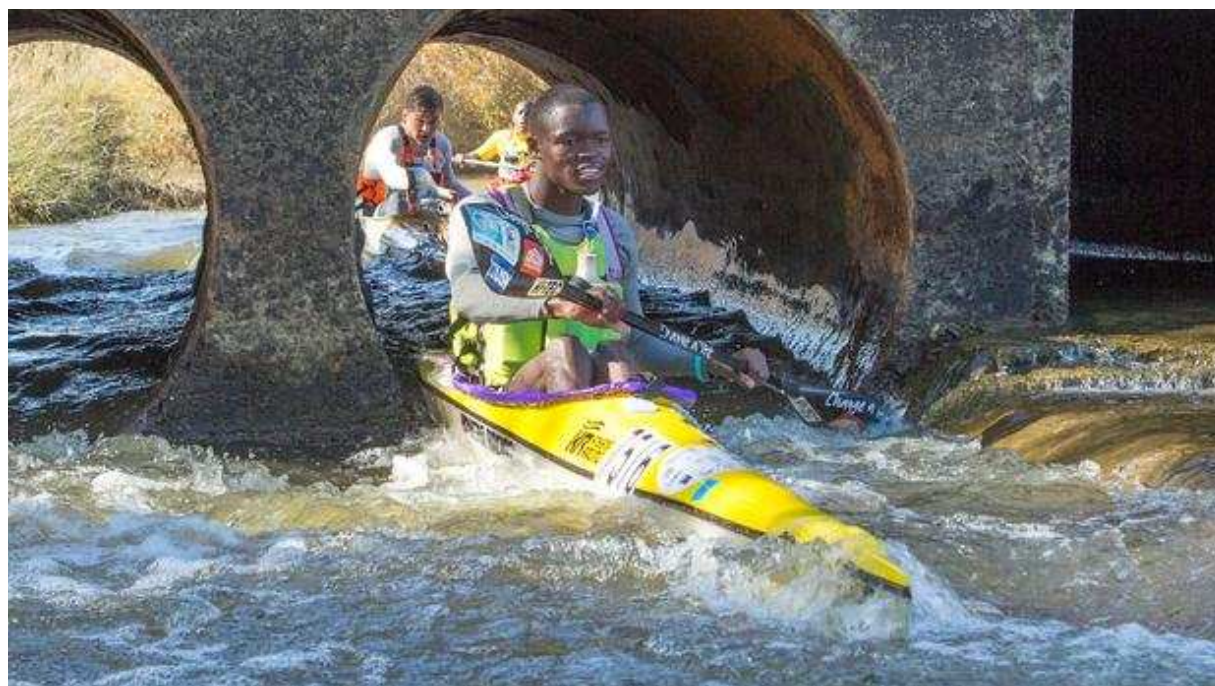


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Classifieds



*Mthobisi Cele from the Change a Life Academy finished fourth overall and won the Under 23 category at the recent Berg River Canoe Marathon. Picture: John Hishin/Gameplan Media*

The next generation of leaders from Martin Dreyer's Change a Life Academy showed their immense potential when three paddlers all finished in the top 10 at the recent Berg River Canoe Marathon in the Western Cape.

Conditions for this year's race were extremely tough - with a low water level greeting contestants taking on the four-day odyssey from Paarl to Velddrif on the West Coast.

This year's Non-Stop Dusi Canoe Marathon winners Mthobisi Cele and Mpilo Zondi were joined by promising Under 18 paddler Mvelo Ngidi and it was Cele who shone brightest winning the Under 23 category and finishing fourth overall.

Zondi was sixth and third Under 23 and Ngidi won the Under 18 category and sneaked into the top 10 overall, finishing 10th.

"I had high expectations but we didn't want to jinx anything talking about it," Dreyer said.

"We knew there was potential and the guys had put in so much work in training and were well prepared when the race came."

The race is usually 240km, however it was slightly shorter this year due to the low water level and water hyacinth blocks, but it remained one of the toughest Berg races in years.

“The Berg is unique in that there are so many other obstacles besides the water. Tree blocks are a huge problem and being able to negotiate yourself through these tree blocks is vital if you want to do well, but also making the right decisions when presented with multiple channel options,” said Dreyer.

Time invested in scouting the river had definitely helped the men from Change a Life this year.

In previous years Dreyer has sent a large contingent of paddlers to races outside of the province, however he took a different approach to the Berg this year and the more refined approach paid off.

“We only sent three guys this year and they flew down to Cape Town a week before the race and had a lot of time to prepare, whereas in the past the guys usually take the bus down, travelling for two days and get there a day before it starts.

“Change a Life just provided the foundation, they still had to go out and perform, which they did admirably,” he commented.

Seeing young talent confirm their potential after so much hard work was extremely satisfying for the whole team, said Dreyer.

“It’s great to see these younger guys stepping up and showing their talent in one of the toughest races in the country.

“Mthobisi and Mpilo have already committed to Dusi for next year which is exciting and to see an Under 18 like Mvelo do so well is hugely encouraging.

“I congratulated him on winning the Under 18 category, but his top 10 finish was far more impressive for me.” - Gameplan Media