

Team Toyota cycling team - ready for the challenge of this year's ABSA Cape Epic

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The Toyota team of committed cyclists and determined celebrities are ready for the most gruelling stage race the Southern Hemisphere has to offer - the ABSA Cape Epic.



Toyota, in their fourth year of competing, believe that they have a diverse and enthusiastic team. The team also has the advantage of supremely fit Jeremy Thompson (ex-Sharks rugby player) as well as the ever-determined, ex-Bafana Bafana star, Shaun Bartlett. Adding to this string of sports stars, is the ever-accomplished Michael Mol, a doctor and celebrity *Top Billing* presenter, whose newly-learnt mountain biking skills should not be underestimated.



Ensuring that he is 100% behind his brand, Toyota SA Senior Vice President Sales and Marketing, Andrew Kirby, will be cycling the race with his wife and veteran cyclist, Cindi. "The Toyota brand is a supporter of South African sport and I am honoured that I am able to partake in a race of this calibre. This will be my second year participating in the race and I am looking forward to the opportunity of experiencing the race with my wife. We are hoping to repeat last year's success and have every one of the Toyota team finish the race."



Teamwork is vital ingredient to success, comments Mr Kirby: "Perhaps the greatest race offering is that of teamwork. Individuals who pair up in an attempt to strengthen their challenge are faced with a painstaking eight-day trial of broken bikes, injuries and fatigue.

"It is in this light, that we felt that the Toyota brand would benefit by association. At Toyota, we pride ourselves on reliability, quality and durability - our vehicles do not give up, and neither will we. Our brand is one of teamwork - we know what needs to be done, what preparation will see to it that the job gets done, and what value add is

required to ensure that we race through to the finish line in one piece. The same can be applied to each and every cyclist out there."

As the Official Vehicle Supplier of the ABSA Cape Epic, the team members have focused heavily on the fitness and mental aspects of the race, undergoing an intensive training camp just last weekend. The camp focused on all aspects of training for the race, including nutrition classes, core strength training and even what to pack for the race.

Shaun Bartlett expresses his excitement: "I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and look forward to taking on Mark Fish in the eight-day challenge! My training has gone well and I have most certainly learnt a range of things from stretches, cooling down and minimising muscle fatigue. I look forward to seeing friends and partners joining forces and overcoming all that this race will throw at them. If it is the last thing that I do, it is to get to that finish line, even if it means carrying my bike!"

The remaining four team members consists of Amabubesi (having completed three races) riders Danie Smit and partner Kobie Pruis, now riding in their fifth consecutive Absa Cape Epic Epic. Fellow Toyota employee John Thomson and partner Duncan Bowman will also be competing for the third time and their Amabubesi positions.

As one of the few women cyclists on the race and the only Team Toyota woman, Cindi is looking forward to getting back to her full strength after a severe injury sustained from last year's Absa Cape Epic training camp. "My training intensity has slowly increased and together with my husband we have done some solid long slow distances over Christmas in the Eastern Cape."

"Whatever our results are, we know that as a team we will endeavour to enjoy every day and challenge ourselves to the maximum," concludes Mr Kirby.

Team Toyota:

Team 1: Danie Smit & Kobie Pruis

Team 2: John Thomson & Duncan Bowman

Team 3: Andrew Kirby & Cindi Kirby

Team 4: Michael Mol & Jeremy Thomson

Team 5: Shaun Bartlett & Bruce Diesel

An additional 80 Toyota Cyclelab members will be participating in the Cape Epic as well and hosted by Toyota at every finish line.

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