



SPORT FIRST BLOOD – THE CAPE EPIC

Literally thousands of people are involved in making the ABSA Cape Epic a success, from the riders, support crew and spectators, to the organizers, course designers, bicycle mechanics and landowners. This is what some of them had to say:



"I left South Africa for Europe during the mid-nineties, and what sustained me during my absence from my home country was my love for mountain biking. When I decided to return to South Africa, I had this dream that I could make mountain biking my business".

- Kevin Vermaak, Cape Epic Founder & Director

"Stefan said to me that I'm crazy to ride with my shoulder (which had been dislocated) and that he could never do it. From him, that was a huge compliment and motivated me to carry on. My answer was that we're here at a good race and we spent a lot of money to get here, so I can suffer."

- Karl Platt, overall winner with Stefan Janakiev (2009)

"This is a grueling and hard race on both you and your bike. Trust in your equipment, but ride with your heart."

- Philippe Lemouchan, bicycle mechanic

"As adventure racers, we enjoyed the stages that were as much about surviving as about biking. Racing for top position was really tough – I swore I would never do it again."

- Michelle Lombard, ONS Street Team (2004, 2nd Ladies Team 2005)

"The toughness of the event and the beauty of the varying terrain made it unforgettable – 9 days without having to take calls or emails. Just ride your bike – best holidays of my life."

- Robyn Powell, Top 100 Finisher (2006/7/8)

Pictured by Jacques Marais

on 29 October 2009 in preparation for the 2010 race on 21 March. What you can bank on is that route designer Leon Evans, aka, Dr. Evil, will once again pull out all the stops to test your sense of humour.

Unlike many mountain biking events, the ABSA Cape Epic sees paired athletes dueling it out along a combo of single track and gravel road. This means team dynamics are bound to play a role when facing off against headwinds, and partners who perfect the art of decreasing drag by riding in each other's slipstream, aka drafting, may gain precious minutes. The beauty of riding the Epic is that it allows riders access to private land, national parks and nature reserves which are generally off-limits to the public, and encounters with big game and venomous reptiles are par for the course.

Race reality does not so much bite you, as rip your guts out, especially as you progress to days three and four. By now you have cranked nearly four hundred grueling kilometres, and the realisation sets in that you're not even halfway yet. Saddle sores, aching muscles, tendonitis, heat, dust and thirst blur into interminable suffering, and the finish may just as well be a thousand miles away. But somehow you grit your teeth and keep cranking through wheat fields, orchards and vineyards, past forgotten villages and historic towns.



Somewhere between day five and seven, you and your bike become one. Nearly a week of riding have tempered your body, soul and spirit, and you've become bulletproof as you bomb towards the Holy Grail that is the finish.

But it is the final day, which makes for the most emotional journey as you hammer home. It is a bittersweet moment when you cross the line. Eight days of suffering and pain, camaraderie and elation must end, but you can stand proud as an official finisher of 'The Magical and Untamed African MTB Race'.

Check out www.cape-epic.com for more information

SIX OF THE BEST:

Entries for the ABSA Cape Epic are near impossible to secure, but fortunately a number have followed in its steps. Feed your ultra stage-racing addiction here ...



IMANA WILD RIDE

Go bush on this awesome 200k navigable cattle track, remote between Karoo and the Karoo web www.imana.co.za

SABIE XPERIENCE

A multi-day event, traversing a Mountain escapement. Four day 70km, day-chasing (drafting) in the picturesque village of Sabie www.sabieexperience.co.za

SANIZC

Wild, sweet and gritty smiles, race, and riders have been racing their gear. You'll be riding, but be warned that this is not done www.sanizc.co.za

THE AMARIDER 100-MILER

This takes a hard core and shall finish this dirt ride between the day. This year's ride was the first a logistic. www.amarider.co.za

SOUTHERN STORM

The 6 day duration offers an a component to this endurance a and trail running, along the in Nature's Valley and Wilderness www.magneticsouth.net

TRANS-BAVIAANS MTB MARATHON

If you can tame 230km of road, night and live to tell the tale, the for you www.ecobound.co.za

For more info on mountain bik in South Africa, check out www.ecobound.co.za

