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CHANGE A LIFER'S ON HUNT FOR ELUSIVE DUSI2C CROWN

The Valley of a Thousand Hills that plays host to the dusi2c multi-day mountain bike race is also the home of Martin Dreyer's RMB Change a Life Academy and for the three two-man teams that have been entered to get this elusive win on their home turf would be a dream come true.

The Change a Life academy has been a regular feature at the dusi2c and in the past have pushed four-time winner Andrew Hill and his various racing partners all the way to the finish at Blue Lagoon, however to get on the top step of the podium has been just out of reach.

One of the most consistent Change a Life pairings has been the Ndumiso Dontso/Sipho Kupiso combination. The partnership has finished third at the last two editions of the dusi2c, but the academy's best result came in 2015 when Mazwi Smimango and Bongumusa Zikhali finished second overall.



Having taken part together at the 2014 dusi2c, the RMB Change a Life Academy duo of Bongumusa Zikhali (right) and Sipho Kupiso (left) will line up on the start line as a team again in 2017 along with two other strong Change a Life duos when the race takes place from 10-11 June.

Photo: Anthony Grote/
Gameplan Media

Dontso and Kupiso will not be riding together in 2017, with the former pairing up with the strong Mboneni Ngcobo and Kupiso lining up with Bongumusa Zikhali with the third Change a Life team consisting of Mazwi Smimango and the little-known Scelo Mhlongo.

Of the three teams taking part, only one of the six riders, Scelo Mhlongo, did not taste Absa Cape Epic action this year.

"Scelo is actually the bus driver and has been riding so well recently that he has forced his way into the team," Martin Dreyer said.

"His hard work in training has been really impressive and he has shown that he is a really strong rider."

The Change a Life team have the added pressure of riding through the communities where they grew up, performing in front of friends and family, but Dreyer believes that this fires his team up and they want to impress the local support.

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"The guys get incredibly excited for the dusi2c every year because they are riding in their back garden, basically.

"They receive so much encouragement along the route that sometimes they might go out a bit too hard, but it's great to see them enjoying themselves.

"Unfortunately Siyanda (Masango) had to pull out after taking a tumble at the SA Marathon Champs but he is being replaced by Mazwi Smimango, who has come second at the dusi2c before.

"It just shows that there is no shortage of talent in the team," Dreyer added.

The combinations that Dreyer and the team have gone with are different from their usual set-up with a few of the partnerships exciting Dreyer.

"Mboneni (Ngcobo) and Ndimiso (Dontso) have never ridden together in a race but they are experienced riders and I am excited to see how they go together.

"Bongumusa and Sipho are really good friends which I think counts for a lot in a mountain bike race.

"I hope that they keep each other's best interests at heart during the race.

"Our last combination is the Mazwi and Scelo team. Scelo has done a few stage races before and has been really strong lately so they will be an exciting combination to watch," Dreyer mentioned.

The dusi2c starts at the Natal Canoe Club on the banks of the Msundusi River in Pietermaritzburg on June 10, the same place the FNB Dusi Canoe Marathon starts every year. The second stage takes riders from the overnight stop at Mfula Store, deep in the Valley of 1 000 Hills, to Durban's Blue Lagoon on June 11.

More information can be found at www.dusi2c.co.za

Source: Gameplan Media

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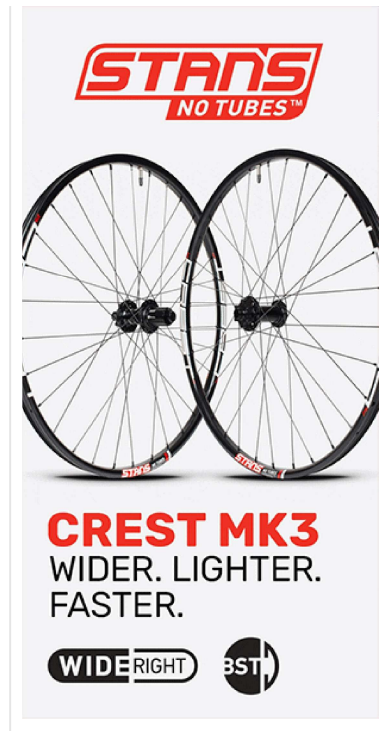
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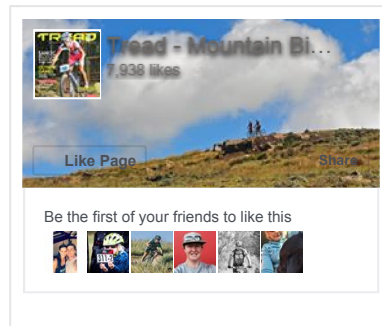
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