



PRESS RELEASE

Winners Return for “Race of Champions”

[26 June 2018, Hong Kong] - Dean Karnazes, winner of the Atacama Crossing in 2008 and the first person to complete the [4 Deserts Grand Slam](#). Juan Vicente Garcia Beneito, the only man to have won all 4 Deserts Ultramarathons in the same year. Kevin Lin, who met his *Running the Sahara* teammates (Charlie Engle and Ray Zahab) while winning the Atacama Crossing 2004. All three will be competing in next year's 4 Deserts Ultramarathon, the Namib Race (Namibia) 2019. Previously called the Sahara Race (Namibia), the ***Namib Race begins on 28 April 2019.***

[Karnazes](#), [Garcia Beneito](#) and [Lin](#) are just some of the 20 past champions who have so far confirmed they'll be a part of RacingThePlanet's first-ever ***Race of Champions*** which will be hosted as part of the Namib Race 2019. Former winners from each race in the 4 Deserts Ultramarathon Series -- the [Atacama Crossing](#), the [Gobi March](#), the [Namib Race](#) and [The Last Desert](#), as well as the [RacingThePlanet Ultramarathon](#), will join an international group of competitors for a unique edition of the Namib Race.

While the race brings together the past champions, it is also very much ***dedicated to any first time and returning*** RacingThePlanet competitors. Nearly 200 competitors are expected to take part. The “race within a race” will be a ***celebration of the more than 60 multi-stage footraces*** hosted by RacingThePlanet since the inaugural Gobi March in 2003, and a further ***15 years of friendships shared by the RacingThePlanet community.***

An early favourite, not only for the Race of Champions but the overall Namib Race 2019, is sure to be Garcia Beneito. Having won all 4 Deserts Ultramarathons in 2012, Garcia Beneito also holds several 4 Deserts records: he holds the record (jointly, with Ryan Sandes) for the Atacama Crossing and is the outright record holder for the Gobi March.

Fewer than 100 people have completed the [4 Deserts Grand Slam](#). In 2008, Karnazes started the trend of racing all 4 Deserts Ultramarathons within a single calendar year by becoming the first. Eager to sign up for the Race of Champions, Karnazes said: “I've long (too long) wanted to take part in another RacingThePlanet / 4 Deserts race.”

[Sandy Suckling](#) is the second-fastest woman to have completed the Atacama Crossing, earning that honour in 2012. Suckling, who is part of the [4 Deserts Club](#), has raced in seven RacingThePlanet and 4 Deserts Ultramarathons and the Race of Champions marks her eighth. Suckling likened the Race of Champions to a reunion, saying: “It sounds like a big family catch up next year in Namibia so I would love to come.” Suckling is always a strong competitor -- she was the third quickest female in the Sahara Race (Namibia) 2018 -- and is sure to be among the competitors to watch next year.

As much as there will be some truly competitive racing, for many returning champions this is more about the reunion, returning to the solitude of the desert and enjoying camp fires in the true spirit of the RacingThePlanet races with new and old friends. [Lucy Brooks](#), who was the female winner of the Gobi March 2007 and the Gobi March's second-fastest female, is one of them; since the birth of her son in 2011 she has only run shorter distances. Although she is beyond excited to be returning to the desert, she says: “My goal this time is simply to get myself to the finish line in one piece - to finish and enjoy myself. For me, at this point in time, that will be as much of, if not more than, an achievement as

winning was in the past. Whilst not being able to train to be competitive will feel sad and hard, I'm really looking forward to being able to have a more relaxed approach to the run, to running as part of the pack, meeting more people along the way and having the time to soak up the beautiful country." Lucy's [blog](#) tells more about her anticipation as she prepares for the race.

She'll be joined by Gobi March champions including Diana Hogan-Murphy (2009), Denvy Lo (2010) and Clare Thompson (2017).

[Nancy Fudacz](#) was the female winner of [the inaugural Last Desert \(Antarctica\)](#) in 2006. A member of the [4 Deserts Club](#), Fudacz is excited about the race, and reflected on the preparations ahead of the 250km footrace. "I think fit might have a new meaning right now, but I can certainly walk..." Fudacz said. "What a cool idea!"

The more recent winners are also thrilled to be returning to this special race. Rodric Williams won the Gobi March 2017, while [Zandy Mangold](#) won the Atacama Crossing 2017. In addition to competing in RacingThePlanet and 4 Deserts Ultramarathon Series, Mangold has also photographed many of the races. "WOW WOW WOW!" Mangold exclaimed. "Totally honoured and goes without saying it has been a life-changing experience being both staff [photographer] and competitor."

As more former champions confirm their attendance for the Race of Champions, one thing's for certain - this is a race that's not to be missed! For those who are taking part their first RacingThePlanet race, this is a great opportunity to meet the legends and learn from them.

- END-