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Our man of iron

My Ironman journey was messy and unpredictable, writes our mechatronics engineer Allan van den Berg. There were moments when I didn't know how I would continue. But I always tried to count my blessings, appreciate the support of friends and family, and dream big. Life is a bit like an Ironman. Everyone needs help with the challenges ahead, but together, with hard work, we can all be an Ironman.



How it started

In early 2021, we were still in the middle of Covid-19 restrictions. I had been travelling to the USA for Jendamark and had the opportunity to visit the wonderful state of Utah. In particular, the red cliffs of Zion National Park, and the small town of St George, near Las Vegas, piqued my interest.

Coming out of lockdown, I was itching to do an Ironman overseas. The thrill of combining it with a holiday (and aging myself from the stress) got me excited. Coincidentally, St George happened to host an Ironman. So, in June, I entered the race.

I wasn't fit, didn't know where I'd be in the world at that time, or how I was going to pay for everything. All I knew was that I had set a goal.

World championship

Soon after I entered, I got a notification that the event was now a World Championship – the first time it was being held outside Hawaii, due to the pandemic. Because I had already entered, they allowed a small number of us to compete without qualifying. I felt like I had won the lottery.

Building fitness and friendships

Just to clarify, I am an average Joe when it comes to endurance sport. I knew from experience that the Ironman journey takes patience and consistency, and I focused on being grateful for any progress I made.

This meant cold 4am cycles before work, swims in the choppy ocean, and 21km evening runs. I would often hear cars honk at me when running up Mount Road at night, only to see a colleague whizzing past and waving.

We are so lucky to live in town where triathlon, as the Gen Z say, is a "vibe". The training can be brutal, up to 15 hours a week. But I reminded myself that being able to use my body and have vitality and health is a huge blessing.

I made two new friends through the Privateers Club, Herman and Bruce, who started training with me. We met for coffee cycles and Sunday morning swims, where we often spotted dolphins in the bay. These two chaps made such a difference, proving that the support of friends and family is vital when challenges arise.

From SA to USA

I decided to head to the USA a week before the race. What a mad rush that last week was!

I had to get my bike serviced and plane-ready with protective packaging, get all my race nutrition, double check my kit, plus all the hotel bookings and transfers; all while working and training. But I loved the pressure and was soon on my long-haul flight from Johannesburg to Salt Lake City via Paris.

Festival of nations

The week-long festivities were a celebration of the world's best triathletes (and me as a wannabe) in one place. There was a parade of nations where I got to meet people from every continent, including two fellow South Africans. We paraded with the South African flag. It opened my eyes to how many people do Ironman all over the world.

There was live music in the town square, a market showing off all the latest gadgets and bicycles, and, of course, delicious food. We even did a 5km fun run two days before the race to loosen our legs, and practice swims in the icy lake.

Finally, race day was drawing near. I was getting nervous as the enormity of the event started to dawn on me.

Race day

3.30am, the alarm beeps. It's Race Day! After a cup of coffee and a banana, I was off to catch a yellow school bus. The event organisation was incredible. There were 2 668 athletes, all needing transport. After a 45-minute commute, we arrived at the lakeside start line.

Everyone was frantically doing last-minute checks. Through this I tried to stay calm and warm. At 6.30am, a cannon blast signalled the start of the race for the professional men.

The other participants were grouped by age; I was in the fourth group to start. The tension was





high; some nervously talkative, others dead silent. Then it was time – they called my group to the holding pen for the start.

Cold swim

And there it was, the mirror finish of the icy lake under the rising sun. I was excited and ready to race. We lined up in single file, with an athlete starting every 10 seconds. Eventually, I was in front. I remember the three distinct beeps followed by the official's raised hand signalling that my race had begun.

The 3.86km swim was steady and I was grateful for my tough ocean training as 234 swimmers did not finish.

Tough cycle

I shuffled through the transition zone and started looking for my red bicycle. It's disorienting when there are 2 000 bikes in front of you. Luckily, I found mine in no time. My spirits were up, and the morning sun saw the temperature starting to rise.

With predicted temperatures over 35 degrees, I knew I was in for a tough cycle. The hilly 180km route had an elevation gain of 2 248m – the second highest in the world for an Ironman. By comparison, the South African event has a gain of 1 540m.

Halfway through the cycle, and at the sun's zenith, dehydration was starting to set in. I had some big climbs ahead and, even though I was drinking loads of water, the heat was brutal. Several cyclists just lay on the side of the road. It turns out, 306 athletes quit during the cycle. I tried to stay positive, but fatigue was setting in.

