






The paddler with a hunger to win that won't be watered down

November 18, 2017



Time seemed to slow as Sbonelo Khwela's mind went into overdrive, managing his adrenaline and focusing on the notoriously tricky pumphouse weir rapid ahead. He'd had the lead of the 2013 K1 Dusi Canoe Marathon since setting record pace on day one. As he approached the home straight on the third and final day, Khwela was protecting a two-minute advantage over the field with everything he had. Breathing deeply, he committed to the swirling current. It was over in an instant. Khwela found himself under water among the rocks, his shot at glory swept away.

He finished third, a bittersweet podium position after having victory in his sights. Khwela returned the following year to claim gold in the K2 division with compatriot Andy Birkett, but knows he will remain restless until he hangs the singles gold around his neck. The KwaZulu-Natal local grew up in the valley alongside the waters that host the world's most epic canoeing ultra marathon, developing a deep respect and understanding for its course. Khwela spent years

 watching the sport's elite fight through the ruthlessly long stretches and vicious rapids of the Msunduzi and Umgeni rivers, forming a vision of himself one day conquering the Dusi.  

“Canoeing has taught me passion, trust and a hunger to win,” he says. A product of the Martin Dreyer Change a Life Academy, Khwela is considered part of the ‘Fantastic Four’ – South Africa’s top four paddlers. Though his dream of taking first prize in the Dusi’s K1 category has eluded him in twelve attempts, Khwela has moved closer with each effort. This year he finished second behind Birkett, who is now a seven-time champion. Khwela believes his day will come, and hopes that his rise to the top of the sport inspires more children from rural areas to get involved in water sports.

 Facebook

PREVIOUS

We can't change the history of gang violence, but we can make gangs history

November 19, 2017

NEXT

Finding purpose in a wasteland, South Africa's next knockout comedian, and an a cappella prodigy

November 17, 2017

[ABOUT](#) [SUBMIT](#) [OUR PARTNER](#) [SUBSCRIBE](#) [CONTACT](#)





Copyright © 2016-2017 Ginkgo Agency (Pty) Ltd. All Rights Reserved.

[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Cookie Policy](#)