

CYCLING

# Cough up and pedal



## Sven Lünsche sweats with corporate SA on the Change a Life cycle tour

**The midday heat in Zambia** has reached 40°C and it is still about 40 km to the Victoria Falls Hotel in Zimbabwe, our finish. But all 81 participants are determined to complete the punishing 225 km and last leg of October's three-day, four-country Change a Life cycle tour.

Not all make it — heat stroke and mechanical failures take their toll. And many participants have never ridden more than 200 km in a day. It's clearly not a problem for the first group of 20 riders, led by SA's Mr Cycling, Andrew McLean — riding on a tandem with his wife, Alison — and Duzi king Martin Dreyer, who drag JCI CEO Peter Gray every one of the 450 km of the tour.

Even the next two groups of about 20 cyclists each — including Sun International CEO David Coutts-Trotter, Old Mutual finance director Diane Radley, Torque IT CEO Mthunzi Mdwaba and JSE CEO Russell Loubser — finish the gruelling day in relatively good time. Only the top half manage to reach the Victoria Falls bridge before sunset.

But it is the last group — the so-called beginners — who steal the show. Having left Katima Mulilo in Namibia just after

6 am, they finally trundle into the Victoria Falls Hotel after 9 pm. They receive a rousing welcome from the other riders, but a staggering 15 hours in the saddle is more than most of them have previously spent in total on their bikes.

It takes grit and determination. JSE deputy CEO Nicky Newton-King originally rides with one of the intermediate groups, but her bicycle gets damaged when it blows off one of the support bakkies while being repaired for a puncture. Desperately trying to finish, she finally uses the bike of a participant in the beginners' group who suffered sunstroke earlier on.

Starting in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, the tour — sponsored by Computershare — winds its way along the Zambezi River valley, westwards for 85 km through the Zambezi National Park to the banks of the Chobe River in Botswana.

On the second day, the road leads to Namibia's Caprivi Strip, a distance of 124 km, which includes cycling through the Chobe National Park, where some report spotting elephants as well as rare roan and sable antelope.

Finally, the 225 km killer route, from Katima Malilo through Zambia, along

the north bank of the Zambezi, back to Victoria Falls. It isn't only the heat that takes its toll — head winds and hills in the later stages of the day are punishing. The experience of group leaders — many of them top-class SA cyclists — makes a big difference. By riding in an organised peloton — with the stronger riders up front — no rider is left behind.

### No pain, no gain

Each cyclist donated R20 000 to participate, an amount matched by the global head office of Computershare. Altogether R4m was raised, which Computershare CEO Stan Lorge says will be used to support victims of crime and fund crime-prevention initiatives.

The initiative took shape last year, when Computershare executive Mike Thomson was killed during a robbery at his home. "Ask any company in SA how many of its employees have been

affected by crime and you'll find a large number," says Lorge. "We needed to do something and this initiative we believe will make a difference in combating crime. Already the Change a Life event has raised more funds for charity than other, similar events in SA," he adds.

Two initiatives will receive the bulk of this year's funding: forensic technology, which will assist police in tracking down criminals; and a canoe school run by Dreyer in the Duzi River valley to identify young sporting talent.

Corporate SA was generous in its support. Executives from RMB, Macsteel, Toyota and Standard Bank participated, while medium-sized companies such as Viva Formwork & Scaffolding and Fleet Steel funded the participation of their managers and customers.

The complex logistics were flawlessly handled by staff from Computershare and Wilderness Safaris, whose experience in managing the annual Tour de Kruger paid dividends.

Next year's tour will take a different route and form. Rovos Rail has come in as a partner and riders will overnight on the famous train while cycling during the day in various parts of Mpumalanga. ■