



ARTIST'S CHOICE

# Give Yourself the Winning Edge

Super-achievers share their secrets for success

By GAIL JENNINGS

**N**KELE MOSIANE stared at the television screen in her Soweto lounge, absorbed in a game of tennis. Watching sport on television was the closest the quiet, reserved Mosiane ever got to exercise. It was 1992, and the 27-year-old had spent 22 years walking with the aid of an artificial leg.

Mosiane was born without a tibia in her left leg and two extra toes on that foot. She found it extremely difficult to balance, even on crutches. The leg was useless. The best doctors could do was to amputate it when she was five years old. She grew up totally dependent on her family. Now she felt she had no control over her life, merely existing from day to day.

The highlight of Mosiane's week was selling Zama Zama lottery tickets at the SHAP Centre for the Disabled in Soweto. One day she was on duty there when athlete Denis

Marathon runner - Nkele Mosiane

Tabakin called in. Part of the Achilles Track Club, a worldwide organisation designed to encourage people with disabilities to take up running, Tabakin bowled her over with his enthusiasm. Mosiane could hardly believe it when she agreed to try it out.

At a grass track in Soweto, she met up with a number of other novice runners, not all of them disabled. Hitching her crutches under her arms, the absurdity of the situation struck her. *This is crazy, she thought. I hardly ever talk to anyone, and here I am with a bunch of strangers, trying to run!*

But the faint stirrings of camaraderie and Tabakin's unflagging support encouraged her to persevere. After days of experimentation, burning lungs, tearing blisters and aching muscles, Mosiane found that wrist-held crutches and a "double hop" increased her speed - and she was hooked. "It was awfully hard work," she says, "but I was doing something for myself."

That August, Mosiane participated in her first five-kilometre fun run. She finished in about two hours, in pain, but surrounded by friends and supporters. *If I can do one "impossible" thing, why not try another?* she thought. So the next month, she boarded a plane for the first time in her life, setting off for the New York Marathon. Accompanied by two supporters in case she needed assistance, she finished exhausted but elated in 12 hours 12 minutes. Last

year, she ran the gruelling marathon again, slashing her time to nine hours 59 minutes, a world record for women running on crutches.

Today, Mosiane trains three times a week, sometimes running 15 kilometres a day. "I won't let myself down now," she says, smiling. "I've learnt independence, and I will never, never give up until I've got what I want. I might even try tennis!"

Like Nkele Mosiane, most achievers know that success is less about talent than about believing in yourself, working hard and remaining undaunted by failure. Here are some examples to keep in mind when a setback threatens your dreams:

**Find the right door.** Cape Town clothing designer Paul Simon, 25, knew his clothes would sell - if only he could find a place to sell them. Although clothing chains said they loved his designs, they wouldn't place an order because he had no track record. Fleamarket stands were not suited for his more formal designs.

Friends and family urged him to give up and find "real" work in a clothing shop. But Simon had another strategy in mind. *Surely there must be other designers out there in my position, he thought. In helping them I could help myself.* Simon's plan was for a cutting-edge retail fashion shop that would offer proper change-rooms, credit card facilities, sales assistants and a "returns" service for dissatisfied customers. He would select a range of garments from other young designers, who would rent