My legs were starting to cramp and spasm. It was so bad that I rode into a street sign, which is hilarious now that I think about it. I also nearly crashed at an aid station when someone stopped abruptly in front of me. I tried to regain composure and count my blessings. I was so lucky to still be racing.

With great difficulty and a bit more luck, I finished my cycle with a long downhill. I knew I was in trouble because my legs were stiff and spasming uncontrollably. In the transition tent, I found my run bag, and wept with pain and frustration. My legs would never be able to do a 42km marathon. A caring volunteer saw me crying and immediately consoled me, reaffirming that I was doing well. He kindly tied my running shoes and packed my cycling clothes in my bag. These small, empathetic moments are what made the race so special. I pulled myself together and started the run.

Running on empty

Running is my strongest sport, so I was excited to make some gains. But after 5km, hope was fading fast. The pure pain and uncontrollable spasms were debilitating. I didn't know what to do. On top of this, the 3pm heat was at its most intense, my tummy was saturated with glucose gels, and no amount of water was helping. I was wobbling along.

And then, I fainted

My strategy was to power walk and repeat "Just keep swimming," like Dory on Finding Nemo. I was walking with a family member supporting me in the race.

But at 15km, my feet and fingers started to tingle, and I felt an overwhelming desire to sleep. The next instant, I saw black. I fainted... and for two minutes felt no pain and complete peace.

I remember waking up with a police officer over me asking for my details, and a spectator gently rubbing ice on my lips. They just kept saying, "Stay awake. Don't close your eyes." Soon after, the ambulance arrived.

The paramedics performed tests and, 30 minutes later, cleared me. The whole team was so caring and professional. I thought I would be disqualified as I had received medical attention. But, because I hadn't received medication, they gave me the option to continue. At that point, I was not even halfway, but I knew I had to try and finish the run. With gratitude, I got up and took the next step!

Every now and then a spectator with South African ties would scream "Lekker!" or "Mooi man!". There was so much support! The US supporters loved sharing their SA safari stories with me during the race.

I continued to wobble, walk, stop, and stretch.
I cried a little more as the pain was now unbearable. I had all the emotions from feelings of victory to vulnerability. It took forever. I did this for over eight hours. That's a whole day at work!





Our man of iron (continued)

I planned to finish the race in South African colours. It was important to me that I was celebrating our country at this world event.

At the 40km mark, I grabbed my SA flag and wobbled towards the finish, where I could still hear the crowds cheering. It was now past midnight. I had been racing for over 17 hours.

Thirty minutes later, I made it to the red carpet. With an overwhelming sense of pride, I held up the flag, and walked my final steps towards the finish line.

The crowds were on their feet, shouting encouragement as though I was a rock star. I remember the host shouting, "All the way from Nelson Mandela Bay, what a beautiful flag!" I tried to acknowledge everyone as this brief moment was the culmination of hundreds of hours of training.

I walked to the finish line in disbelief, with cameras flashing, spectators screaming, and a heart of gratitude for all the people who had helped me. Finally, the words, "Allan, you are an Ironman," echoed in the main street of St George, USA.



CELEBRATING OUR SILVER SURFERS

"To Roderick and Greg, thanks for 25 years of service to our company. Thank you on behalf of everybody at Jendamark for your dedication and commitment. It's thanks to people like you that we are the global success that we are today. On a personal note, thank you for the guidance, wisdom and patience you afforded me, a pure mechanical engineer, to grow into a technology-conversant one. Looking forward to our futures together." - Quinton Uren, MD

This year, Jendamark's two longest-serving employees reached their quarter century with the company. We asked our electrical design manager Roderick Plag and senior systems analyst Greg Perelson about their experiences over the last two-and-a-half decades. Here's what they had to say:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

This month, we recognised the commitment of a special group of employees who earned their long-service awards during the second quarter of 2022. Congratulations, everyone!

5 years: Alecia Scheepers · Neilan Swarts Leonard Kilian · Brendon van Dyk

10 years: Funeka Gusha · Terence Whelan Martyn Bowers

25 years: Greg Perelson



1. What changes have you seen at Jendamark over the past 25 years?

Roderick: Jendamark has gone through massive, progressive changes over the years. When I started, everyone, including seniors and directors, was inexperienced and the company was finding its feet. Every project was a learning curve and we "burned our fingers" many times. Over the years, we have evolved into a global technological leader in our field and compete at the highest level with other machine and production line builders. With our global growth we have had to change our mind-sets and make the necessary changes in the company to accommodate these requirements.

