KZN Mountian Biking www.kznmtb.co.za

Newsletter #10- November 2026



KZN XCO CHAMPS – Cascades Pmb
18th October 2026

From the Saddle

As we move into the final stretch of the 2026 season, many riders will already be starting to enjoy some well-earned downtime, while others still have a few exciting events circled on their calendars. With ALS of Niks and the Sani Seeker still to come, there is plenty of mountain biking action left before we close the chapter on another memorable year.

One of the highlights of the past few weeks for me was having the privilege of supporting our KZN Schools team at the SA Inter-Schools and Inter-Provincial National Finals, hosted by the Western Cape at Paul Roos Gymnasium and the challenging Coetzenburg trails. The course represented a significant step up from the type of terrain typically encountered in schools mountain biking, yet our riders rose to the occasion magnificently. Our primary school team achieved a historic milestone by finishing as the 3rd-ranked province, earning KZN's first-ever podium placing in the event. Our high school team finished an impressive 4th overall, with particularly strong performances in the older age categories.

While those results are certainly worth celebrating, what made me most proud was something that cannot be measured on a results sheet. KZN was awarded the Team Spirit Award in both the Primary and High School competitions, and those awards were never in doubt. They reflect the values that define our mountain biking community: teamwork, respect, encouragement and a genuine passion for the sport.

When we consider the depth of numbers available to larger provinces such as Gauteng and the Western Cape, KZN's performances in the SA schools finals, National XCC/XCO series and SA MTB team selection become even more remarkable.

We continue to compete toe-to-toe with the country's biggest cycling regions, and I believe much of that success stems from the incredible environment we are fortunate enough to enjoy.

We have some of the best trails, venues and riding terrain in the country. The quality of riding challenges us to improve, while the strength of our community fosters mutual respect, healthy competition and lasting friendships.

I know many of you have also been following Michael Foster's recovery journey. It has been encouraging to see the progress he continues to make, and we remain hopeful that his positive trajectory will continue. We look forward to the day he is back home, back on his bike and planning his return to racing. As always, these things happen in God's time, and we continue to wish Michael and his family strength and encouragement along the way.

As another season draws to a close, I would like to thank every rider, parent, coach, volunteer, official, sponsor and organiser who has contributed to mountain biking in KwaZulu-Natal during 2026. Your passion and commitment are what make this community so special.

Thank you for being part of the KZN MTB family and I look forward to seeing you all back on the trails in 2027.

Andrew Mackinnon
Chairperson
KZN MTB Committee

email: chair@kznmtb.co.za

The delayed KZN XCO Championships finally took place on 18 October at Cascades and one of the highlights was welcoming more than 30 riders to their very first XCO event, either in their age-group races or the Rookie category for Nippers and Sprogs. The Rookie Events were contested on the same course as the Nippers and Sprogs, provided an ideal introduction to cross-country racing for riders who enjoyed the KZN Schools Series. It was wonderful to see so many new faces, and we look forward to welcoming them back to the start line in 2027.

The KZN trail building crew gave us 2 great courses. The Rookies, Sprogs and Nippers tackled their own dedicated courses, whilst the Sub-Junior through to Grand Master riders took on the long course featuring new features and plenty of technical and physical challenges.

Off the bike, a skills area kept riders entertained throughout the day, while a variety of food and beverage vendors ensured nobody went hungry. New vendors, Milky Lane Ice Creams and The Cure House, proved particularly popular in the spring heat, while The People's Coffee Company kept everyone well fuelled with excellent coffee.

Congratulations to all our newly crowned KZN Champions, who received Bendworx bike stands, while every rider went home with a Revite goodie bag.



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2026 KZN ANNUAL PRIZE GIVING AND AWARDS

On Friday, 6 November, the KZN MTB community gathered at Shongweni Club for an evening of celebration, recognition and camaraderie as we reflected on the achievements of our riders throughout the 2026 season.

It was a fun-filled occasion, bringing together riders, families, officials, sponsors and supporters to acknowledge the hard work, dedication and success achieved across all disciplines of the sport. The evening kicked off with a warm welcome by the KZN MTB Chairman, Andrew McKinnon, and a video greeting from Mike Foster, who was unable to join us in person.

During the evening, riders received their Gold, Silver and Bronze Certificates and awards for outstanding performances at provincial and national level in XCO, XCM and Gravel racing, as well as recognition through South African and provincial colour awards. We thank Nutritech for their support in providing samples for our riders to take home and enjoy.

The achievements of our KZN Super Classics Series competitors were also celebrated, with riders who finished in the top 3 of their respective categories acknowledged, along with 6 riders who successfully completed all 7 of the series events. The KZN Super Classic Series will return in 2027, and will be joined by a brand-new KZN Gravel Series, creating even more opportunities for riders to compete and enjoy some of our province's best events.

Several of our special awards, most improved rider, young gun rider and rider of the year, were awarded via public voting process, with the votes in many categories being extremely close, reflecting the calibre of the nominated riders. The other awards were based on performance, and again many categories it was hard to select only a single rider to award. Each special award winner was presented with a Bendworx bike stand and, as several winners were not able to attend due to racing commitments many were awarded via video presentations..

For those who were unable to attend the awards evening, certificates have been distributed via local riding communities or sent electronically.











DID YOU KNOW ?

There were 68 days of racing in KZN this year (63 MTB and 5 Road)

South Africa came, saw, and conquered at the 14th edition of the African Continental Cycling Championships. Over six days, 250 athletes representing over 30 African nations gathered in Kisumu – Kenya's third city – for the 2026 African Continental Cycling Championships. South Africa left the event with 13 medals overall, with five race wins among these.

