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MEDIA RELEASE

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MEDSHIELD POWERS JOBURG'S TOUGHEST HALF MARATHON IN 2026

JOHANNESBURG, XX JANUARY 2026 – Gauteng's running community is gearing up for one of the most demanding and iconic tests of endurance on the calendar as the [Pirates 21K powered by Medshield](#) returns on Sunday, 15 February 2026.

Steeped in history, defined by grit, and celebrated for its uncompromising course, the Pirates 21K has earned its reputation as Johannesburg's toughest 21 km half-marathon. It is a race that does not flatter, but rewards. Each year, thousands of runners line up not only to chase personal bests, but also to earn the right to say, "*I ran Pirates.*"

Starting from the historic **Pirates Club in Greenside**, the 21.1 km route cuts through some of Johannesburg's most recognisable suburbs before delivering its defining moment, the relentless ascent of Northcliff Hill, a climb synonymous with courage, character, and the spirit of the race itself.

"The Pirates 21km race is about more than the challenge on the day, it's about community, resilience and celebrating a healthy, active lifestyle. Our partnership with Medshield allows us to enhance the race experience for participants while reinforcing the importance of long-term wellness and recovery," says Samantha Harrison, Race Director, Pirates Running Club.

"Movement is one of the most powerful tools we have to prevent illness, manage health and live better lives," says Kevin Aron, Principal Officer of Medshield. "The Pirates 21K is more than a race. It is a shared commitment to resilience, well-being, and showing up for yourself. That is what makes it such a powerful platform for meaningful health engagement."

A flagship challenge on Joburg's running calendar

Widely regarded as one of the city's oldest and most respected road races, the Pirates 21K remains a bucket-list event for seasoned athletes and first-time half-marathon runners alike.

It is unapologetically tough, deeply honest, and profoundly rewarding, qualities that mirror Medshield's *Partner for Life* philosophy. "The gruelling course defines the race," Aron adds. "It's demanding, but it gives back exactly what you put in. That's also the case with one's journey of health and why the Pirates 21K aligns so naturally with Medshield's philosophy, brought to life through our Medshield Movement service offering." Medshield's continued partnership ensures the event delivers not just a world-class race but also an experience rooted in preventive health, movement, and long-term well-being, on and beyond race day.

“We value our partnership with Medshield and the shared focus on supporting runners’ health and well-being. Collaborations like this help elevate the Pirates 21km experience while reinforcing the importance of looking after your body beyond race day,” says Ryan Mills, Chairman, Pirates Running Club.

With entries steadily filling, momentum is building as runners lock in their places. Early-entry benefits may be gone, but the real prize remains: the opportunity to be part of a proudly Joburg institution that blends heritage, challenge, and collective resilience.

Bringing the Medshield Movement to life

The 2026 race is expected to attract a strong national field, with elite athletes anticipated on the start line, including **Gerda Steyn** and **Bong'musa Mthembu**, Comrades Marathon champion and Medshield Movement Ambassador.

Medshield Movement Ambassadors will activate throughout the race experience:

- **Bong'musa Mthembu** is competing and engaging runners as an ambassador
- **Amy Hoppy** is capturing the energy of race day while acting as MC along key route moments
- **Mapule Ndhlovu**, wellness practitioner, is leading a guided post-race recovery and cool-down session

"Crossing the finish line is only part of the journey," Aron says. "Recovery matters. By focusing on what happens after the race, we are encouraging runners to view wellness as a complete, sustainable journey." As part of Medshield's preventive health focus, runners will again have access to complimentary health check stations through Medshield's partnership with Abby Health, offering quick, non-invasive screenings during registration and race weekend to promote early awareness and proactive health management.

Powered by community, amplified by media

Adding to the atmosphere, [HOT 102.7 FM](#) returns as the official media partner, amplifying the race with live broadcasts, runner stories, training insights, and on-the-ground energy, bringing Joburg's toughest half-marathon to life for runners and supporters alike.

Whether on the road, on the sidelines or tuning in, the 2026 ***Pirates 21K powered by Medshield*** promises an experience that goes beyond the finish line, uniting movement, health, and community in one unforgettable Joburg moment.

Entries are open. The challenge is waiting.

- To enter or learn more about the race, visit <https://pirates21.co.za/>
- For more Medshield information and movement inspiration, visit www.medshieldmovement.co.za

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