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Sport

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The Namib Desert Race



The competitors at the starting line

Rudi Bowe

The Namib Race 'the race of champions' is the first of the 4 Desert races. It started Sunday 28 April at the Ugabmund and will end on 4 May at the 259 kilometres mark near Torra Bay.

The 16 previous champions that are part of 110 competitors from 36 countries from around the world, entered the Skeleton Coast National Park for the 259 km. 6 stage ultra marathon race across the oldest desert in the world.

Racing The Planet and the 4 Deserts Ultra marathon Series was founded in February 2002 by American Mary Gadams. A former investment banker and strategist by day, Gadams was a well-known figure in adventure and endurance sport with finishes in numerous marathons, ultra marathons and wilderness competitions around the world.

The 4 Deserts is the world's leading rough-country endurance footrace series with a unique collection of world-class events that take place in the largest and most forbidding deserts on the planet with only drinking water and a place in a tent each night to rest.

The competitors are supported by highly qualified staff, all with experience in hiking, marathons and ultra marathons, and medical teams specialising in wilderness medicine. The competitor must carry all their own equipment and food for the seven days in a backpack with an average weight of between 5 and 14 kilograms.

Each of the 4 Deserts is completely unique. In every race competitors find themselves immersed in ancient cultures and surrounded by stunning scenery and indigenous wildlife and on a journey through the driest, hottest, coldest and windiest places on earth, testing their limits both physically and mentally.

Competitors complete the events as part of a new family, individuals and teams from distant corners of the earth from different backgrounds, religions and cultures bond together by a common mindset and a shared experience like no other.

The 4 Deserts Series is a world class sporting event open to anyone who is ready for the journey of a lifetime.

The 4 Deserts seeks individuals and teams who are internationally diverse, open-minded and determined. Both elite and non-elite individuals and teams are accepted. The qualifications require that you and/or your team complete several forms which are provided upon registration. The overall finishing times range from about 25 hours to 70 hours (combined times over seven days).

The 4 Deserts World Champion title goes to the man and woman with the highest cumulative rankings in each of the 4 Deserts events and he or she must complete all races in order to qualify for the 4 Deserts World Champion title to be amongst the best endurance athletes in the world.

The 4 Deserts Ultra marathon Series is widely recognized as the most prestigious outdoor footrace series in the world. The series consists of the Namib Desert Race, the Gobi March (China/Mongolia), the Atacama Crossing (Chile) and The Last Desert (Antarctica) where competitors in the races traverse 250 kilometers in seven days over rough country terrain with only a place in a tent and water provided.

In February 2008, a fifth annual race, called Racing The Planet Ultra marathon, was added to the calendar. By the start of 2018, Racing The Planet had staged 56 rough country races over fifteen years. Nearly 10,000 competitors from more than 100 countries have participated in the 4 Deserts Ultra marathon Series and Racing The Planet Ultra marathon.

Racing The Planet has worked closely with the Y.L. Yang Education Foundation and Operation Smile in countries around the world, raising more than US\$750 000. Other charities supported through the

races include Royal Flying Doctors in Australia, Society for the Promotion of Hospice Care in Hong Kong, Child Welfare Scheme in Nepal, Ocean Voyages Institute in Antarctica, Make-a-Wish Foundation and Function Amigos de Jesus in Chile.

To further the understanding of human endurance, Racing The Planet supports prominent medical research projects through travel bursaries to races and has donated tents and raised money to support people affected by natural disasters that have occurred in countries where races are held, including major earthquakes in China, Chile, Ecuador and Nepal and encourages and supports competitors in their own fundraising efforts for charities personal to them - millions of U.S. dollars have been raised by Racing The Planet competitors through its races.

Racing The Planet Founder Mary Gadams said "With Event Director, Zeana Haroun and Event Senior Support, Riitta Hanninen and with the 19 volunteers from all over the world and the 62 Namibian volunteers this event will be one of the best held at the Namibian coast".

After the first stage all competitors completed the 43.5km as they reached camp at the end of the stage with only one competitor that withdrew and with Florian Vieux from Switzerland the stage winner.

The Top 10 which includes 2 women after stage one are:

- 1st Florian Vieux 3 hours 16 min, 2nd Dan Parr 3 hours 55 min, 3rd Rod Williams 4 hours 6 min, 4th Christophe Santini 4 hours 7 min, 5th Richard Sanderson 4 hours 8 min, 6th Joasia Zakrzewski 4 hours 18 min 1st female, 7th Ben Fox 4 hours 31 min, 8th Salvador Calvo Redondo 4 hours 31 min, 9th Clare Thompson 4 hours 32 minutes 2nd female, 10th Davide Vitali 4 hours 36 min, 19th Szilvia Lubics 3rd female, 25th Lara Reynolds 4th female, 26th Kate Richdale 5th female.



Namibian volunteers Katrina Simeon and Zimbabwean Mabasa Mubatasango

The oldest competitor Bernd Kreimer (70 years) from Germany as he prepares for his fifth desert race



The Namibian volunteers from Swakopmund, Walvis Bay, Windhoek, Henties Bay, Otjivarongo and Okahandja with Head of the volunteers Oliver Ahrens and François Snyders the camp manager with their vehicles before the start of the race

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