


[Subscribe now >>](#)


Navigation


 You are here: [Home](#) > Ten minutes with Sbonelo Khwela

## Ten minutes with Sbonelo Khwela

 by Carli-Ann Furno on March 14, 2017 in [Interviews](#), [People](#)

### Sbonelo Khwela set on snatching up Dusi title

**Sbonelo Khwela** is a product of the Martin Dreyer [Change a Life Academy](#). Rising out of the Valley of a 1000 Hills, he has worked his way up to being one of South Africa's leading paddlers. After four [Non Stop Dusi](#) titles in a K2, his wife finally convinced him to make the change to a K1 in 2015. It wasn't long until he saw the reward of his decision, and just a year later became the first black man to take the Non Stop Dusi title. He hopes to do the same in the [FNB Dusi Canoe Marathon](#), and came painfully close when he finished second this year.



Sbonelo Khwela paddles during Day 2 of the 2017 Dusi Canoe Marathon, in KwaZulu Natal. Photo: Red Bull Content Pool.

#### What led you to make the change to a K1, especially after so many successful Non Stop Dusi races in a K2?

There were a few things. My wife always wanted me to do Non Stop in a K1, she used to encourage me to give it go all the time, because I had already won four of them in a K2 by that point. I was always scared to try it in a K1, especially if I'd think about a long day in the boat without anybody to chat with! There was also a guy I used to train with at Shongweni Dam, Mark Germiquet, who had already done five K1's. He kept pushing me from the side and played a big part in convincing me to try it too. In 2015 I gave it go and was so happy to finish second, so kept pursuing K1 from there. I realised that if Hank McGregor could do it in 2005 or Andy Birkett in 2012, then I could do it too. And so in 2016 I became the first black man to win the Non Stop in a K1, my wife was right!

**You now have your sights set on a K1 Dusi title. How did it feel to come so close this year when you crossed the finish line second?**

It made me even hungrier to come back and win it. I have been after this for a long time. In 2013 I came very close – I was leading on day one and two, but made a big mistake on day three. With only 10km to the finish I fell off my boat and the other guys managed to catch me. To have come second this year is really something special, so I'll keep pushing to go for that win.



Sbonelo Khwela runs during Day 3 of the 2017 Dusi Canoe Marathon. Photo: Red Bull Content Pool.

**You are extremely passionate about a multisport lifestyle and often talk about “life being too short for one sport”. What other adventure sports do you enjoy most?**

I love doing trail running. I did the Molweni Trail Run last year, it was 33km and I came third! I am so willing to do more of them. I also really look forward to getting into triathlons after paddling.

**How do you train to get the strength and cardiovascular balance that you need for this sport?**

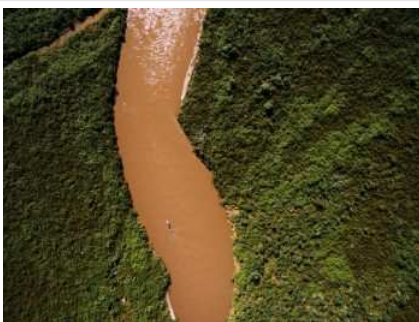
When I am training for Dusi, I focus on running without the boat on some days and then with the boat on other days. I paddle as often as I can and gym twice a week. I have a guy that helps me keep my training focused, especially to work on my core strength.



Sbonelo Khwela crosses the finish line on Day 3 of the 2017 Dusi Canoe Marathon, in KwaZulu Natal. Photo: Red Bull Content Pool.

**Where are your favourite spots to train at the moment?**

I love training at Shongweni Dam. It's close to my house, and I really like the view and atmosphere there – I'm surrounded by a mountain in the Valley of a 1000 Hills. It's easy to train for Dusi there because we have a dam for paddling and trails to practise running with the boat. I also like training on the Umsunduzi River. It's really different to train on a river than on a dam, and I get more challenging rapids, which makes it really fun to paddle. To be on the river where the Dusi happens is something special.



Sbonelo Khwela paddles during Day 2 of the 2017 Dusi Canoe Marathon, in KwaZulu Natal. Photo: Red Bull Content Pool.

