for Him, and you cannot stop sharing and talking about Him, because you know He is the only way, truth and life as we read in John 14:6? Did you take the evangelical call on your life that we

SHAPE

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A – Accountable

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E – Evangelical

read about in Mark 16:15, and Matthew 28:28, to go out into all the world and preach what to live? And are you making disciples?

Follow me as I follow Christ

If we are in shape like this, then we should also be able to say to people all around us the words that Apostle Paul used:

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Let's go and ponder on the following scripture, and ask the Lord to help us to get into shape so that we can coach and help the world and Church to get in shape for the sake of God's Kingdom:

You Will Know Them by Their Fruits

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. (Matthew 7:15-20)

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Para-athlete Fanie van der Merwe shining in darkness – Cobus Kruger



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In the journey of bringing unity within the body of Christ, I started to set a lot of my time out to meet with, and to hear the heartbeat of fellow believers in different ministries, different areas and different situations. As I spent time last week in Stellenbosch with training and ministry, I met many wonderful brothers and sisters in Christ on and off the sports field.

I want to share the story of one of our fellow brothers in Christ, Fanie van der Merwe, a veteran professional athlete who started winning medals at the IPC World Championships in 2006 as a para-athlete in the 100m and 200m T37.

Fannie retired from professional athletics last year after the Rio Olympics and currently lives in Stellenbosch where he runs a coaching ministry called Inspired2Become. As I spent a bit of time with Fanie last week, I just felt that I should share

his story with all of you.

In this month's column I'm going to share his testimony, and then next month I'm going to write more about his ministry, and his work as a retired paralympic gold medallist.



Fanie van der Merwe raising the South African flag in celebration. (PHOTO: [Springs Advertiser](#))

Fanie's athletic achievements

Let's first take a look at some of Fanie's greatest achievements as a professional athlete:

Like I said, he won a lot of international medals since 2006. He won his first paralympics golds in Beijing a 2008 in both the 100m and 200m T37.

He won gold again in the 2012 London Paralympics in the 100m T37, and in 2014 he won gold in the 100m T37 at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. Fanie ended his Paralympics career last year in Rio where he won bronze in the 100m t37.

Although this all looks really impressive on paper – and is really impressive – I got the idea as I spent time with Fanie that he really understood that there is more to life than gold

medals ... Jesus. He loves God with all his heart, so let's be inspired with his story in his own words.

Fanie's testimony

"My journey started as a pre-schooler running trials at the 'big-school'. I was in the front for all of the race, but fell just before the finish line! This basically describes what I experienced throughout a lot of my school career in sport – big expectations that often came with big disappointments." Growing up I loved doing sports but always felt held back by my disability, and my disability seemed so purposeless. The only thing I wanted in school was a chance, but never felt like I really received that fair opportunity. I made peace with the fact that I might not get far in sport, but I would take part because I loved it!

But God knew about that desire in my heart. Little did I know God was preparing me for the big chance He had planned for me from the beginning.

"When I was young, I would get offended when people asked me if I was disabled or why I was limping. But my disability – the very thing I thought was placed in my life as a 'curse' – God turned around into one of the biggest blessings in my life!

In school, all I wanted was just to make a school team. God's plan looked so much different, He gave me a gold medal at the Paralympic Games!

If I hadn't go through the suffering I did, if things just always went my way, there is no way I would have handled my journey in the same way.

The thing is, I knew I had no future in sport, and made peace with that, but God in His goodness decided to turn things around. I can confidently say that the career I had in sport was a gift out of God's hands, something I didn't deserve, and

therefore I can't boast in it!



Fanie van der Merwe (left) with Ilse Hayes (middle) and Charl du Toit (right) at the Rio 2016 Paralympics. (PHOTO: [AFK Sports](#))

“So in Grade 11, I made the able-bodied school team, which was a big achievement for me. That was also where Miss Wessel saw the opportunity to get me into athletics for people with disabilities. New doors started to open for me, I missed out on Athens 2004, but if anyone asked me what my dream was, I would say: to go to the Paralympic Games in Beijing in 2008!

“As things got closer I realised I could be a medal contestant. As a young believer, I remembered one thing: I didn't want to do this alone, I embraced this journey with the Lord.

I remember thinking on the way to Beijing, on the airplane, what it would be like sitting on the airplane heading back home! All I can say, sitting on the airplane on the way back, I was in awe of what God did.

