

Daredevils take male cancer fight to the streets in Speedos

By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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It's that time of year again, when men don purple Speedos and storm the streets in aid of male cancer awareness. Warwick Bloom, marketing communications manager at Hollard and Lucy Balona, head of marketing and communication at Cansa, run us through what to expect from the 2017 Hollard Daredevil Run.

The annual run, which has been taking place since 2009, kicks off at 3pm tomorrow, 24 March 2017 – it's a literal 'kick off' as the male runners (men and boys of any age may participate, provided they wear the obligatory purple Speedo) will follow a 5km route from Zoo Lake in Johannesburg, with satellite venues at the Green Point Salesian Football Club in Cape Town, College Rovers Rugby Club at Kings Park Stadium in Durban and Government Boulevard in Mbombela.

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Wondering what to do next Friday? Get your squad together, put on some purple Speedos and Run Cancer Outta Town! #WozaBozza #DaredevilRun2017 Enter using the link in our bio!

A post shared by Hollard Daredevil Run (@daredevil_run) on Mar 16, 2017 at 11:09pm PDT

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While the run has a remarkably positive impact on cancer awareness around the country, statistics indicate a frighteningly high increase in male cancer incidences in South Africa. Research from the National Cancer Registry shows there has been a 32% increase in prostate cancer cases in the past year alone, with one in 19 men at risk of developing prostate cancer in their lifetime.

Luckily testicular cancer and most other cancers can be treated if they are detected early enough.

That's why the Hollard Daredevil Run works with Cansa to promote early and routine testing for the most prevalent forms of male cancer in South Africa, while also showing men and boys alike that it's easier to run in a Speedo than it is to fight cancer.

I spoke to Lucy Balona, head of marketing and communication at Cansa, about some of her most memorable experiences of the Hollard Daredevil Run over the past eight years:

■ **Talk us through the importance of highlighting something as serious as cancer in such a fun and quirky way.**

Balona: As cancer affects one in four of us in South Africa, it's important for organisations to find ways to convey health messages that resonate with people and force them to sit up and take notice. This campaign is impactful and attracts the attention of the audiences that we're trying to reach and educate. The Hollard Daredevil Run challenges men to do something fun and daring – to wear a tiny piece of clothing and run 5km in traffic on a Friday afternoon.

However, the main reason for the run is about raising awareness and understanding the different cancers that affect men of all ages. It's a campaign that 'cuts through the clutter' of conventional events. When men register, those who are 40 years or older can get a free Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) test. On the day, our Cansa team also provide cancer education as well as free sunscreen, so we are helping in educating men to be sun-smart to lower their cancer risk.

■ **List a few of your favourite moments from Daredevil Runs gone by.**

Balona: I love that the run attracts men from all walks of life, and of all shapes and sizes, and is not limited to only good looking men in good shape. I've also seen fathers arrive with their sons to take part, which shows that we're getting the right health messaging across to family members, too. This is valuable, as the cancer risk is higher if a family member has been diagnosed with cancer. It's also great to see so many women on the side lines showing support for their men, who are taking part.



Get ready, set, go!

There have been so many memorable moments over the years, but I specifically remember seeing a young disabled man being pushed in his wheelchair by his friends and I recall being so amazed that he wanted to be part of this campaign. On another occasion, there was a young man carrying a sign which read, 'Running for my dad and aunt', which I think speaks volumes about the impact of this event. It encourages guys to take part and show support for cancer survivors and those currently living with cancer, and is also as a way to remember those who have passed on due to cancer. Now, what other event can generate that type of emotional connection and participation?

■ **Tell us about the ManVan initiative and how it literally gets the message across the country.**

Balona The ManVan is a mobile health clinic that travels to urban and rural areas to provide screening, health checks and care and support outreach programmes for prostate and testicular awareness sessions, with proceeds from the Hollard Daredevil Run going toward funding this mobile clinic for the year.



The ManVan.

