



MEDIA STATEMENT: 100 DAYS COUNTDOWN TO THE MANDELA MARATHON

The clock is ticking, the entries are flying in and registration is well under way. uMgungundlovu District Municipality in partnership with Provincial Government and the Kwa-Zulu Natal athletes are ready to host another successful Mandela Day Marathon.

Tuesday, the 17th of May 2016, marked a 100 days before the 5th Mandela Day Marathon takes place. This iconic marathon will be celebrating 5 years this year and is expected to host up to 15 000 athletes from over 30 countries who will descend to scenic Midlands, Kwa-Zulu Natal, to participate in one of Africa's toughest marathon's. The theme of this year race, set for the 28th of August, is "*It always seems impossible until it's done*" – one of the late President Nelson Mandela's inspirational quotes.

To kick start the 100 days countdown clock, a liberation heritage route tour was organized –aimed at educating and informing the community within the District, the country and the world about the rich history the District has. The tour started at the site where the young Mandela made his last speech, Manayi Hall – Imbali (Msunduzi Municipality) as a free man on 26 March 1961, and ended at the Mandela Capture Site (Umgeni Municipality), where he was finally arrested when he came back to the country on 05 August, 1962. The tour included several stops at the various iconic landmarks that form part of the course that makes the Mandela Day Marathon a unique event on the South African running calendar. Along the journey you will discover why this marathon is regarded as South Africa's toughest.

The tour was narrated by the Race Director, Mr. Johan van Staden and the Heritage and Content Manager, Mr. Oscar Dlomo. "The primary aim of the tour is to articulate the state of readiness, given the fact that the marathon is only just 100 days away. The secondary aim is to show and tell that this is not just a marathon... It's THE Mandela Day Marathon." – Municipal Manager, uMDM, Mr. Sibusiso Khuzwayo.

Athletes who have participated in the 42.2km marathon have said that the struggle hill is the toughest point of the marathon. With this tour we are hoping to encourage more runners to take part in the 42.2km and endure the struggle hill (which is about 8km). The most difficult years of Madiba's political life are symbolized by this 8km steep stretch, called the "Struggle Hill."

About the 2016 Mandela Day Marathon: Focussed on the Athlete

The process will begin with a seamless registration process starting on 25 August for all the runners in the Durban area followed by two days of registration on 26 and 27 August in Pietermaritzburg. Athletes are urged to enter now at www.mandelamarathon.co.za as the entry system will close on 31 July and no extensions will be allowed.

Saturday 27 August will kick off at 6am with the Trail Running events covering distances ranging from the 4Km for the not so fit through the 8Km and up to 16Km for the experienced Trail Running enthusiasts. Mountain Bikers will depart at 9am to complete the 10, 21 or 42 Km routes built by the most experienced course builders in South Africa. The first Mandela Day Marathon Triathlon will start at Midmar Dam with the mini triathlon at 11 am followed by the Sprint Distance at 12 and then the Olympic distance kicking off at 1:30 pm.

Sunday 28 August will host the Road Running events all leading to the flagship 42.2Km Mandela Day Marathon. The day will begin at 6:30 am with the 4.6664 Km VIP race where Dignitaries from all over the world will come to experience the Madiba magic. At the same time the 10 Km road race will start at the Howick Sports Stadium taking the runners past Midmar dam on the R103 to the Iconic Capture Site. The 21.1 Km Half Marathon will start at 6:45 am in the heart of Hilton meandering down to Cedara and up to Merrivale followed by a steady drop down into Howick Sports Stadium where they will join the 10Km route to the finish.

The flagship 42.2 Km full Marathon measured to IAAF standards will start at Manayi Hall in Imbali, Pietermaritzburg. The race will start at 7 am sharp with full live TV coverage by SABC 2 All top athletes entered this race and will be competing for the R 100 000 first place prize packet. This is the first official televised Comrades qualifier for the year and many pro athletes are ready to stamp their first mark within the South African Road Running calendar. The Mandela Day Marathon is one of the hardest marathons in South Africa starting off with a fairly easy flat section through Edendale Township then leading to the well-known Struggle hill with 8 Km of non-stop climbing all the way up to Motolo's butchery. A short flat section to catch your breath and then the next 2 Km climb up to the highest point. A short drop will take the Athletes into Hilton and the halfway mark where the 21.1 Km half marathon started.

The whole route will be covered with 15 refreshment stations catering for all the athlete's needs. Various sponsors have come on board for the 2016 Mandela Day Marathon and all dietary requirements will be met. The Refreshment Portfolio will be led by John Hall well known in the Road Running fraternity assisted by 400 volunteers to distribute a staggering 60 tons of refreshments to the more than 10 000 participants. 250kg Biscuits, 300kg Chocolates, 90 kg Energellies, 30 kg Potato Crisps, 250kg Bananas, 20 pockets of potatoes, 55 pockets of oranges, 20 kg Salt, 40 000 litres of water in sachets and 500ml bottles, 3 000 litres of energy drink in sachets, 7 000kg Ice, 8 000 litres of coke and 70 000 cardboard coke cups will be handed to the athletes.

Both Msunduzi and Umgeni Municipalities have come on board to sponsor the by now well-known Mandela Day Marathon Runners village where athletes will receive accommodation, dinner and a solid breakfast before they take on one of the most difficult marathons on the South African road running calendar

Nathi Hlongwa will manage the 350 Community Marshals spaced out over the 42.2 Km ensuring the safety of all runners participating in this year's event. Local traffic officers, RTI and SAPS will be on duty to regulate traffic and control the crowds coming in force to support the runners.

All this will contribute to an unforgettable runners experience designed to celebrate the freedom of our Rainbow Nation and commemorate the Mandela Legacy. All spectators are invited to join in the festivities planned for the two day festival of events. Come and experience a transformed marathon route culminating in an Iconic Finish Venue where all aspects of the "Madiba Magic" will be amplified.

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