“After my semi-finals in the 100m, the Chinese athlete had a brilliant race 0.70 seconds faster than my time. My first

thought was 'I've to settle for silver', but as I got back in my room I listened to the same song I listened to that morning, saying "God will lift up your head soon and in joy". I jammed that song going crazy in my room, believing I could win that race (and if I didn't it would be okay, but I'm not going into that race thinking it is impossible, I'm going in with faith). We prayed before that race, just submitting under God's will.

"I got into the call room and the Chinese athlete wasn't there, he didn't race, and only afterwards did I hear that the head classifier had a look at the athlete and found that he wasn't in the right class. I would not hope that for anyone, but what happened there was actually impossible. To have a permanent classification changed just before the final is unheard of. My friend said God opened a door for me to receive that gold medal. And not just one, God gave me two gold medals at my first Paralympics!

"I remember a lot of people asking me what is my favourite place I've been to, but I always connect it to my best experience, especially experiencing God. The most precious thing about my athletics journey has been discovering God's father heart and getting to know Him through all the highs and the lows – Him showing me He is always with me, and experiencing His constant, unfailing love.

"A lot of the times we take our eyes off Jesus and stare at the world, or get intimidated by it. God will use the hard times to draw you closer to Him and give you back the joy of living for Him alone, if we will only let Him and I am still challenged with this (living for an audience of one that is what we were created for).

My athletics is also an opportunity to connect with people I otherwise would have never had the chance to do so, to shine in the darkness, and to trust and believe God for the impossible."

Scripture references Romans 8:28; 1 John 4:16 AMP; 2 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Philippians 2:14-16a.



Fanie van der Merwe acknowledging God. (PHOTO: [Inspired2Become](#))

So fellow believers, let's go and read and ponder and apply the scriptures that Fanie gave us at the end of his testimony. Be inspired and let's live for Jesus day by day, and glorify God in whatever we do.

There are more stories from Fanie, but I'm going to write some of them in my next column as I look into his coaching and ministry.

Be inspired, and remember Jesus is the way, truth and life ... Jesus loves you!

Blessings

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Bear with each other in unity – Cobus Kruger



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South West District in action against Eastern Province on Tuesday July 18 at Craven Week. (PHOTO: [RNews](#))

This is an exciting week of Rugby. On the one hand we have the Super Rugby Quarter finals this weekend where we will see if our three top teams can go through, and on the other hand we have the Craven Week Rugby currently on the go at St Stithians College in Randburg, where the under 18 provincial teams are playing each other to become the winner of Craven Week.

I spent a bit of time yesterday at the Craven Week Rugby giving some support to some of my fellow believers and ministries that are working with these teams for the sake of God's Kingdom. They are doing a great Job. Please keep them in your prayers.

But as I sat at this event and while I mingled with some of the players and parents, my eyes caught two teams as they lined up to play their game. The Eastern Province team was standing in a line in front of me. My eyes scrolled through each player, I looked at their form, their focus, their look, their colour, and then my mind went deeper and I tried to picture each player's background as well. Then it hit me...

Here I'm looking at a team that comes from different

backgrounds, that have different cultures, different talents, different languages, different schools, and are from totally different communities but they have been put together as a team to represent their province. This team with all their diversities are bearing with one another, and are putting their bodies on the line for one another for the sake of the team and to play the best rugby they can play to win for their province.

What a beautiful picture this was ... I'm getting tears of sadness in my eyes as I think of the next part that I need to write...

It saddens me that sport teams can bear with each other in their diversity for the sake of the team, but we as the Body of Christ don't do it for the sake of God's team...

Let me explain...

I'm on the one hand surrounded with a lot of sports people as I train, mentoring and coaching some of them, and on the other hand I'm surrounded with a lot of Pastor's and different ministries as we try to build relationships and get through diversities and try to partner for one goal in mind, one name in mind, JESUS, and His Kingdom!

But a lot of the times this team that I'm speaking about is not united, is not bearing with each other's differences and backgrounds. I wonder actually if we truly can call the Body of Christ a team with one goal in mind? Can we call the Body of Christ a united team that is working together for the goal God called us to despite our differences in background, community, skin colour, denomination, ministries, status? Do we operate in unity to answer God's call to enlarge God's Kingdom in heaven and on earth?

