

MEERKAT MOUNTAIN BIKE CHALLENGE

Report by Chanel Rood

Conti Meerkat Challenge Organiser and SASP Sport EC Committee member



CHANEL ROOD (left) SASP SPORT EC committee member and Marieke Roux

On 23 April 2016 the SASP was represented well at a new mountain bike race called the Meerkat Challenge. This was held from Crossways Country Kitchen between Port Elizabeth and Jeffreys Bay. The Conti Meerkat Challenge consisted of 2 tough forest rides, a 30km and 60km ride both with lots of climbing, as well as a 5km Kid's fun ride. This is a charity race to raise funds for a children's home in Korsten, Port Elizabeth, called Sinenthemba.

The Meerkat Challenge was started as a memorial race to pay tribute to a good friend, Sonnica Kensley, who sadly passed away in a cycling accident in 2015 after being run over by a truck outside of P.E. Sonnica and her husband, Clayton, were training for the Trans Elands MTB marathon, they were both hit by the truck and Clayton survived the accident. My racing partner, Marieke Roux and I went on to finish the Trans Elands on 17 May 2015, 3 weeks after the accident. I started planning the

race and met up with Johan Gerryts from Fattraks MTB club and liaised with them to organize the race. I am full time physiotherapist and needed some advice on organising a mountain bike race!

Sonnica was a Biokeneticist's in Port Elizabeth, having started a practise at St Georges Hospital with her partner Leani Horne. She was really a light in the lives of all who knew her and adored by all her patients. She was a good friend of mine. Her sister Veronique Beets is also a physiotherapist in the Port Elizabeth area, practising at Woodridge College.

Why name it Meerkat Challenge? That was our nickname for Sonnica as she had a very upright posture on the bike, looking like a little Meerkat, climbing any hill without even looking tired.

Two Physiotherapists from P.E volunteered to work at the race to assist the tired legs after the race. A huge thank you to Robyn Jacobs and Marelize Dalton who offered their services completely free of charge. Before starting their physio duties, they also helped to marshal on the kiddies race. They even helped clearing the route markers off the 5km route after the day's activities.

The SASP SPORT gazebo was a very busy zone as the riders stood in line to get their massages done or get some advice to deal with minor injuries from the race.

We had a lovely race day on 23 April 2016 with 241 riders between the 30km and 60km route. A good 50 kids, including Veronique's 3 year old twins, Grace and Rebecca took part in the kids race. Some parents also joined in, cruising with the kids. Sonnica's husband Clayton and her father, Norman Skinner finished the 60km race with some of her close friends. Veronique's husband, Grant rode the 30km. The whole race was a very special experience and we managed to raise some funds for Sinenthemba, the Children's Home in Korsten, Port Elizabeth. Our dream is to start a cycling program with the kids.

Once again a huge thank you to Robyn and Marelize for helping us on the day to make this special event even more special and get the SASP visibility out there!