Greg: In many ways, Jendamark is a completely different company today to what it was 25 years ago. Most of that is due to change in scale, since there were less than 20 people at Jendamark when I first arrived.

2. Personally speaking, how have you grown – in terms of your role and your skills – from where you started to where you are now?

Roderick: I joined Jendamark directly from varsity, so I had almost no market-related skills and no practical experience. I had to learn the trade from scratch. Jendamark provided the ideal training ground for anyone with a hunger to learn because we were exposed to all the technical aspects of the machines that we were producing. We were never held back from an opportunity to learn and get involved with something new. My role evolved from being a student technician to my current position as manager of technical people.

Greg: I joined straight out of university, and so I obviously didn't have much experience and my knowledge was very much theoretical. 25 years of

experience teaches you that things don't always work the way they are written in the textbook.

3. What's your stand-out memory or one of the funniest things that has happened during your career?

Roderick: I can remember Quinton Uren working alongside us on site trying to get a machine to work. He was adjusting the mechanics of the mechanisms and I was waiting for him to finish so I could complete the electrical wiring. The directors were so hands-on and that gained them my respect. One funny thing that springs to mind was when a colleague of mine who fell asleep near some part boxes on a new line was rudely awakened by the morning shift operator! We were working many long hours and late nights to get the project ready on time. It was not uncommon to steal a quick power nap if you had the opportunity.

Greg: I don't know that there's one specific thing that I could point to. But certainly the opportunity to do international projects stands out as something that most South Africans don't get to do.

4. What keeps you motivated to come to work every day?

Roderick: I love what I do. The energy and drive of the people I work with is also a big motivational factor. I like the opportunities to impart knowledge and grow the people.

Greg: Most software people spend their time writing code that moves numbers between columns in spreadsheets. At Jendamark, we get to see our code affect the real world, and what we produce here in ODIN now has a potential to have a real impact on the quality of products that people around the world buy and rely upon.





VIVA, UNCLE VIV!

t the end of April, the machine shop said Agoodbye to our lathe artisan, Vivian Gamble, with a sweet ceremony. Vivian joined our company in February 2013 and has retired after nine years at Jendamark.

Machine shop supervisor Emmanuel Peyper describes him as the "biggest softy" and the most kind-hearted of all the machinists Jendamark has seen.

"His presence made every day feel good. Seeing a senior and very experienced co-worker always smiling and taking on tasks with a smile is what made us realise that, even after many years, you can still love what you do.

"Uncle Viv's presence, experience and knowledge is definitely missed in the machine shop. We youngsters have learned a lot from him, and we hope to one day be just as good and dedicated, with a sincere love for what we do, as Uncle Viv showed us daily," says Emmanuel.

Go well, Uncle Viv, and know that your legacy will go on in Jendamark through your machine shop family. Retirement is not for youngsters!

Here's what rest of the team had to say about Uncle Viv:

"Viv has always been an example of a true gentleman to me. He treated his fellow employees with the greatest amount of respect and was never too busy to assist an employee in need or to coach them. His quality of work was outstanding, always aspiring to reach the greatest level of accuracy and quality. He is also a family man. Seeing him at gym after 8pm with his son always touched me deeply and my respect for him never stopped growing. Age is just a number. He will be dearly missed, not just as a colleague, but as a true friend. I'm sure he is going to have a great retirement."

- Marinus van Rooyen, manufacturing and assembly manager

"Mister Viv is such a kind and compassionate toppie, but he has a naughty side. That combo made for very good memories, ones that will last a lifetime. A solid toppie, one you can depend on! I miss him deeply at work but it's time for the toppie to relax and enjoy his retirement. Salute, Mister Viv!"

- Kevin Kilian

"When I started at Jendamark, I didn't really know him. I always saw him as this guiet uncle, always minding his own business, until I actually had to start working with him. Today I don't regret a moment. In all these years, we grew so close to one another that I looked up to him, like my dad. Every single day he inspired me, just looking at him so dedicated in his work and how proud he was doing his job. I couldn't say more. The day he told me he's leaving, I was extremely sad but happy at the same time. So today I would like to say, 'Thank you for everything you have done. I really appreciate you."

- Debra Essen

"Over the years he has not only been a colleague but a true friend. I could always go to him in good or bad times. I truly miss our chats. Thank you for all you've done and thank you for being the person you are."