Are we as the Body of Christ following the instructions as the Apostle Paul wrote it in the scriptures? Let's read what he wrote:

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you have a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on Love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Colossians 3:13-14 NIV)

Come on fellow brother and sister of Christ!! Let's ask the Lord Jesus Christ to show us where we need to change our mindset, our ways and our actions, where we need to repent and make right with each other, so that we can stand in line like this young Eastern Province rugby team. So we can with our diversity, different backgrounds, different cultures, different communities, different talents, and different languages play in unity the game of our lives as part of the team of all teams, the Body of Christ, for one goal, God's Kingdom!

Be blessed!

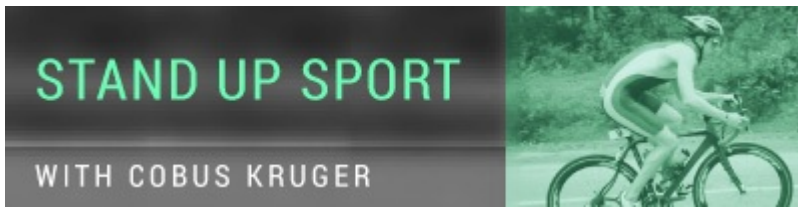
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Competitive greatness in sport and God's Kingdom –

Cobus Kruger



A monthly Christian sport column by Cobus Kruger, a professional triathlete who is passionate about evangelism, leadership and community development through sport.

A lot of coaches would agree with me that one of the characteristics that any top sportsman or woman needs is competitive greatness.

So what is competitive greatness? It “is the ability to be at your best when your best is needed.” – Coach Wooden

A sportsman or woman that has competitive greatness is a sports person that seems to enjoy difficult situations.

If we have people within a team that have competitive greatness then it would typically be the person that loves the difficult games, and this person will step up his or her game for the sake of the team.



Herschelle Gibbs celebrates after South Africa hit a world record 438 for nine in the highest-scoring one-day international in history to beat Australia by one wicket and win the series 3-2. (PHOTO: [Siphiwe Sibeko](#))

Competitive greatness in SA sport

If we look back into the history of South African sport, then we will see a lot of people that had competitive greatness for the sake of the team.

We can see it in the South African team in the famous 438 Cricket match in 2005.

Australia scored a world record, at the time, of 434 in the first innings of a one day match and then South Africa came in only to lose an early wicket with a score of 3 for 1 wicket.

We then saw competitive greatness from Graham Smith and Herschelle Gibbs who took the difficult situation on and started to score world record run rates for the sake of the team.

South Africa scored 438, won the match and beat the world record that Australia had set earlier that day.

And who can forget Joel Stansky in the 1995 Rugby World Cup?

He had competitive greatness with those drop goals that won the world cup for us for the sake of the team.

Recently, I saw some competitive greatness at the South African athletics championships in Potchefstroom.

Luvo Manyonga broke the SA Record early on in the long jump event, but what amazed me about him was the fact that he continued to motivate his fellow competitors as they tried to jump their best jumps for the day for the sake of their goals.

He had competitive greatness.



Luvo Manyonga set yet another SA long jump record in Potchefstroom on Saturday April 22 2017. (PHOTO: [Reg Caldecott](#))

Competitive greatness in God's kingdom

In the same way, I believe we should have competitive greatness in terms of God's kingdom.

We should have the ability to be our best when it is needed for the body of Christ, so that we can bring God's kingdom to this earth.

Let's read the following two scriptures on this matter:

Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out

of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus... – Philippians 2:2-5

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. – Ephesians 4:1-6

We can see through the letters that Paul wrote the way we should operate in competitive greatness for the sake of God's Kingdom.

So let's start to work on our ability to be at our best when our best is needed, for the sake of God's Kingdom.

Through this ability we could bring God's kingdom and greatness to this earth as we are like-minded; in the same love; one in Spirit; of one mind; in humility value others above ourselves; not looking to our own interests; have the same mindset as Christ Jesus; completely humble and gentle; patient, bearing with one another in love; one hope, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father.

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Doing the impossible – on the track and through the cross



A monthly Christian sport column by Cobus Kruger, a professional triathlete who is passionate about evangelism, leadership and community development through sport.



Roger Bannister is a legendary track athlete of the late 1940s and early 1950s who will always be remembered for doing the “impossible.”

