

## **Ben Melt Swanepoel**

### **Back on the horse!** **Induna MTN marathon series #3, Hazyview**

The saying goes that if you fall off a horse, get straight back on. Sage advice, but unfortunately I needed 3 months for my elbow to heal before I could 'mount my horse' again. As most of you know, I fell on stage 1 of this year's Sani 2 C mtb stage race, back in February, and broke my elbow.

After 3 months out of the mountainbike racing scene due to this injury, I was pretty apprehensive at the start of the 2009 edition of the Induna Adventures marathon race on Saturday (13 June). If coming back from injury wasn't enough, it would also be the first time that I would compete in the new ultra distance marathon format of racing. This meant the Elite men were to race over a distance of 105km on a course consisting of one 45km lap and two loops of a 30km lap.

As usual the Lowveld winter weather was just amazing and after a week of rain, we started the race in glorious sunshine. The route also didn't disappoint and was a real mountainbiker's delight. Jaco Lubbe and his team from Induna Adventures made sure the course was filled with singletrack, jeep track, quad trails and water crossings. One had to be extremely concentrated just to stay on the bike, never mind racing the competition!

Max Knox (DCM Chrome) took it out hard from the start gaining a small lead up the first climb of the day. Behind him a group formed containing Knox's team mate Johnny Kritzinger, MTN riders Kevin Evans, David George and Trust, as well as Garmin team members Filip Buys, Marc Bassingthwaighte and Mannie Heymans. Renay Goustra (GT) also hung on to the group for a while, but once he was dropped I was left as the only individual rider in the group as we finished the first 45km loop.

At the feed zone, (45km) I stopped to fill my bottles and lost contact with the group. From there I basically time trialled on my own until I reached the finish line about 3hours later.

Up front Knox had some mechanical issues and some serious chainsuck cost him a good result on the day. The MTN riders attacked the group in tandem which allowed Evans to get away up the steepest climb of the day. The Garmin riders chased and closed the gap on the following downhills, but Evans hung on for the victory ahead of Marc Bassingthwaighte and Mannie Heymans. David George was 4<sup>th</sup> with Max Knox in 5<sup>th</sup> and Kritzinger in 6<sup>th</sup>. I managed to pass Filip Buys somewhere as he also suffered some mechanical troubles, handing me 7<sup>th</sup> for my first race back. In a race of this distance and intensity you have to rely heavily on your equipment and my Shimano XTR equipped Specialized Stumpjumper did a perfect job on the day.

Now that the ice is broken and I'm back in racing, I really look forward to the rest of the season.

It somehow feels good to be back on this horse which can sometimes change into a young, wild colt and throw you like a drunken rodeo cowboy!

The old cliché goes: 'You get to know your true friends in tough times!'

Thanks for everyone who has stuck by me and supported me through my injury and subsequent rehab.

I hope to see you guys out there on the trails!

As always, happy trails!

Melt