



Whether you're a weekend warrior or a pro athlete, the numbers for The ABSA Cape Epic are scary: eight days of gruelling racing, a 648 km route and 15,475m of climbing. Add in untamed mountainous Western Cape terrain and unpredictable Cape weather, and there's a reason why this race has been termed the MTB Tour de France!

In previous Cape EPIC's, heat, along with dehydration has been the deal breaker in most participants' races... 2023 had different ideas! Wind and rain humbled riders this year. Bringing with it mental fatigue that made negotiating watery and muddy stages difficult and the wet and wild conditions amplifying riders' risk along the route. With saying goodbye to Dr Jaidan Mays, who after multiple Epic's has chosen to hand over the baton of leading the ChiroSport team; this year's sports chiropractors and students who were selected to take care of the ABSA team riders were left to fill big shoes in ominous conditions.

Prologue kicked off to a busy start with riders making good use of the team to clear out any last minute niggles. Riders were given the option to book in for either a massage or chiropractic session or both, which made day to day running more efficient but didn't stop those last minute riders sliding off the plinth and onto a chiropractic table if they hadn't booked. With the weather forecast finally arriving with nightmarish headwinds in Hermanus on Stage one, riders had a rude awakening and just as the team were getting into the swing of things, safety took precedence over riders' aches and pains. The race village was evacuated and closed until tents could be reinforced to tackle the wind. After many riders missing a day of treatment and fighting two long days of pushing into high winds, bodies were in need of some catch up TLC. The lull waiting for teams to cross the finish line didn't last long before riders streamed into our tent, most days with a constant tick over of patients for students and doctors every half an hour till around 8:30 pm. From Thursday, the rain had crept in, turning single tracks into obstacle courses, gravel roads into axle-deep streams and race villages into fields of sludge. Muddy and slippery days made riding challenging - one of the big ones was just staying on the bike. Everyday had something new: from the expected lumbar or cervical strain to VMO and quad overloading issues, skin abrasions in all sorts of places, saddle sores, acute achilles tendinopathy and AC sprains and fractures. It was noticeable that our chiropractic presence with the ABSA team is growing and that riders were utilizing our sports doctors treatment for injury prevention as well as injury management and race performance. Familiar faces couldn't wait to get on the tables and new faces couldn't get off them realizing that without chiropractic treatment, getting through EPIC would be a painful experience. It's a great moment to be told by riders that without us, getting back on their bikes for 8 consecutive days of hard riding would just not be the same, if not impossible.

It's an emotional journey walked with the riders and being field side with these athletes at an event of this prestige, is a humbling experience for the doctors and recharges a necessary excitement in students who are on the edge of walking into practice. It was 8 long days of driving, waiting patiently, being wind/rain swept and squelching through mud...with this year's Cape EPIC 2023 done and dusted, I can't wait to see what is in store next year.

Thank you to ChiroSport SA and this year's team who made it such a success!

Dr Loren Brodie