He declined an opportunity to compete in the 1948 Olympics, but was inspired while watching the games and decided to work hard to compete in the 1952 Olympics.

When the 1952 Olympics came Bannister was well established in the 1 500m in Great Britain. Everyone expected him to win, but at the last minute, the racing schedule was changed,

disrupting his resting routine and he came in fourth.

As to be expected, he was disappointed. He took a two month break after the Olympics, using the time to decide whether he wanted to keep on running.

He decided to continue running and to go big by doing the so-called impossible.

'Physically impossible'

Scientists believed that it was physically impossible to run a sub four minute mile. But Bannister had his mind set on doing just that – doing the impossible – and he trained specifically towards that end.

On May 6 1954 Bannister and some other top athletes were scheduled to try and run the mile under four minutes. The weather conditions on that day were not good at all. It was raining and there was a strong wind.

Landy, one of his fellow competitors who had already tried to break the four minute mile mark, was already on his way to Finland for his next shot – in supposed ideal conditions.

But Roger Bannister stuck to his goal of pursuing the impossible on the evening of May 6 1954.

He believed in himself and his coach apparently told him just before the race that he believed that, despite the adverse weather conditions, Bannister had what it took to break the four minute barrier.

Strengthened by belief

Bannister went into that race with strong self-belief and bolstered by his coach's belief in him. And on that historic evening in athletics history he achieved what he set out to do – he broke the world record and became the first man ever to run a sub four minute mile.

He was just an ordinary boy. There was no reason why he should

have gone on to do anything great. He was just a boy from a working class background who went on to study medicine.

But Bannister decided to change things.

He refused to settle for the limits imposed by others.

When no one believed his goals were possible – he continued to believe. When he failed publicly, he picked himself up, and carried on. When his competitors were hot on his heels, he picked up his pace.

He took things into his own hands, and decided to tell a better story. And in doing so, he did the impossible. He made history!

Freed from death

This remarkable story of a man who believed in himself and had the belief of his coach on race day despite unfavourable race conditions, and went on to achieve the so-called impossible, reminds me of another great, true story. The story of our God who sent Jesus, His son to earth to die on a cross and do the so-called impossible of rising from death, so that we as human beings that accept Him as our Saviour and believe in Him could be freed from death and have everlasting life. Wow!

God believed in us, just as Bannister's coach believed in him on the evening when he went after his so-called impossible goal.

It is the story of Easter, of God sending Himself, Jesus, to die on a cross for us, his beloved people, because He believes in us. Now we can walk in freedom and love in this world, bringing God's kingdom, changing the world and making history, even though our world's condition makes this seem like an impossible task.

Deciding to finish strong this year



A monthly Christian sport column by Cobus Kruger, a professional triathlete who is passionate about evangelism, leadership and community development through sport.



Cobus Kruger on the bike leg of the Cape Town triathlon he recently competed in.

I came out of the first leg, the swim in a triathlon race I did in Cape Town last week. It was a hard week of planning in ministry work in Stellenbosch, and as I went to the event I tried to get my head together so that I could race well, even though my body was tired.

I started well with the swim, but allowed the front group to pull away from me. As I climbed onto the bike, I climbed on with a negative mindset. I just wanted to finish the race

before a bit of a break. As one or two athletes passed me, I just did not care. But I remember the moment, about 25km into the bike leg, when the third and fourth athletes passed me close to each other. This was the moment when I realised that I had the wrong wrong attitude in this race. I needed to finish strong.

I started to attack the hills and caught up with a few athletes that had passed me earlier. As I climbed off the bike and went into the run, I forced myself to run at a high pace through the beautiful vineyards of Cape Town. My legs started to feel the high effort of running, but there was one thing in my mind – I wanted to finish strong and positive for the glory of God. I could not catch the bunch that had pulled away in the swim, but the position that I would come did not bother me this time. I just wanted to finish strong for the glory of God.



2 Timothy 4:5-7 – I love the first part of this scripture. Paul is writing for Timothy these words ... *But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship ...*

We need to keep our head in all situations, and as we keep our heads we need to endure hardships . We do this for the sake of God's kingdom.

There is a lesson that you can take out of the story of my triathlon race last weekend – it is the fact that I did not

“keep my head” after the front swimmers pulled away from me in the beginning. And that there was a moment in this race when I allowed my situation to make me negative, and when I became negative I started to race negatively, and when I raced negatively without any goal I did not endure when people passed me. I did not endure the hardship that I needed to. I gave up.