The Hollard ManVan helps us reach more men across the country, travelling to Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban – in 2016, we were able to reach and screen an impressive 8,112 men, which is an incredible achievement for Cansa.

■ **What's the result of the annual campaign, both in terms of awareness and donations?**

Balona: The result has been very positive on both accounts. For instance, the number of men participating increases each year, especially in the Johannesburg venue. From an awareness standpoint, there has been specific focus on getting cancer messaging across, which has been immensely helpful to Cansa in showing men why they should participate. Donated income has also increased steadily, which has helped us in establishing the Hollard ManVan – over R400,000 was raised in 2016!

Those are certainly results to celebrate. Warwick Bloom, marketing communications manager at Hollard was also happy to provide insight into Hollard's involvement with the event and some of his own favourite moments:

■ **Explain Hollard's sponsorship of the annual Daredevil Run and what resonates with the brand.**

Bloom: Although Hollard only officially became the sponsor of the Daredevil Run in 2015, we've been a part of the Run since the first official event took place in the colours of Etana, a subsidiary of Hollard's which was eventually re-absorbed into the business in 2014. The event is a fun run that aims to raise awareness of male-specific cancers, an approach which fits so well with our culture – we take what we do extremely seriously, but we try not to take ourselves quite as seriously.



Hollardites, proud to be part of the Daredevil Run.

The spectacle of thousands of men running through rush hour traffic wearing nothing but the official Daredevil Speedo is truly a sight to behold, but the run provides a fantastic platform to share some incredibly important information – that cancer claims more male victims than it should due to a lack of awareness, and that testicular and prostate cancer in particular can be beaten through early detection and treatment.

This message resonates so perfectly with our purpose, which is to enable more people to create and secure a better future. Becoming more aware of these cancers enables men (and the women who love them) to know the signs and symptoms to look out for, and to hopefully make better decisions regarding when to seek advice and medical help.

■ ***How has the Daredevil Run grown and changed over the years?***

Bloom: The early Daredevil Runs were quite organic in nature, with pop-up events taking place around the country. As the numbers, have grown (from about 200 in the first official year to more than 5,000 men in 2016) we've had to try and consolidate the smaller events and bring a level of control and professionalism to each of the venues, because health and safety regulations have also changed, and It's not easy to negotiate a rush hour traffic stoppage in major South African cities! We've also improved the registration and Speedo collection processes, as well as the after-run hospitality to ensure a smoother process.

It's been very rewarding to see more and more men take up the challenge of running 5km in a Speedo to raise awareness of male cancers – it takes a lot more guts than people understand to strip down to the bare essentials and run through peak hour traffic! Of course, it's nothing when compared to the bravery needed to face cancer, and the growth of the event has brought us into contact with more and more families who have been directly impacted by testicular and prostate cancer.



Advice and information aplenty.

However, the exponential growth in media coverage of men's cancer during the build-up to the run and afterwards has been one of the most exciting aspects of the run. The South African media deserve a huge amount of credit for the way that they have taken the messages behind the run to heart, and for all of the assistance they have provided in ensuring those messages are heard. Through the media, the number of people that have seen messages about how and when to test for testicular and prostate cancer has grown more than a hundred-fold since the run started.

❏ **List a few of your favourite moments from Daredevil Runs gone by.**

Bloom: One of my favourite moments in the history of the Daredevil Run is definitely seeing the reactions of drivers on Jan Smuts Avenue in Parktown, as thousands of purple Speedo-clad men of all colours, shapes and sizes emerge from one of the side streets into the main stream of traffic and start weaving their way down the hill towards Zoo Lake. People are generally startled at first, and then, once they realise what is happening, just smile (and occasionally hoot) as they take in the madness of it all.

It's also amusing to see men arrive at the race for the first time – slightly sheepish and unsure of themselves as they generally haven't previously appeared in public wearing so little. However, once they realise they're just another purple Speedo among hundreds and that they're part of something bigger than themselves, the initial shyness disappears and a real sense of pride and achievement starts to filter through. By the end of the event, you can't get them to put their clothes back on!

