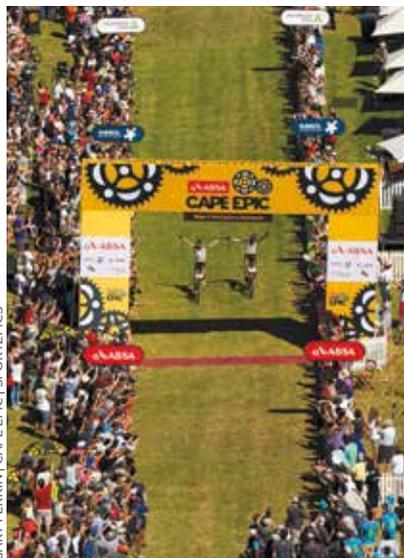




Susi and Jaro being doused in MCC upon securing the 2015 ABSA Cape Epic title.



The view of the Meerendal Grand Finale from the chopper.



Erik snapping a photo of Jaro, Susi and Nico on their traditional ride back to Stellenbosch.

Mount Olympus, the Wheel, Roger Bannister, & New Horizons

One of Full Sus's loyal readers, *Jacques Wilkinson*, took the time to pen this letter after an encounter with four of his mountain biking heroes, so we thought we'd share it with you. We hope you enjoy it.

Yesterday saw the conclusion of the 12th ABSA Cape Epic. After cycling from my home to Meerendal, in order to avoid the inevitable traffic queues, I triumphantly took my seat on the pavilion at 08:52. It was, without a doubt, the best seat in the house with superb views in all directions, right in front of the big screen. Unfortunately, I had forgotten to marinade myself in sunscreen and, also, to grab my water bottle. Sick with the effects of dehydration and sun stroke, I was subsequently forced to abandon my post by 10:25, but only after reserving my spot, by pain of death, with all those within earshot. (I knew that in the event that my threats failed to have the desired effect, I would in all likelihood end up strangling someone. Placing my trust in the SAPD to only arrive once the winners had crossed the finish line, I was willing to take the chance.) I returned at 10:35 to find my spot... VACANT! Joy of joys!

Although it seemed as though my day could not get any better, it did. With the exception of Team RECM's Erik Kleinhans and Nico Bell, all the teams that I supported over the past

eight days (being Investec Songo Specialized, Scott Factory Racing and Team RECM's Ariane Kleinhans and Anika Langvad), walked away with some sort of silverware. Much to the confusion (and embarrassment) of my friends around me, the delighted screams of a 12 year old girl that escaped from this 29 year old man, were unmatched by any, including actual 12 year old girls!

I spent the next couple of hours strolling around, waiting for the award ceremony. During this time I was again impressed by the manner in which many of the professional riders interacted with the fans. Erik Kleinhans, specifically, impressed me in the way that he treated many fans: signing baby cycling shirts, chatting

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to people and just being a genuine nice, humble, guy.

Before undertaking the journey home, I jokingly remarked to a friend at the stall of the Cape Leopard Trust (one of the official charities of the Epic): "I doubt whether the tradition of Erik and Sauser, cycling home after the event, will continue this year."

Shortly hereafter, I got back on my bike and started the journey home. Approximately 2km from Meerendal, riding into a strong south-easter, I became aware of voices and the sound of tyres behind me. I looked over my shoulder to confirm my suspicion and... it is at this point that I knew that Sunday 22 March 2015 will be remembered as one of the best days of my life. My glance back was met by the smiling face of one Erik Kleinhans, closely followed by the yellow jersey wearing Jaroslav Kulhavy, similarly dressed Christoph Sauser and the equally cycling and mechanically gifted Nico Bell. I barely managed not to eat dirt / tar and duly pulled onto the dirt next to the road, so as to allow them to pass, which they did with smiles and nods.

In a moment of insanity and audacity, I gave three or four hard pedal strokes and sat on the wheel of Mr Bell. Here I spent the next couple of minutes with my mind utterly consumed by only two thoughts: 1. I can't believe what's

happening / what I'm doing! 2. NO-ONE will ever believe me (how could they, when I scarcely believe it myself)! It was only after our ways parted that I remembered my cell phone in my back pocket. Photo opportunity missed.

I went to bed last night, still grinning like an idiot, contemplating the events of earlier in the day. It was there, in the dark, on my bed, while wondering why those 10 minutes meant so much to me, that the following realisation dawned on me.

For a few minutes, the hills of Durbanville became Mount Olympus, and I, mere mortal, got to spend it with the gods of mountain biking. These gentlemen are the cave men who left their homes to explore new places, who ultimately invented the wheel, and who drove that wheel to shape the human experience. They are the Roger Bannisters who show us what is possible, who extend the perceived boundaries of human ability, and who challenge us all to reconsider what can be achieved and what we are each capable of. And for those of us who share the love of this great sport with them, they literally and figuratively show us new horizons.

I might add that I have had the privilege of "meeting" both Erik Kleinhans and Christoph Sauser in the past: On two separate occasions, but both on the majestic trails of Jonkershoek. On both occasions I was made to look as though I was looking for parking, on one of the many climbs in those mountains, first by Mr Kleinhans and later by Mr Sauser. Similarly on both occasions, I was pleasantly surprised by the riders' friendliness and respect, as well as the joy which they derived from riding.

What made Sunday's experience so special was the knowledge that I was part of something that would never happen again in light of the disappointing news that Christoph Sauser is retiring from professional cycling. I am sure though that the tradition will undoubtedly continue for as long as he still takes part in the event (which I hope will be the case for many years to come).

I am, and will forever be, thankful for the decision to cycle to and from Meerendal. I rue the missed opportunity for a photo... and a chat. Hopefully, in the not too distant future I will have another opportunity to share a trail with these four gentlemen. And maybe then I can tell Erik Kleinhans: "Remember that day in Durbanville when you sat in my slipstream against a strong head wind ... albeit for 15 meters." FS



Jacques Wilkinson is a Cape Town based attorney who started mountain biking in 2010 on doctor's orders. His favourite riding spot is Matoppie in Franschhoek, much to his riding partner's dismay, as he has passed out there twice during rides.