

Suffer a little, gain a lot

THE COMPUTERSHARE Change a Life Cycle Tour is an annual road cycling event, open to a very select group of participants. The purpose of the tour is to raise funds for anti-crime initiatives backed by the Mike Thomson Trust, established by Computershare after the murder of one of their senior managers in 1987. The first Change a Life Cycle Tour took place in 2008 and R12 million has been raised to date by these tours. Each participant is required to open their donation account at R20 000, but a surprising amount of cycling also goes on.

West is best

At the beginning of September this year, a group of 67, consisting mainly of South African business leaders, covered 500 kilometres on their road bikes during a three-day cycle tour of Namibia. Invited along to lend support in the form of experience and muscle were sports personalities Malcolm Lange and Martin Dreyer, with the lanky frame of television personality and new cyclist Derek Watts, of *Carte Blanche* fame, thrown into the mix.

This year's Taming the Wild West adventure included extreme desert heat, shifting sand dunes, howling coastal winds and mist, and some Namib Roubaix riding on Namibia's unique salt roads. It all ended with a paired *Amazing Race*-style day that required participants to navigate between GPS waypoints to the spot where some participants thought they had to fish for their dinner. Tour director Ursula du Plooy had a devil of a time

getting them to proceed to the rather more plush surroundings she had planned for them.

While the everyday lives of the participants might be very different from our own, the dynamics of shepherding groups of A-list personalities of varying cycling ability over the route makes for a potential soap opera that anyone can identify with. David

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Coutts-Trotter of Sun International is a long-term supporter of the tour, and one of the more experienced cyclists among the participants. He had doubts when Ursula insisted on rearranging the fast, medium and slower groups that have formed over the years, partly to encourage networking and interaction which tends to suffer when cliques form. In some ways, success was guaranteed by the fact that there were regular training rides before the tour started, and many of the beginner cyclists, who made things challenging for themselves in the earlier tours, now have abilities well beyond novices. With a leave-no-one-behind policy, the general objectives were very clear, but David admits there were times when managing the pace was difficult. Some of the



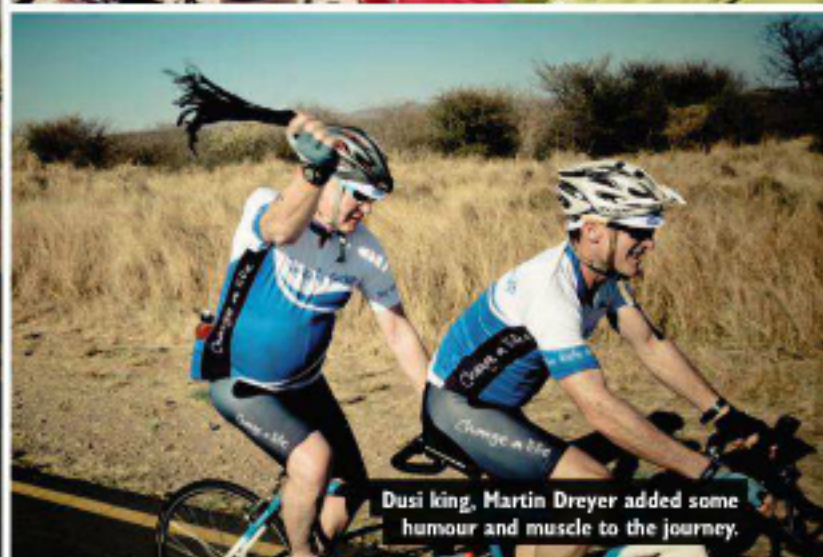
Refuelling at the tea stops recharged the energy levels of the riders, but the support staff took strain in setting up these desert oases in high winds and temperatures, which peaked at 50 degrees Celsius.



The tar roads in Namibia are in excellent condition, with little traffic.



Derek Watts, Malcolm Lange and Craig Dutton had a long, flat road behind them and another ahead.



Dusi King, Martin Dreyer added some humour and muscle to the journey.


riders who were not so strong got impatient, only to remind themselves later that you almost can't go too slowly at the beginning.

Route master Jonathan Scott is one of the established characters of the tour, and his pre-ride briefing notes didn't make any attempt to hide the hardships of the second day's riding. With 130 kilometres already in their legs, the cyclists faced a 208-kilometre journey across the Namib towards Swakopmund: "Along the way there are no trees, no water, no shade, no cover, only endless miles of hot, glaring sand and rocks. If we are lucky, the wind will be behind us for most of the way. Cruelly though, as we approach the coast, and the blue ocean comes tantalisingly into view, cooler air will be brought by a fresh sea breeze that will blow directly against us." It was not easy, but in the Wild Bunch, people who weren't exactly bursting with cycling self-confidence came away from the experience enriched. Both JSE CEO Russell Loubser and JSE deputy CEO Nicky Newton-King commented on the camaraderie that developed in their group, and found themselves buoyed by the strength of their companions. These riders were absolutely delighted when they could put a day with temperatures that averaged at

43 degrees Celsius, and an average speed of 36,5 km/h in their cycling bank, thanks in part to the brisk tail wind, but also some bunch riding that was very far from behaving like a Wild Bunch.

Major sponsorship for the tour this year came from Vodacom, the JSE, the Kelly group, Sun International and UTI, and the success of the undertaking depended heavily on the resources of all these role-players, but the logistical ramifications are nothing short of awe-inspiring. UTI deployed a team of cross-border specialists, because they provided transport for everything in the event's supply chain. This amounted to quite a bit more than the miles the cyclists covered between Windhoek and Walvis Bay. It started with face-to-face bicycle collection from each of the cycling participants, and went on to include delivering everything that was needed in an eight-tonne, 15-metre truck. It is no surprise that extra security was arranged in Windhoek

for the truck, because it was packed with bicycles valued at nearly R3 million.

With record rains this year, Namibia was probably more lush than it would be in the average year, but even without the extra bits of covering over the soil, the participants concluded that the person who said Namibia is the land God made in anger has not ever been there. They found excellent roads, friendly people and much more varied scenery than they could have imagined, and to enjoy all of that while supporting a good cause was surely a delight for all concerned. 

COMPUTERSHARE CHANGE A LIFE CYCLE TOUR BENEFICIARIES

- <http://www.dnaproject.co.za/>
- <http://www.martindreyeracademy.com/blog/>
- <http://www.valuedcitizens.co.za/>
- <http://www.karate-do-riverside.co.za/>

