



## Nguni Adventure Race – 9 – 11 March 2007

(Graham Bird, Sakkie Meyer, Philip Swanepoel, Carla Germishuys)

Written by Graham Bird

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On the weekend of the 9 – 11 March the third annual Nguni Adventure Race was held. The previous two races had been organized by Peet Smit, with this year's event being organized by Fred Richardson. The venue for this year's event was the central Drakensberg.



After suffering last minute injuries to regular team members Jeannette Walder and Eddie Schurmann, the McCain Adventure Addicts managed to rope in Carla Germishuys and Philip Swanepoel to join Graham Bird and Sakkie Meyer. The start venue was the Four rivers adventure camp and after plotting the points for the race from master maps, the event kicked off with a dinner and briefing on Friday evening. It was then early to bed in preparation for the 150km of mountain biking, abseiling & kloofing, river rafting and running/hiking, split over 7 legs.

The race started promptly at 04h30 on Saturday morning with teams heading in all directions on their mountain bikes to find the quickest route. After passing the Waypoint given by the race organizer to show the quickest/suggested route, we arrived at the first transition in about sixth place, 40 mins behind the race leaders. All the teams in front of us had ignored the waypoint and head to the transition via the district/tar roads. It was frustrating to be so far behind



after only 2 hours of racing. After two short “wet” abseils, we were back on the bikes for a short cycle to the river

rafting section. Each team was given two, two man crocs for the 8km paddle down the Little Tugela river. Due to the lack of rain in the preceding week, this ended up being more of a raft carrying leg.

It was then back onto the bikes for a 50km mtb to Giants Castle Main Camp, which included a hike a bike section up a 300m ascent to get to the main road leading to the camp. By the end of this cycle we had moved up to second place and had managed to close the gap to the leaders to 20mins.

The next leg was going to be the toughest and longest leg of the race. It involved hiking from Giants Castle camp to Injisuthi Camp 30km away. However the organizer had placed two optional checkpoints, one at the top of Langalibalele pass and one on Bannermans pass. If a team collected these points they would receive an eight hour deduction from their overall time. It involved an additional 5km of hiking with approximately 1400m of vertical ascent. A tough decision. Going for the race win, basically left us with no option but to go for the two points. The views were spectacular. We managed to close the gap to around 5 mins behind the leaders, just as it got dark, however we then made a big navigational error which saw us searching for a path junction for just over an hour, before realizing our mistake. The remainder of the hike proved very tough with the paths marked on the map, non existent or very faint on the ground. We finally finished the hike just before 01h00 on Sunday morning, 2h15 behind the leaders. Feeling very tired, we enjoyed a long transition before getting back onto our bikes for the final 40km cycle to Mountain Splendor Caravan Park, finishing in second place at 04h50, giving us 24h20 minutes of racing, just over three hours behind the winners, Team Cyanosis.



Well done to Fred Richardson and his team from Singletrack Africa for a superb race. Also well done to Team Cyanosis for a flawless race up front. Thanks to our seconds Jeannette Walder and Clinton Agnew. Also a special thanks to Carla and Philip for agreeing to race with us at the last minute.



Finally thanks to all our sponsors, whom this would



not be possible without:

- McCAIN for supporting our active, healthy lifestyles!
- SALOMON for the footwear and backpacks
- GIANT – for the Anthem mountain bikes
- ENERGY DYNAMICS – for the energy products necessary to keep us going!
- LINDEN CYCLES – for all the great service and advice.