But after the 25km mark in the race, I decided to finish strong. I decided to attack the hills. I decided to endure the pain and hardship that was in my legs so that I could race the best I could race, so that God could be glorified.

I want to encourage you all, brothers and sisters. Let's finish strong this year. let's love each other over this time with the love of God Himself through His Holy Spirit in Jesus. Let's endure the hardships and all the situations that we might have around these times. Let's stay obedient to God's call to us, and let Jesus' Love be more radiant through our attitude in our situations so that we can say at the end of this year: “We finished strong” and Jesus is glorified.

Have a blessed Christmas. May the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ be your strength this December and in the New Year.

Blessings Cobus

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Run to receive the prize



A monthly Christian sport column by Cobus Kruger, a professional triathlete who is passionate about evangelism, leadership and community development through sport.



Henri Schoeman earned his first WTS win after Jonathan Brownlee struggled to finish. (PHOTO: [Janos Schmidt](#))

It's three weeks since the exciting triathlon race at the Grand Final of the Triathlon World Series 2016 or simply called the World Champs in the triathlon world. You may know about our Olympic bronze medallist, Henri Schoeman, by now. He won the World Series race and is the 2016 World Champ. But let me explain how the race played out:

It was extremely warm weather in Mexico, so the swim was a non-wetsuit race and it was fast. About eight athletes broke away from the rest of the group and were the first out of the swim and onto the bike. They managed to stay ahead of the second pack of cyclists until the end of the cycling leg.

So the excitement was pressed into the run. The two Brownlee brothers and Henri Schoeman (the three medallists of this year's Olympics Games) took the lead immediately out of the bike transition and into the run leg. They stayed together ahead of the rest of the field for about three quarters of the running leg until Jonathan Brownlee made a move and created a gap of 50m between him and Alistair Brownlee and Henri Schoeman who were still running together. It looked like Jonathan had the race in the bag until 200m before the finish line. The race played out quite differently than what was expected.

Here is what happened

Jonathan started to falter and collapsed about 200m before the finish line. A marshal started to assist him. Henri and Alistair came around the corner for a sprint out for silver and bronze when Alistair saw Jonathan and realised that his brother was in trouble. He ran to his brother, took hold of him and ran with him to the finish line. Henri, on the other hand, looked around and seemed unsure of what was happening at that stage. He then pressed on to win the race becoming the 2016 World Champ with Jonathan second and Alistair third. What a dramatic finish for the last World Series race in this Olympic year of 2016!



Alistair helps brother Jonathan across the finish line. (PHOTO: [Delly Carr](#))

There were so many emotions and opinions around the final few metres of this race that I don't want to go into in this writing. I just want to use the race as an example to explain the following scripture: *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.* (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

What physical and spiritual lessons can we learn from this race?

All these athletes trained specifically for this year's Olympic Games and the Grand Final race and they all trained in such a way as to win the prize. Jonathan pushed hard, breaking away from Henri and Alistair in order to win the race, but something went wrong. He didn't pace himself properly and pushed too hard, too soon. It could have been that in the heat

of the day his nutrition or water intake was not good enough, but whatever the problem was, he didn't manage to go all the way and win the prize.

In the same way we should train and prepare ourselves for what God called us to do. We should go out and take on the heat and stand up where God called us to stand up, but at the end we should make sure that we stay in the race and are not disqualified for the prize at the end.



Alistair pushes Jonathan over the finish line securing himself the bronze medal and his brother the silver.

We should stay focused on the head of the Church, the cornerstone of the church, Jesus at all times as we run the race. We should let His presence and the Living Word, Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, drive us day by day so that we won't be disqualified and so that we can win the prize.

The way we handle people, how we love each other and run our daily race should be through Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit – if we do that then we won't be disqualified and we will win the prize. I want to encourage you: let's keep pressing into God's presence and His will day by day and start

to become who God intended us to be on this earth – sons and daughters of God, winners in the Truth and in the eyes of our Loving Father.

Our team at the Olympics



Cobus and Philna Kruger.

The greatest sporting contest in the world, the Olympic Games, launches in Rio de Janeiro on Saturday, and Gateway News is pleased to report that our readers can look forward to a weekly update from our special correspondents on the spot – Cobus and Philna Kruger.