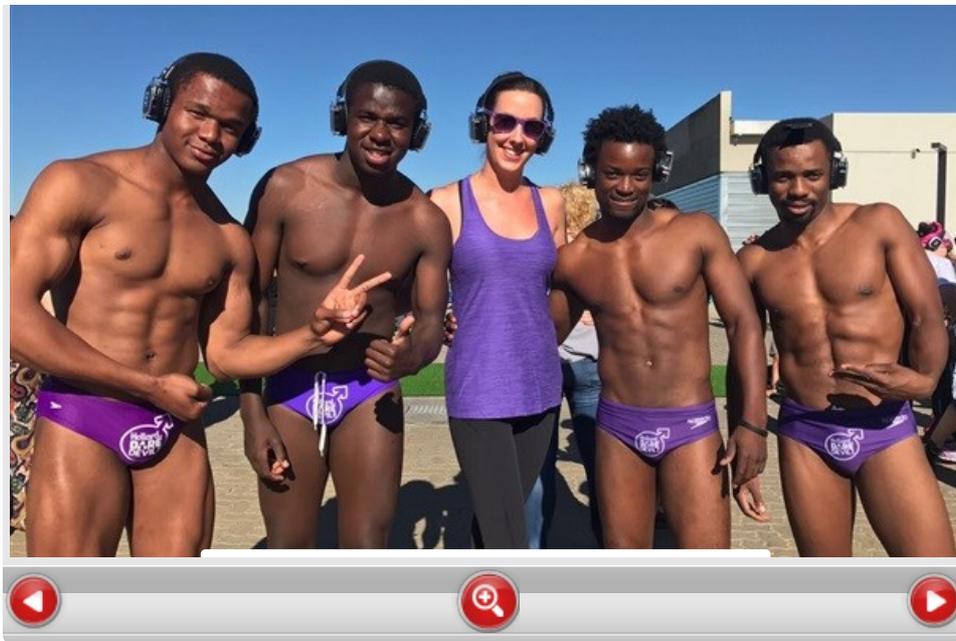
Of course, the best moment is handing over the funds raised to organisations like the Cancer Association of South Africa (Cansa), who do so much fantastic work throughout the year in raising cancer awareness and providing support to thousands of South Africans affected by the disease.

❏ **Any particular reason why the run is on a Friday afternoon?**

Bloom: We want to maximise the visual impact of the run, but we also acknowledge that being stuck in rush hour traffic isn't always fun. We figured that patience is likely to be higher and tempers less frayed on a Friday afternoon, than on any other day of the week. Also, because many of our Daredevils are employees, we wanted to host the event when it would be possible for them to secure some time away from the office.

And finally, what could possibly be more rewarding than a Friday afternoon run for a good cause, followed by drinks and a chat with hundreds of like-minded Daredevils?





There's an extra leg of fun this year as Secret Sunrise is collaborating with what they call "the ballsiest event of the year", with the next Secret Sunrise event taking place at Zoo Lake in Johannesburg from 5:30pm after the run. Like-minded individuals and so-called "radical self-expression Secret Sunrisers" will join in the fun for the good cause by hosting a yoga session for all those who have gathered to support the men – yes, females and family members are welcome – in fact, the more the merrier as 10% of all Secret Sunrise proceeds going to the Prostate Cancer Foundation, while all proceeds from the run will be donated to Cansa to help fund cancer awareness programmes and testing across South Africa.

I can't think of a worthier cause to kick off the weekend! If you've not yet registered and would like to participate in the run or challenge a friend, relative or colleague to join you in running cancer "clean out of town", go to www.daredevilrun.com to register. To participate in the post-run Secret Sunrise event, you can purchase tickets from [Nutickets](#) at R125 for adults and R75 for students and children under 12. You can also join in for the free yoga class on the day and [click here](#) to make donations to the cause.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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