

With 14,550 vertical metres of climbing and no less than 707 kilometres long, the Absa Cape Epic challenge truly is an epic challenge.

The route changes every year and leads aspiring amateur and professional mountain bikers from around the world through the unspoilt nature of the Western Cape in the Republic of South Africa.

It's not for the less-than-serious rider and it was with some trepidation that two determined and passionate

engineers submitted their entry.

Stephen Butler from PSC New Zealand and Willie de Beer from ABB South Africa entered with support of PSC Group. The sponsorship is a reflection of PSC's commitment to its people and the relationships they forge with their clients. PSC also felt the high performance nature of the event



reflected its overall philosophy to business. In particular, high performing people taking on tough challenges.



CAPE EPIC CLASSIC PRESENTED AN EPIC CHALLENGE

Our intrepid riders were joined by some of the big names of the mountain bike scene, such as Karl Platt of Germany, a four-time Cape Epic winner, and none other than the current world champion, Jose Hermida from Spain.

PROLOGUE AN APPETISER FOR THE MAIN EVENT

The event got underway with the prologue. Stephen Butler describes his feelings at the start:

'I took on this challenge because I thought it would be an amazing experience, and probably one of the hardest things I would ever do. Lining up for the start of the prologue on the first day, there was a lot of anticipation of what was to come, and knowing that I had been training hard

for a year just for this.'

Stephen soon found it was going to be the amazing experience and challenge he had hoped for. The prologue was also a great familiarisation to the rules of the race. Riders must stay within two minutes of their partner for the entire race and this is closely monitored. There is also a maximum time for each stage; teams must finish within this time on every stage to be classed as an official finisher.

With the prologue stage of 27 kilometres and 750 vertical metres behind them, team PSC looked forward to the much harder stages with excitement.

The event has eight stages including the prologue and it took in some of the most stunning scenery and amazing challenges a mountain biker could hope for.

STAGE 1:

Saronsberg in Tulbagh – Saronsberg in Tulbagh

Distance: 89km

Climbing: 2,050m

Max stage time: 9 hours



Heading up the first big climb on stage 1 in the heat.

STAGE 2:

Saronsberg in Tulbagh – Saronsberg in Tulbagh

Distance: 104km

Climbing: 2,300m

Max stage time: 10 hours



Coming over the top of the ridge on the main climb on stage 2 after climbing for over an hour mainly on steep, rocky single track.

STAGE 3:

Saronsberg in Tulbagh – Worcester

Distance: 125km

Climbing: 1,900m

Max stage time: 10 hours



River crossing after a steep descent on stage 3.

STAGE 4:

Worcester – Worcester

Distance: 32km

Climbing: 800m

Max stage time: 3 hours



A fast open descent on the Worcester time trial.

STAGE 5:

Worcester – Oak Valley in the Elgin Valley

Distance: 143km

Climbing: 2,350m

Max stage time: 11 hours



Coming near to the top of Groenlandberg, the major climb in stage 5 which took over 1.5 hours to climb.

STAGE 6:

Oak Valley in the Elgin Valley – Oak Valley in the Elgin Valley

Distance: 128km

Climbing: 2,700m

Max stage time: 10 hours



Enjoying the narrow tracks on stage 6.

STAGE 7:

Oak Valley in the Elgin Valley – Lourensford Wine Estate

Distance: 59km

Climbing: 1,700m

Max stage time: 6.5 hours



Crossing the finish line for the final time.

FINALLY THE FINISH....

Stephen describes the conclusion of the event:

'Seeing the "five kilometres remaining" board on the last day, we rode the last five kilometres so fast we dropped the bunch we were riding with completely; it was so exciting to finally be at the finish where a crowd of 16,000 people were waiting to greet us.'

The Cape Epic challenge is most definitely not for the faint-hearted and represents an elite level of physical pursuit many aspire to but few achieve. PSC congratulates Stephen and Willie for their achievement – you did us proud!



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