Professional triathlete, sports ministry worker, [fitness coach](#) and Gateway News Stand Up Sport columnist Cobus and his sprinter wife Philna will arrive in Rio on Monday to take their place in a group of 150 Athletes in Action chaplains from around the world who will be ministering to athletes and spectators at the Olympics.

In his most recent column, [God's foolishness outshines Olympic gold](#), Cobus shares how he and Philna ministered together at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and got married two weeks after

their return to South Africa. In the run up to the Olympics, the couple also wrote two special [Road to Rio reports](#) featuring interviews with Team South Africa members who are passionate about following Jesus Christ.

Watch out for the Krugers' report-backs from Rio over the next fortnight of the Olympics. You are also urged to pray for Cobus and Philna and their ministry colleagues that they will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to share the gospel with boldness at the games.

God's foolishness outshines Olympic gold



A monthly Christian sport column by Cobus Kruger, a professional triathlete who is passionate about evangelism, leadership and community development through sport.



Usain Bolt wins the 100m at the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008, setting a new world record of 9:69 secs. (PHOTO: Odd Anderson/[AP](#))

It is August 2008. There are a lot of exciting things happening in my life: I'm in the third year of my Theological study degree; I have been active in sport and ministry through sport for 8-10 years; I got engaged to my beautiful wife and we are sitting in the airport on our way to the Beijing Olympic Games to join fellow Athletes in Action workers from around the world for the chaplaincy project in Beijing; and about two weeks after we arrive back in South Africa it will be our wedding day and our honeymoon.

We sat in a restaurant in Beijing watching the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games and were amazed how well and precisely the Chinese executed the ceremony. I remember feeling a bit overwhelmed by the magnitude of the Olympic Games. I knew that it was big, but as I compared it with the size of other big sport events I knew of, like the Rugby and Cricket World Cup I realised that this was much bigger by far: 204 nations competing against each other in various sport codes in the city of Beijing.

The Bird was the track and field Olympic Stadium and it has 96 000 seats. I remember the atmosphere in that stadium when

Bolt won the Olympic gold and broke the world record even with slowing down in the last few metres of the 100 metre final. Electric.

It surely was big. Now, let's go back to the opening ceremony. When I got back to my room that night I could not sleep. I had an uncomfortable feeling and was sad to see that a nation that did not honour God could do something so great.

I remember that as I sat down speaking to God about this confusion, I also started to work on an exegesis that was due for my theological studies in the week I returned to South Africa. The exegesis was on 1 Corinthians and as I read through 1 Corinthians 1, verse 25 stood out for me. God spoke loud and clear in those early morning hours. Here is the verse:

For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength – 1 Corinthians 1:25

Wow, I started to praise God in His Spirit. He showed me the truth once again as I was in the midst of the greatest sporting event in the world. Here, where some of the wisest of people wanted to showcase how big, greatly and well they could do things for their own glory, God brought the truth: even the "foolishness of God" is wiser than their human wisdom. Praise Jesus! We had such boldness to bring the truth of Jesus Christ in the midst of this great event to spectators and athletes after receiving this revelation. Praise the Lord!



Cobus and Philna Kruger.

It is now 8 years later. My wife and I have been happily married for eight years. Over the past eight years we have operated as athletes to bring the truth of Jesus Christ to all kinds of people, in all kinds of places, and including some who think that they have arrived in their own human wisdom.

Within two weeks from now we will be on our way to the Olympic Games again in order to bring the truth of Jesus to great sportsmen, sportswomen and spectators from all over the world. Why, you may ask. Simply because even though we as human beings like to look up to people that are good at something or successful in some area, these acts of greatness are still foolishness when compared to God and His wisdom.

Without Him these achievements mean nothing. So, we should stand up and speak the truth of Jesus Christ so that people can have an intimate relationship with God through Jesus Christ. God loved the world so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to this world so that whoever believe in Him and accept Him can become children of God and can have purposeful lives – so that there will be “more” than just the gold – namely Jesus.

As you enjoy the Olympic Games this year please keep on praying for us. We will also keep all of you in our prayers. Use every opportunity while watching the Games so that you can speak the truth of Jesus to people around you who perhaps also put their trust in their own human wisdom instead of in God.

May God bless your work and ministry around the Games and may the angels in Heaven celebrate, not for the great event and achievements, but for souls that turn to God through us all being bold and obedient to preach the gospel!

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