

Hot Heels Africa Pre-Race Report

Contributed by Marcus Rietema & Iona Zietsman
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World Cup Series Showdown!!!

Mischo VS Scoot

Kogelburg, South Africa- After eight World Cup races spread over five continents, it has come down once again to a battle between Mischo Erban and Scoot Smith. Scoot is the defending IGSA World Cup Series Champion and Mischo is the two time runner up. Coming into this race last year, Scoot already had the Championship wrapped up. Because of that he elected to stay home and nurse some injuries he suffered a month earlier in Brazil. This year he is going into South Africa as the underdog.

Erban could have wrapped up the Series Championship with a strong result at the World Championships in Australia. Instead he had a disastrous race when he fell and was eliminated in the first round. That opened the door for Scoot who had a really solid race finishing second. His second place finish moved him into second place overall in the World Cup Series Championship. Now if Scoot can win the race and Mischo finishes third or worse, Scoot will repeat as the World Cup Series Champion.

This battle has been going on all season long. Photo Marcus Rietema

When Mischo and Scoot went head to head in France, this was the result in the Final. Photo Bob Ozman

Last weekend, Mischo opened the door even wider for Scoot. During the Houwteq Downhill Challenge National race, Erban collided with Olivier Bareaud and Mike Zietsman suffering a severely sprained ankle. All week it has been touch

and go for Erban to see if he can even race. It now looks like he will race but to beat Scoot, Bareaud, Zietsman, Stefan Ruefli, last weeks winner Oliver Nielson and a whole slew of other talented racers while nursing an injured ankle will be a tall order. It looks like Mischo only hope for the Championship will be that one of the other racers can beat Scoot.

Mike Zietsman is always a threat to win Hot Heels. Photo Jon Huey

The radios and video cameras are charging, the hay bales are in place and the trailer is ready. The toilets, marshals, medics and super Mitsubishi transport will be here tomorrow. Registration forms and ID bands are also organised. The evening is still and no baboons have visited yet! Hot Heels Africa is about to begin!!!

Olivier Bareaud is coming off a strong fourth place finish at the World's. Photo Melissa Ransom

On Tuesday evening the riders enjoyed a pizza party, courtesy of sponsors Butlers Pizza, at Ben Malherbe's house on Signal Hill above the city. It has one of the most beautiful views in the Cape Peninsula. Stefan Ruefli and Rebekka Gemperle arrived from Switzerland and Australia respectively just in time to attend. The evening was enlivened by the presence (well confined) of a large puff-adder snake caught by Ben's dad in a suburban garden.

Kogelsburg is always a beautiful setting for the season finale. Photo SAGRA

The South African Gravity Racing Association (SAGRA) crew of Anton and Justin, together with volunteer helpers, came through to Kogelberg late on Wednesday night and have spent the day putting over 1000 hay bales in place. The weather has been kind, with a few clouds and drops of rain to keep the heat at bay. After a swim in the dam, the set-up crew and several riders had a very relaxed braai in the beautiful setting of the Kogelberg mountains and watched the African stars come out. Some of the riders have already arrived at the Hangklip Hotel, and most will be coming through from Cape Town tomorrow morning. Mischo will see a physical therapist for the bruise on his ankle, and then drive through with Bareaud around noon. Scoot has recovered from a twelve-hour stomach ailment. He drove out with Iona Zietsman in the afternoon and enjoyed the braai.

Dasha Kornienko is hoping to win her first Women's World Cup Series Championship. The excitement is building and lots of new riders will be competing in their first downhill race. Dasha Kornienko is here and hoping to wrap up her first IGSA Women's World Cup Series Championship over second placed Rebekka Gemperle. Rebekka is still recovering from a fractured wrist she suffered after Newton's in a freeriding accident. Depending on how she is feeling, there is still a chance of the first women's downhill race at Hot Heels Africa. Downhill is growing and about to go big in 2010!!

We will have full coverage of Hot Heels Africa each day including qualifying and the race.