

# when the **saints** come marching in

*Dorcas: I thought runners were all sportsmen and totally honest.  
Len: Not this lot. They're all as bent as hell.  
- From the novel "Sisterly Feelings" by Alan Ayckbourn*

Venn Nemeth and Hart manned a table at the annual Thorntree Challenge hosted by the Saints Athletic Club. The 15 kilometre run and 10 kilometre walk winds through the southern suburbs of Pietermaritzburg and the Hesketh Conservancy.

Most runners made it past the Venn Nemeth and Hart table around 7 o'clock (in the



*Asha Sookdeo handing water sachets to the runners*

morning, not the evening!) and much needed water and Coke was dispensed.

Clients who recognised Venn Nemeth and Hart attorneys, paralegals and secretaries, stopped to chat and soon found themselves way behind time!

# coach mom

*The nice aspect about football is that, if things go wrong, it's the manager who gets the blame.  
- Gary Lineker, one time captain of the English soccer team*

When Laura Kok, one of our receptionists, switches off her computer and hangs up her headset, she could be forgiven for wanting to put her feet up with a glass of wine. Our receptionists field a bewildering number of calls every day. But, instead of taking a much-deserved break, Laura heads for the Collegians soccer fields.

When the Savages U6 team found themselves without a coach, Laura could not bear her little boy's disappointment. Not willing to see her son's team enter the league without a coach, she laced up her soccer boots and reached for her whistle!



*Laura Kok with the U6 team and assistant coach, Jennifer Els*

Laura now coaches four teams of aspiring Bafana Bafana players and the results speak for themselves: her first team won the 1st division and the Cup Knock Out Trophy, while her second team won in its division!

# shooting for **2010**

*I've been on a calendar, but never on time.  
- Marilyn Monroe*

We give a lot of thought to the theme for our calendars each year - last year emphasised 'growth' and the photo shoot was held in the famous plane tree avenue at the Botanic Gardens. The previous year featured legal landmarks in the city, including the High Court, the Deeds Registry and (dare we say it!) our own offices at 281 Pietermaritz Street.

This year, we wanted a theme that captured the growing excitement towards the 2010 World Cup, our own enthusiasm about the future of our country and the value we place on the broader Venn Nemeth and Hart family.

The result? Well, if the players of the well-known Pietermaritzburg United soccer team had arrived at their main playing field early on a recent Saturday morning, they would have been amazed at the talent on the field. More than fifty Venn Nemeth and Hart moms, dads, uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces, nephews and kids were having a ball! The youngsters were delighted to have the whole field to themselves - this was a once in a life time experience!

We won't say too much now, but do watch out for our 2010 calendars.



*Family members watching the photo shoot*

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# LAW LETTER

## Supplement

November 2009

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## coffee with tim

Tim's primary school teacher predicted that, if he were not jailed first, Tim would end up as a journalist or a writer. She turned out to be at least partially correct - as a commercial and labour attorney Tim works with words every day. Over a cup of coffee we found out how Tim puts words into action ...

**A good contract starts with clear analysis.** Whether you are dealing with a lease, the sale of shares or the supply of materials, you really need to understand your client's business. From this basis, you can begin to ask 'what if' questions - this helps you to understand the possible outcomes and risks, and how to protect your client in each of these scenarios.

**I have always hated the poor use of words.** A bad advertising slogan, especially one that misses an obvious opportunity, really gets me going. Contracts require the same degree of care. Your words must record the arrangements between the parties as economically and clearly as possible. Venn Nemeth and Hart has never enjoyed 'legalese'; we feel that we have done our job properly if everyone understands our contracts.

**Labour law often has a much more personal aspect.** I enjoy the logical thinking required for drafting contracts, but the CCMA and the labour court offer a totally different type of work. The employment relationship gives rise to strong emotions, both positive and negative, so dismissal is



Tim Brown  
Commercial Division

bound to be an emotional business. I enjoy this as a change from the logical precision of contract work. You also need to be able to switch between adversarial and negotiating mode. You need to fight when you have to, but it often makes sense to explore acceptable methods of settling labour disputes.

**I think you can teach an old dog new tricks!** I recently completed an MBA through the University of Stellenbosch. It was hard work, with regular trips down to Cape Town for two-week lecture and examination sessions. The MBA has given me new insight into my clients' businesses and has added some depth to my role as director responsible for marketing.

**It all comes back to my dear teacher's prediction.** I pretty much live by words. Contracts are all about clarity and precision in the use of words. Labour work depends on using words persuasively, whether to convince an adjudicator or to predispose your opposition towards settling a matter favourably.

## from the chairman's desk

*1992 is not a year on which I shall look back with undiluted pleasure. In the words of one of my more sympathetic correspondents, it has turned out to be an Annus Horribilis.*  
- Queen Elizabeth II



Matthew Francis  
Chairman

I was initially tempted to echo the Queen's words and say that 2009 has been a truly horrible year. But, when you think about it, 2009 has not been so bad after all. For one thing, government's sensible counter-inflationary policy, together with timeous action to curb credit granting, seem to have resulted in the world-wide recession largely bypassing South Africa. We have felt the effects - the economy has definitely slowed and the property market is only now showing signs of some new life - but we escaped the full rigours of what could have been a truly *depressing* depression!

Perhaps more importantly, the recession has given us the opportunity to reassess why we are in business in the first place. Potentially devastating events - whether physical or

economic - often have the effect of giving the thinking man or woman a bit of 'philosophy'. We naturally tend to take another look at our priorities, plans and purpose when faced with a force that is greater than ourselves.

For our firm, at least, the recession has offered the opportunity to hone our practice, to refine processes and to expand skills. It has also been very pleasing to note that our firm remains buoyant on a sea of some turbulence.

We hope that a truly great 2010 awaits us; not an *annus horribilis*, but a year of real opportunity. Seasons greetings from the directors and staff at Venn Nemeth and Hart.

## the spar ladies race

*Please smoke. Thank you for not jogging.*  
- Anonymous sign in a New York taxi.

2 600 women (and a few confused male runners) took to the road for the recent Spar Ladies Race.

The 10 km race started at the Pietermaritzburg Cricket Oval and ran through Alexandra Park. Venn Nemeth and Hart fielded six ladies for the walking event, each of whom finished in good time.

The annual race is run in support of breast cancer and similar races are held throughout South Africa.



Marcel Sandells, Radha Gopaul, Tina v Wyngaard and Janice Will.