

A Cape Argus Pick n Pay Cycle Tour with a Difference...

by Charl Pieterse, March 14, 2011

Sunday, March 13, 2011, was a special day. Not only did it mark the day of the Cape Argus Pick n Pay Cycle Tour, but also one of the most breathtakingly stunning Cycle Tour days in recent years (does “scorching heat” and “hurricane-like winds” ring any bells?). But what really added something quite extraordinary to this day, was a group of 76 riders who tackled the 110km route in the bright red and white *Distance For Difference* (D4D) colours, to participate in the biggest one-day D4D initiative to date!

Yes, this year D4D grabbed the opportunity to make a real impact at the Cycle Tour, by entering itself as one of a number of “charity” groups. It granted us permission to compete in the D4D branded cycling kit, ensuring an impressive visual presence during the event (The “red and whites” is almost like spotting Santa Clause in a crowd of Batman enthusiasts). But maybe more importantly, D4D mobilised the 76 riders to individually obtain sponsorships for their participation in the Cycle Tour. Each rider asked friends and family to pledge a certain amount per kilometer of the race. Slowly but surely the pledges started rolling in, and once again we were amazed by the open hearts and wallets of all the sponsors. Even during these tough economic times, people are still moved by the hardships of less privileged people - so much so that on the eve of the Cycle Tour an unbelievable R120,000 were already pledged! R120,000 of which each cent will be channeled towards children in need... to make a concrete and lasting difference in their lives. By the time of writing this article (one day after the race), another R20,000 were raised – upping the total of “difference making funds” to R140,000! That represents a lot of smiles on a lot of kid’s faces! *(Our final campaign total was R158,322)*

Early on the morning of D-Day the D4D riders gathered together for a group photo, after which everyone moved to the starting line with nervous excitement. Some of the more serious riders had hit the road earlier in their respective seeding groups. Among the lot we even had two tandem pairs taking on the challenge. The race itself was nothing short of spectacular! From the relative windless conditions to the pristine scenery around the peninsula’s coastline! The stretch between Muizenberg and Simon’s Town was filled with picture perfect views of a glassy blue ocean on the left, and imposing rocky mountains on the right. One of our riders who “stopped to smell the roses” even reported spotting a large school of dolphins frolicking in the water. On the Atlantic side we were greeted by a lovely cooling mist and one of the most beautiful sights in the world... Chapman’s Peak Drive on a beautiful sunny day. Although it’s a killer of a climb, the beauty really does make it a bit more bearable. The bitterness of Suikerbossie is quickly forgotten as you reach the top of this famous hill to marvel at the waves crashing down on the beach of Llandudno – knowing that it’s almost all downhill from there! What a joyride!

There’s an interesting, but sad “backstory” behind D4D’s involvement in the Cycle Tour this year. A story that just reiterates the fragile nature of the human condition, our place in the world, and the importance of “reaching out” to each other... otherwise people will frankly just be left behind. Two days before the event, Japan was hit by a huge earthquake, resulting in a devastating tsunami to sweep over the country’s coastal areas. It was a chilling reminder to Stéphan Pieterse (founder of D4D in 2005) of his original inspiration for D4D – the Asian Tsunami in 2004. The brokenness of being human is a constant, thus also the need for D4D’s work – work that has channeled in the region of *R750,000* to various beneficiaries over the last six years.

Thank you to everyone (riders and sponsors) who helped D4D to live out its motto: “Children in need is our passion in deed”. The contribution that you had made is going to change a kid’s life forever! Doesn’t it feel good?

For those who want to find out more about D4D and how to join or contribute to this organization, please visit their website at www.d4dsa.co.za and their Facebook page (search for “Distance For Difference”) for photos that include those taken at the Cycle Tour. *(see next page for photos)*



Emile Kotzé, Charl Pieterse and Stéphan Pieterse ready to go!



Brothers Jacques, Stéphan and Charl Pieterse with brother-in-law, Jan Botha nervously smiling just before the start of the race.



Somerset West residents, Stéphan Pieterse, Charl Pieterse and Emile Kotzé lining up at the start of the 2011 Argus Cycle Tour.



28 of the 76 D4D riders posing before the start of the race. Dieter Voigt from SABC 2's Pasella actuality program joined the D4D group on the day.



Husband and wife team and D4D directors, Stéphan and Yolanda Pieterse in front of the beautiful Cape Town city backdrop.



Stéphan Pieterse, Hein Coetzee and Willem Coetzee (see article elsewhere) making ready for the 2011 Argus Cycle Tour.