

# CSA Newsletter No 93 - 24-09-2009

## Development paddlers set to star at Hansa Powerade Fish

Cradock – A new initiative to assist development canoeists to take part in the Hansa Powerade Fish River Canoe marathon has been warmly received around the country, and fuelled the hopes of seeing some of the emerging development stars racing into top positions in the famous two day race in Cradock on 2 and 3 October.

Multiple Dusi winner Martin Dreyer has leapt at the opportunity created by the race organising committee, which has heavily subsidised entries for development paddlers, by sending a strong squad from his Martin Dreyer Change-A-Life Academy in KwaZulu-Natal.

Dreyer, who also serves as a national development co-ordinator, has warmly welcomed the new initiative and wants to see a number of the top development paddlers excel in the race to serve as role models and inspire more development paddlers to get to the level needed to take part in the race.

"It is fantastic that the race has been so forward thinking in making provision for development athletes to make the trip to Cradock to do the Hansa Powerade Fish," said Dreyer.

With the cost of transport to Cradock representing one of the biggest challenges to development paddlers taking part in the popular race, the major saving on the race entry has paved the way for regional canoe unions and clubs to send more athletes to the event.

KwaZulu-Natal's canoe union held a trial at the recent Ngwenya Classic race to select six senior and six junior development paddlers to take part in the Hansa Powerade Fish. The majority of that team chosen came from Dreyer's Academy, and he has also added a further five paddlers to the core group from his charges.

The Gauteng Canoe Union has also committed to a team of development paddlers selected from the Sasol, Soweto and Florida Lake club ranks, while the Western Cape union is also sending a squad of development paddlers to the event.

"We wouldn't have been able to send such a big development team if it hadn't been for the entry concession from the race," said Dreyer. "It is a far sighted move that will make a huge difference to the emerging development paddlers, not only this year but in the years to come."

Dreyer is optimistic that some of the star paddlers in his squad will challenge for top 100 positions, with the steadily improving Tom Ngcobo best placed to aim for a top twenty placing.

"It will be tight in a K1 championship year with such a strong field already entered and a potent international team" said Dreyer. "We will be arriving in Cradock on the Monday of the race to give us plenty of time to trip the river and prepare."

Ngcobo will be returning from representing South Africa at the African Champs in Cote d'Ivoire just before the Hansa Powerade Fish.

"The impact of top performances that we have seen recently from guys like Tom Ngcobo, Skhumbuso Ngcobo and Eric Zondi is massive," said Dreyer. "Their hero is Michael Mbanjwa, who has used his paddling ability and dedication to uplift himself significantly. He is a real example of what can be done with passion, and a desire to better yourself."

Several members of Dreyer's Change-A-Life Academy have recently secured jobs at a Pietermaritzburg supermarket, based on their reputation for hard work and tenacity. "It is a very good CV reference, especially at a time when education is becoming questionable."

A large number of paddlers from the Dihlabeng slalom canoe club will be making the trip to Cradock, led by Olympians Sboniso "Master" Cele and Cyprian Ngidi to take part in the African Slalom championships that take place on the Fish in the days before the marathon.

The Hansa Powerade Fish takes place in Cradock on Friday 2 and Saturday 3 October. More information can be found at [www.fishmarathon.org.za](http://www.fishmarathon.org.za)