AIRSTREAM COMPRESSORS
TALISMAN Hire

2027 KZN EVENT CALENDAR
https://kznmtb.co.za/event-calendar/

CASCADES LIFESTYLE CENTRE
WINCOACH

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FEATURED EVENT - 1

GO2SEA is a seven-day mountain bike stage race from Clarens in the Free State to Salt Rock in KwaZulu-Natal. Covering 600 km and 11,000 m of climbing, it takes riders through the heart of South Africa. We caught up with KZN's Female XCM Rider of the Year, Kirsty Searle, to hear about her 2026 experience.

What made you choose GO2SEA?
"My husband and I had ridden Joberg2c a few years ago, and when a group of our cycling buddies from The Brink Burg Wheelers decided to enter GO2SEA, that was all the motivation we needed. With so many of us entered, the training journey was almost more fun than the event itself. United by a common goal, our weekends included long-distance rides and training camps with back-to-back long days. Having raced for many years, I think as one gets older, the camaraderie and gees of entering a race with mates and people you enjoy spending time with carries a lot of weight when deciding what event to do."

How was the overall experience?
"My overall experience was a true appreciation for the beautiful and amazing country we call home. The route was diverse, with gravel roads, jeep track and some of the best singletrack in the country. Coupled with the spirit and passion of the organising team, and the laughs and banter along the way, it truly is a must-do race."

You finished 3rd in your age category. Were you racing or riding?
"While my training had gone well throughout the year, the two weeks leading up to the event were less than ideal because of work commitments. After a challenging Day 1, I was relieved to find my legs again and started to claw my way back into some form. I am definitely more of an endurance athlete and seem to get stronger with each day. I think that competitive instinct is always there and when you line up on the start line, you push yourself to do the best that you can."

What is the accommodation like?
"We chose the basic tented accommodation, although riders can book their own accommodation if they prefer. There is also an upgraded tent option with a stretcher, mattress, duvet and pillow. There was always a hot shower at the end of the day's ride and the food throughout the event was superb."

How do the local communities contribute to the event?
"The communities and schools we passed through are pivotal to the event. They benefit from the upliftment and contributions that come from the race, while the event benefits hugely from the services they provide. It's a win-win situation. From friendly school kids cheering riders over the finish line and washing bikes, to local choirs performing in the evenings, school communities preparing meals and delicious treats at water points, and children serving dinner, it's a huge part of what the event is all about."

Will you be back in 2027?
"With so many awesome events on the calendar, we usually prefer to enter an event we haven't done before. Next year we'll be taking on RASA (Race Across South Africa), a 2,000 km self-supported bikepacking race on the legendary Freedom Trail. I can't wait!"

10-16 September 2027 – Go2SEA https://go2sea.co.za/ Entries open 2nd December





FEATURED EVENT - 2

Earlier this year, KZN's Male Gravel Rider of the Year, Daniel van der Watt, travelled to Nannup in Western Australia to compete in the UCI Gravel World Championships.

Set amongst spectacular forests, wineries and endless outdoor trails, Nannup proved to be the perfect backdrop for a world-class gravel event.

What was the experience like?
"The UCI setup was well organised but fairly basic. There was no fancy race village, gazebos or entertainment. Riders who weren't part of professional teams had to organise everything themselves, from feeding stations and transport to mechanics and bike preparation."

Away from race day, Dan was impressed by the cycling culture.
"Around Nannup there are hundreds of kilometres of cycling and walking paths. There were countless groups of people riding, walking and enjoying the outdoors. Pre-race riding was a joll!"
The food was familiar for a South African palate, although restaurant prices were another story.
"The food was lekker and similar to what we know in South Africa. The price of a steak might be slightly off the charts though. And a word of advice for Nannup: keep your coffee shops open all day when the world cycling community descends on your town!"

How did the race go?
The race covered 144 km with 3,700 metres of climbing.
"The opening 15 km on tar were proper bunch racing, heartbeat-raising stuff, jostling for position with riders everywhere travelling at incredible speed."
Dan also got a close-up view of the World Championship production.
"It was awesome to see the TV crews on off-road carts with one guy driving, one filming and one taking photos, plus four helicopters constantly covering the race."

For the first 30 km everything was going according to plan.
"Riding alongside the main group and some of the pre-race favourites, the pace felt comfortable and everything was on track."
Then disaster struck.

An issue with his SRAM AXS battery left him unable to change gears. After one kick failed to solve the problem, Dan resorted to what he describes as a "massive kick" to the derailleur. Somehow it worked. The gearing came back online, but by then the front group had slipped away and the chase began.
With the leaders out of reach, the focus shifted to staying composed and making the most of every opportunity. A major climb helped him reconnect with another group, while the huge crowds along the route created an unforgettable atmosphere.

When that group split again with around 60 km remaining, Dan found himself riding alone."Between 80 km and 115 km it became a solo effort, a real test of endurance and determination."

The breakthrough came a few kilometres before the final major climb when another group caught him. Sensing an opportunity, Dan attacked on Folly Climb.

"The attack stuck and three riders came with me. We worked together towards the finish before one final acceleration in the closing kilometres."
After 4 hours 51 minutes of racing, 12 gels and 4 feed zones, Dan crossed the finish line in an outstanding 58th place in the Elite Men's World Championship.

20 Jun 2027 – SA Gravel Championships + Interprovincial / Karkloof Country Club

