

ROSSOUW TO DEFEND TITLE AT NELSON'S CREEK THREE-DAY STAGE RACE

One of South Africa's top mountain bikers, Jacques Rossouw, will return to the Boland in September to defend his title at the action-packed Nelson's Creek Mountain bike Challenge running from 11 till 13 September 2009.

Rossouw was crowned champion at the inaugural event in 2008 when he completed the three-day stage race in an impressive combined time of 08hours21minutes10seconds. According to Rossouw, it has taken him four years to recover from glandular fever combined with over-training syndrome. He is, however back on his bike and ready for the Nelson's Creek Challenge. "As a competitor my strengths lie in the fact that I am a steep climber, a power climber, a time trailer, great at descends and strong on attack. I can do just about anything I put my mind to. I am currently training for the 2010 season, when I will be returning to the life of a professional cyclist. So every event that I compete in from now till then will be done with no interference to my training. This means no resting for events, except for Nelson's Creek, that is, which is a challenge. I want to cycle at 100% heart rate for the entire three days, I can't wait," says Rossouw. Other top competitors to look out for include Petrus Malherbe, Erik Kleinhans, Max Knox and Brandon Stewart in the men's category and Elmiën Stander in the female's category.

Bikers taking on the Nelson's Creek Challenge will have to complete a combined distance of 235km over the three days. Friday's stage is 65km, while Saturday's stage is 85 km and Sunday's stage 80km. The stages explore the full scenic diversity of the Boland as the routes take bikers through a network of farm roads in Agter Paarl, the rolling hills of the Wellington basin, single-track sections at the foot of Groenberg mountain and the undulating wheat fields and vineyards of the Paardeberg. The top three male and female participants with the best overall times for the three days' riding will share a R26 000 prize pot.

This year's action-packed festival promises something for every MTB enthusiast from rookies to veterans and spectators can anticipate loads of fun. Each day's trails will start and finish at the beautiful Nelson Wine Estate. Riders can decide whether they want to participate on all three days or if they only want to ride on one day and select the distance that best suits their abilities. Beginners and novices can tackle the shorter loops of 15km – 18 km on fairly flat terrain, while intermediate riders can enjoy the fast 32km or 35 km routes through the rolling countryside. More experienced bikers can try the longer 50km and 55km trails, which contain a couple of challenging surprises. The races will start at 13h00 on Friday and 08h30 on Saturday and Sunday.

Spectators can get a bird's eye view of the action during a fun Night Ride on Friday and the crowd-pleasing DualX on Saturday afternoon. Fun wine tastings, fabulous farm stalls and beautiful scenery will ensure a weekend of entertainment for the whole family. In the evenings, competitors and spectators can enjoy a slide show of the day's riding action, movies, kids' entertainment and much more. Camping facilities with 700 camping spots are available for making the event a weekend get-away.

For more information and pre-entries, visit www.mtbfestival.co.za, email theteam@dirtopia.co.za or call the Dirtopia Trail Centre on 021-8844752.