

## **Mbanjwa and Zondi rumble with Jenkins and McGregor at Rietvlei**

The richest one day race in Gauteng, the Best 4 Healthcare Rietvlei Rumble, saw top The Unlimited Dusi canoe marathon contenders Thulani Mbanjwa and Sibonelo Zondi claim a moral boosting victory over Team Best 4 Kayak Centre's pairing of Len Jenkins and Hank McGregor.

Despite the event taking place on flat water and being substantially shorter than the grueling three days of racing of The Unlimited Dusi, the win will certainly give Mbanjwa and Zondi some much needed confidence and reaffirms their status as one of the three favourites to claim this year's title.

"It's obviously still quite early and these are very different conditions to what we will have to deal with during Dusi but we've had a couple of frustrating races recently and haven't done quite as well as we would have hoped so to get a win today is great," said Mbanjwa.

"We're very happy to have won today but there's still a lot to be done and things we need to work on so we can't read into this too much," added Zondi.

Having spent the first of three paddling legs safely in the lead bunch the two dominant pairs then set a blistering pace on the first portage and it wasn't long before it became a two horse race despite Richard and Nhlahlayakhe Cele's and the rest of field's best efforts.

"We could not believe the pace Hank (McGregor) and Len (Jenkins) ran at on the first portage. Once we realized just how well they were going on the run we decided just to tuck in behind them and see what happened later on," said Mbanjwa.

"Then on the second portage they actually got away from us across the dam wall and we were definitely nervous at that stage," he added.

"We realised we needed to take a few risks because it would be very difficult to outsprint them at the end. Luckily for us it worked and we managed to catch them, then drop them on the hill which gave us a thirty second lead when we put in again and then we managed to hold them off in the last lap," added Zondi.

Whilst not being a poor performance by any means, the premier Team Best 4 Kayak Centre crew will be slightly disappointed with how things went and will have a few points to ponder regarding how they approach the closing stages of their The Unlimited Dusi preparations.

"It would have been nice to have won and we realize we need to up the anti a bit from here on but it was definitely a good race to test our strengths and weaknesses and just see where we are at the moment," said Jenkins.

“Everyone knows Bunjee (Mbanjwa) and Eric (Zondi) are fantastic runners and to have stayed with them throughout the long first portage was obviously very encouraging for us and to have only lost thirty seconds after ten kilometres of running is really encouraging for us,” said McGregor.

“Having said that though we know tactically we could have done things a little differently and that we’ve got a bit of work ahead of us but overall we’re certainly not too unhappy,” he added.

Third placed Richard and Nhlahlayakhe Cele once again reminded the paddling fraternity of the strength that lies within the Change A Life academy and all bodes well for this exciting new duo.

In the ladies race it was an incredible return for Abbey Ulansky (formerly Miedema) who has joined Team Best 4 Kayak Centre from her adopted country Canada and will partner the immensely talented Robyn Kime.

The pair looked both exceptionally comfortable in the boat together and very relaxed throughout their victorious effort whilst twins Abby and Alex Adie fought hard for their second place finish.

“It is great to be back and it was nice to be able to get the win today. Robyn and I get along really well so to be back in the boat with her is fantastic, even though it was a little out of the blue,” chuckled Ulansky.

The Adie sisters had a tough day at the office and will certainly be looking forward to the Global Trader Drak Challenge this coming weekend to get a better performance under the belt and boost their confidence again.

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