- Shandré Salsone









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"Describing Uncle Viv, I'll say hardworking, always willing to help and gives good advice." - Johnovan Nell

"It feels like it was yesterday (when he joined Jendamark). I still remember when I first saw Maviva, Uncle Viv. I said, 'Yhooo I am blessed with old people.' Throughout his nine years of service, he has been not only a co-worker but a father and a friend to me. He has set an example to be followed in the future and cherished by those of us that were fortunate enough to experience it for ourselves. It saddens me to part ways with people like Maviva who I have known for so long and who've had a huge influence on me. I will forever be grateful to him for pushing me in the right direction in becoming a better person that I

am now. Yeah, Maviva, it is his Xhosa name."

- Funeka Gusha



As the title sponsor of the Jendamark United Cricket Club, our company is an active supporter of grassroots sports development. We are assisting JUCC to nurture male and female cricketing talent from primary school level to the premier league, with the aim of providing a pathway beyond the club to provincial and national teams. Read the club's full report here.

Jendamark United Cricket Club was awarded Blue Flag Status by Cricket South Africa in the 2019/20 season, which recognises the quality of the club amongst others in the country. The club stands among just 20 nationwide that have been awarded the privilege to boast such high achievement, and is the only one in the Eastern Cape to attain and retain it even in the dark times of Covid-19.

Blue Flag Status for Club is a Cricket South Africa recognition given to clubs who have driven the objectives and aims of the Presidential Plan (for operating an effective cricket pipeline structure). The criteria used to ascertain the status of such a club are based on administration capabilities, adequate facilities, minimum number of teams and suitably qualified coaches.

The Jendamark United Cricket club is a long standing and highly respected Cricket Club in our local community. The club has very strong links to its community and surrounding areas for the last 46 years and we depend on the support of our generous sponsorship from Jendamark Automation. The sponsorship covers grassroots cricket development at club level for four Senior Men's teams and two Senior Ladies' teams; and at Hub (grassroots) level for 15 primary schools and five high schools in the following age groups:

- Mini Cricket: U/11 Boys, U/13 Boys, U/15 Boys and U/19 Boys
- Mini Cricket: U/11 Girls, U/13 Girls, U/15 Girls, U/19 Girls

We take pride in noting that with the initiatives the sponsorship has afforded us, we have managed to produce players for the Proteas, Warriors, Eastern Province Colts and Eastern Province academies (boys and girls).

JUCC is also actively involved in cricket development at local schools through programmes that are part of our Jendamark New Brighton Cricket Hub. These programmes are in aid of bettering the New Brighton community, to assist in the alleviation of crime, drug use, as well as child abuse and gender-based violence. These programmes include, amongst others, the Nutriwell Food Supplement initiative where the club partnered with Eastern Province Cricket to deliver food hampers to selected deserving primary schools around the New Brighton area.



TECH TOURS FOR KIDS

Meet the future. This young generation is growing up in a different world, where tech is an unsurprising fact of life and coding is just another language they speak.

A few weeks ago, Jendamark had the pleasure of hosting Grade 6 learners from Curro Westbrook Independent School and the Grade 7 class from Woodridge Preparatory School. Both schools already offer Robotics as a subject, so we were happy to introduce the kids to our cool Odin Manufacturing tech and show them what their future careers could look like. As the official South African agent for Dobot, we also had the opportunity to put our new collaborative robots through their paces. (The children's reactions were mixed and hilarious!)











"Robots are confusing." – Phoebe



"It is the best experience ever."

– Connor



"It all felt very futuristic." – Bianca



"The robots were weird and amazing, the tour was inspiring. I broke the bike...hopefully I won't pay." – Chuma



"A whole new world in a pair of goggles." – Mihlali

WORKPLACE

You've probably seen the posters popping up all over the place – with invitations to join our Workplace Wellness challenges. Dreamed up by each of our departments, and funded by Jendamark, each unique challenge is designed to encourage some aspect of health and wellness - body, mind and soul! Find the one that suits you and sign up. It's a great way to mingle with colleagues and have some fun.

These are some of the challenges currently on the go:









To inspire you, here are some snaps from our recent Trivia, Scavenger Hunt and Beach Clean-Up events!















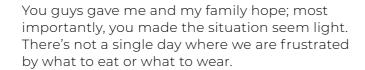
THANK YOU

A heartfelt thank you from our receptionist Jen Ndlovu to everyone who rallied to support her and her family after the devastating fire at her home in June.