**That leak on your boat during the Non Stop Dusi this year must have been frustrating. Tell us more about what that like.**

I really wasn't happy. Once I'd realised what was happening, I knew that there was no chance that I'd win. The guys were really close to me, and we all know that a K2 is faster than a K1 on flat water. I was the defending champion, and was so set on getting my sixth Non Stop win. But a race is a race, anything can happen. I can't complain about coming second to those guys, they'd been right there pushing for the

win the whole day.

**What do you feel you need to work on the most to be able to overtake guys like Andy at the next Dusi?**

I'm going to work harder on my paddling. Guys like Andy are some of the best paddlers in the world. I need to make sure that I balance the two – running and paddling. I worked hard on my paddling last year, and that's why I got the second. So I'm just going to keep going like I am, and put in everything that I have.

**Follow**

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Twitter](#)

**Comments**

0 Comments

Sort by Oldest



Add a comment...

Facebook Comments Plugin

**Other articles posted in this period**



**About Carli-Ann Furno**

[View all posts by Carli-Ann Furno →](#)

**Subscribe**

Subscribe to our e-mail newsletter to receive updates.

E-mail

Submit

**Related Posts:**

- [OCR training: how to find the balance between strength and running](#)
- [Smart hydration for endurance athletes](#)
- [The X-Berg Challenge: run, mountain bike and paraglide](#)
- [Chris Bertish passes halfway on Transatlantic SUP Crossing](#)
- [Team Sanlam Painted Wolf fourth at 2016 Adventure Racing World Series](#)

[Dusi Canoe Marathon, Non-stop Dusi, SA paddlers, Sbonelo Khwela, slider](#)



Be the first of your friends to like this



TRAIL

Read anytime and anywhere on your



**Subscribe to TRAIL Mail**

Email Address


First Name


[View previous campaigns.](#)


**Partner promotion**



POPULAR LATEST TAGS

- 

**Ten minutes with Sbonelo Khwela**  
MARCH 14, 2017
- 

**Mudman Hermannsburg 2017 results**  
FEBRUARY 22, 2017
- 

**Survive the six toughest Cape Cycle Tour climbs**  
MARCH 1, 2017

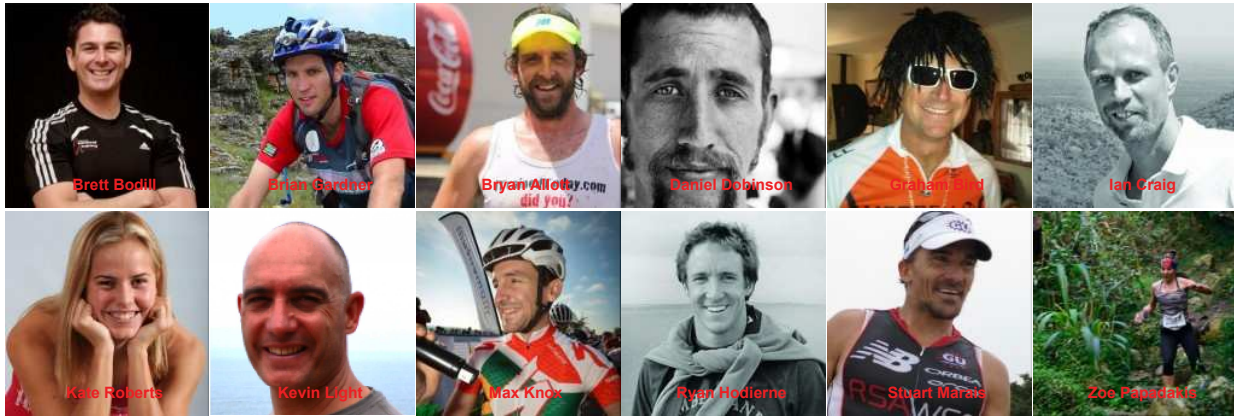


728x90 banner 3

728x90 banner 2

---

Contributors



---

© 2017 Go Multi magazine. All Rights Reserved.