



PRESS RELEASE: For immediate release – no embargo

DATE: 27-10-2011

MTN-QHUBEKA 2012 TEAM LAUNCHED

Media, cycling enthusiasts and sponsors gathered at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Sandton, Johannesburg on 27 October 2011 for the launch of the 2012 MTN-Qhubeka team.

Nearing 400 race victories since 2008, MTN-Qhubeka is Africa's most winning and most multi-discipline continental race team and is beginning to attract attention far beyond the continent's shores.

The launch event kicked off with a brief introduction to the work being done by the Wildlands Conservation Trust in partnership with Qhubeka, MTN, World Bicycle Relief, Trek and SRAM.

"Seven years ago, we had this idea: what if we could get the poorest of the poor to grow trees and use those to trees to feed, clothe and educate themselves," said Wildlands CEO Dr. Andrew Venter. "Today, we have 5 000 'tree-preneurs'. Last year, over 600 000 trees were grown. We also have more than 2 000 'waste-preneurs' who collected more than 3million kilograms of recyclables."

He went on to explain that the 'tree-preneurs' and 'waste-preneurs' have traded the trees and recyclables for food, clothing and, among other things, bicycles. "Bikes change people's lives," he said. "They do this in a future-forward way."

There are seven previous versions of the Qhubeka bike. Dr. Venter today unveiled the eight version – a bicycle built for rural environments that is made to last. The bicycles will be assembled by 'tree-preneurs' who have now been up-skilled to become 'bike-preneurs'.

Trek representative Rob Kozich spoke next. He explained that Trek builds and races bikes to make them better, but also believes that bicycles can provide simple solutions to some of the world's more complex problems. He pointed out that the partnership with the MTN-Qhubeka team that was announced just a few weeks ago is an exciting opportunity for Trek to bring these two principles together. He then unveiled the Trek Madone bicycle that the MTN-Qhubeka road teams will race with in 2012.

MTN Chief Marketing Officer Serame Taukobong said the launch was an important milestone in the three-year journey that MTN has walked with the team. "Our focus was the development of cycling, but we've gone far beyond that," he said, in reference to the team's impressive results. He pointed out Reinard Janse van Rensburg's recent stage win at the Jayco Herald Sun Tour in Australia as proof that the team is competing at a globally competitive level and at the highest standards.

"Sponsorship is not just about branding everything out there yellow though," he quipped. "We are driving socio-economic development. But the bike is yellow; the team is yellow and maybe one day we'll see the Arc de Triomphe and an African rider in yellow." His remark was greeted with cheers from the crowd.

Doug Ryder, MTN-Qhubeka Team Principal, said it was a proud moment for the team. "It's significant that we have Trek, MTN and Wildlands here," he said, going on to explain that the make-up of the team would be different in 2012 as riders from Eritrea and Ethiopia had been signed. "Our focus remains the same – offering riders the opportunities to race at the highest levels," he said. He announced that team MTN-Qhubeka has partnered with the UCI World Cycling Centre run by Jean-Pierre van Zyl, and welcomed Jens Zemke to MTN-Qhubeka as the UCI Continental Road Sports Director. Zemke was the Sports Director of HTC Highroad in 2011, and before that the Sports Director of the Cervelo Test Team for two years.

Arran Brown and Lise Olivier, captains of the MTN-Qhubeka men's and women's road teams respectively, modelled the new 2012 kit.

Media then conducted interviews and photographed the newly-unveiled Qhubeka and MTN-Qhubeka bikes while guests enjoyed a selection of eats at the end of the successful launch.

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For more information about the MTN-Qhubeka team, contact Team Principal Doug Ryder on douglas@ryder.co.za or +27 83 721 2020 or visit www.qhubeka.org.

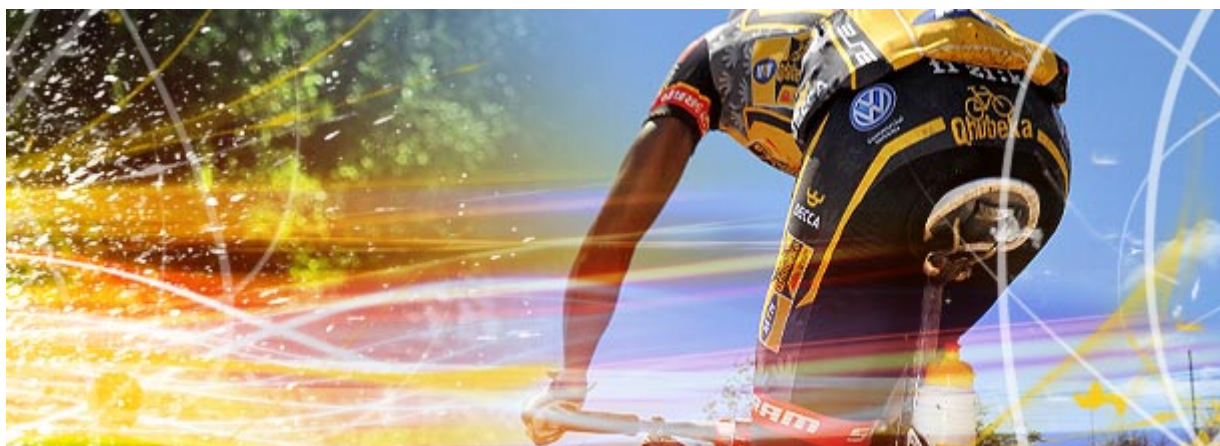
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NOTE TO EDITORS:

VISIT WWW.QHUBEKA.ORG FOR MORE ON THE TEAM

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