Finding your home burnt and, to top it, your niece ending up in ICU is the worst and most tragic experience of my whole life. No amount of strength was enough to hold how shattered I was.

In Xhosa we say "ndiswele imilomo eliwaka", which, directly translated, means "I'm out of words; even a mere thank you feels like an understatement."

I'm extremely thankful to be part of the Jendamark family. Not a single person was obligated to assist. But each person contributed from the little they have – from donated money to clothes and household equipment.



The kids are playing with toys and are at peace. Continued prayers, please. And Hlumelo is also responding in hospital.

Jhooo 🥸 శ⁵♥.

Thanks to everyone.

I pray you the good God blesses and double your pockets in every corner you took from.

Thank you, Jendamark family. Jen













FIT FOR THE JOB

After years of hard graft, and with all the challenges the pandemic brought, these two gents passed their trade test in April. Athanele Wayile and Malibongwe Nqopha are our latest duo of qualified mechanical fitters. Attie and Mike, we are so proud to have watched you grow and develop on your journey from apprentices to qualified artisans. Congratulations!

GIVE THAT MAN A BELL

our Manufacturing, Assembly and Design (MAD) department has instituted a fine new tradition – ringing the handover bell to signal another successful sign-off of a customer facility!

It's a proud moment every time another machine or tooling project moves over to Commissioning, and we love sharing it with the people who made it happen.

On March 2, our tooling project supervisor, Xolile Dikana, became the very first team member to

sound the message that a facility was leaving the floor. After four months of hard work, the tooling assembly team took the honours for some gamechanging work piece carriers – supplied with 3D printed polyurethane test parts – for a differential assembly line.

Since then, the MAD department has seen several projects given the green light and the Assembly Hall continues to echo with the sound of a job well done!













A WINNING TEAM

Onfirming our trajectory as a global tech leader, Jendamark has just won the Top AGOA Exporter award in the Large Size Business category. The awards are hosted by the International Trade Institute of Southern Africa with the support of the USAID Southern Africa Trade and Investment Hub. We have had a sales and service presence in the USA for a number of years but we are actively pursuing new opportunities in this market, while giving our existing customers our trademark world-class service.

Our MD Quinton Uren was all smiles as he accepted the award at the official ceremony in Johannesburg!





ODIN EDUCATION ON THE RISE

Jendamark's Odin Education division has been rolling out our Omang ed-tech devices to schools across South Africa, with the help of corporate businesses who come on board to sponsor a whole class, grade or phase.

More than 2 500 of the devices are already in use by high school learners and educators in the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Free State and Limpopo.

Recently, we welcomed our very first primary school on board. Phuthumani Primary is also the first Gauteng school to benefit from this ed-tech ecosystem.

Almost 200 Grade 5 learners will be using their e-learning devices to access curriculum-aligned educational content as they progress through the senior phase of their primary school career.

MICHELLE BREAKS BOUNDARIES

Michelle Kitching is one of the new faces in our machine shop – and Jendamark's first ever female CNC machinist

A qualified tool, jig and die-maker, Michelle originally had her sights set on joining the South African Police Service or the SA National Defence Force

"But that all changed after Matric when I started a holiday job as an assistant at Ocean Legacy Marine. We did shutdown maintenance work at Coca-Cola and SA Breweries, and I became so fascinated with how the machines worked and how products were made that I started an apprenticeship with an engineering firm."

By 2014, she was a qualified artisan and moved from making jigs and fixtures to spending seven years in the motor industry.

"Jendamark is a whole new challenge for me, but I love it! Being a lady in this 'male industry' is tough but it's worth every challenge that you face if you love what you do," she smiles.

Supervisor Emmanuel Peyper says Michelle brings a new and dynamic energy to the machine shop.



"She is a determined lady with high standards set for herself. I personally like hearing how confident she is and how she is always ready for a new challenge and especially challenging the gents on being the best machinist."

Emmanuel says she also raises the bar when it comes to a positive attitude.

An all-round achiever, Michelle grew up in Despatch, where she earned her Eastern Province colours in cross-country and was also crowned Miss Hoërskool Despatch. In her spare time, she enjoys wrestling with a fresh challenge of a different kind – this time on the end of a fishing line.





HAPPY HEART

You can't keep a good man down. We are so happy that our digital strategy director, Yanesh Naidoo 2.0, is healthy and raring to go after a successful heart valve replacement surgery in June. Welcome back!



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Send us your stories!

Got a funny or inspiring personal or work-related story to tell? Share the details and your news could make a splash in the next issue of Jendamark Juice!

