

Press Release



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Rhinos run the Comrades Marathon

On Sunday 30 May 2010, athletes from all over the world will meet in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa where they will attempt to conquer the 89km (56 miles) distance between Pietermaritzburg and Durban: the Comrades Marathon. To add to this immense challenge, the Save the Rhino teams will be taking it in turns to wear two of our famous 12kg rhino costumes! Both teams are aiming to complete the race in less than 11 hours to secure themselves bronze medals.

The rhinos are running for two reasons: firstly to raise money for the conservation projects supported by Save the Rhino, especially Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park in South Africa, which the team will visit after the race to see conservation in action; and secondly to increase awareness about rhino conservation.

The world's rhino population faces an imminent threat of extinction, and will continue to do so unless urgent action is taken. Three of the five species of rhino are listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, whilst a CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) document published in 2009 warned that rhino poaching is approaching a 15-year high. The CITES document also stated that 470 rhinos were illegally killed in Africa between 2006 and 2009 (although there are probably many more undocumented), with 95% of these being from either Zimbabwe or South Africa. The need to take action has never been greater.

Notes to Editors

Comrades Marathon

The first Comrades Marathon took place on 24 May 1921, Empire Day, starting outside the City Hall in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, with 34 runners. It has continued since then every year with the exception of the war years 1941-1945, with the direction alternating each year between Pietermaritzburg and Durban, the so-called up & down runs. The Comrades Marathon is a cherished national treasure and attracts thousands of runners, spectators and television viewers every year.

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The 2010 race takes place on Sunday 30 May. The 2010 Comrades Marathon will be the 85th running of the race, and the Comrades Marathon Association (CMA) is gearing up for the biggest, most spectacular and exciting Comrades since 2000. The 2010 Comrades Marathon will be a 'down run', starting at the City Hall in Pietermaritzburg and finishing at the Sahara Kingsmead Cricket Stadium in Durban. 22,000 runners will take part.

The Teams

Kenneth Donaldson



Kenneth Donaldson is the Director for Actuarial Services at Capita Hartshead. Capita Hartshead is one of the UK's leading pension services providers, employing around 1,600 people. Kenneth's responsibilities include running Capita Hartshead's team of 100 actuaries and support staff providing services to trustees and sponsors of pension schemes.

Outside the office, Kenneth is closely associated with the UK charity Save the Rhino International. He took part in the legendary "Marathon des Sables" in 2003 and in 2006 ran six back-to-back marathons across the Andes. This gruelling ultra-marathon took place at an altitude of over one mile and involved wearing the famous rhino costume designed by Gerald Scarfe.

Kenneth also plays in an orchestra which featured in BBC Radio 3's "Genius of the Violin" series, and has performed on several occasions in the Barbican. One of his last concerts featured the international star soloist Ian Bostridge singing Britten's "St Nicholas". Kenneth's two tortoises are currently happily hibernating in his spare fridge.

Kenneth has run a number of ultras for the Rhinos. The Comrades has special appeal:

- It's the oldest ultra and attracts phenomenal numbers of runners – it's hard to image finding 20,000 people who are prepared to run a 5- mile race inside 11 hours, but the Comrades attracts that field within hours of opening the ballot
- Other ultras are staged over days – this is a single, straight-through, do-or-die effort
- South Africa is the home of rhino conservation and indeed arguably the home of conservation, period
- Very few, if any, idiots contemplate running this race in a costume, let alone a rhino

Stephanie Feeney



Stephanie Feeney is a 30-year-old Irish girl with an obsession about running that is bordering on the unhealthy, if that is possible! She's worked in the financial services industry for the last eight years and is currently working part time in an operational project management role for a specialist insurance company. When not wearing a business suit, she is dressed a little more casually for her second 'job' as a student at Goldsmiths University where she is in the first year of a two-year MA course in Contemporary Art Theory. There's not usually much time left over but, when she can, she also helps out a London-based arts charity that organises visual arts events.

Comrades Marathon is the biggest physical challenge Stephanie has ever faced. With three marathons under her belt – London, Berlin and Dublin – she is not unfit, but this challenge will surely test the boundaries of her physical and mental strength. When Save the Rhino asked her if

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she wanted to join up, she simply could not say no. She thought the chance to take part in one of the world's top ultra-distance races in a team of fun-loving yet dedicated athletes does not come along every day. But just as important is the chance to raise significant funds to support the excellent work that Save the Rhino does.

Robert Hart



Robert Hart is a 35-year-old software writer living in Berkshire. In the past Robert has raised money for charity playing guitar at some concerts, but mostly he has just been sitting in front of the telly with a glass of wine! So he decided to do something productive with his life... he swapped the wine and TV remote for some Lucozade and trainers. He then got a place in the London Marathon 2009 with Save the Rhino. Robert had never done a marathon before, but a basic training plan and sheer determination got him through – despite a 2-stone rhino suit weighing him down! 2010 will be busy for Robert as he is getting married and doing the Comrades!

Robert is taking part in Comrades for several reasons. Mainly because he knows he can do it – so he feels like he should! He needs a challenge in his life, something to motivate himself. Whilst running Robert feels detached from the rat race and the usual humdrum, and afterwards it will be a great personal achievement for him to look back on. The atmosphere at the start and finish will be electric. In between, he'll have the views of South Africa, the camaraderie of the runners, and the legendary crowd support to get him through. Finally Robert is very proud to run for Save the Rhino, a great and important charity.

Phil Hobson



Phil is a construction manager working for the largest civil engineering contractor in the UK, Balfour Beatty. He started endurance sport in 2002 competing in the London triathlon, ably supported by his then-partner Pam. Three years later, he completed the UK Ironman Triathlon, which he thought was the toughest event ever created. Phil and Pam have always had an interest in rhinos, with 95 individual rhinos dotted around their house in Leicester. When the opportunity came for Phil to run the London Marathon in 2008, plus raise money for Save the Rhino, he had to run it in the world-famous rhino costume. He completed the event in over five hours, revising his view of the toughest event ever created.

Why Comrades marathon, in a rhino suit? In the summer of 2009 Phil and Pam tied the knot at Woburn Safari Park. Thanks to Save the Rhino, the wedding day was made extra special and full of rhinos. To say a huge thank you, and take Pam on a slightly delayed and unorthodox honeymoon, Phil decided to take on his biggest challenge yet: 56 miles + rhino costume in the most famous ultra marathon in the world, whilst raising funds for Save the Rhino. Phil has a respectful fear of this event, but with good support he is determined not to fail.

Stephen Robins



Stephen Robins has been running for years - he started with 10k runs and half marathons. His first marathon was London in 2005 which he found incredible, mainly due to the great support all round the course. Stephen has also run Berlin and London (again) but these were all 'normal', non-rhino events. Then his colleague (thanks Kenneth!) talked him into the Atacama Crossing in the Chilean desert - with the Rhino. He found it a truly amazing event - the blood, sweat and tears notwithstanding. But sweat washes off and tears dry so it's all about the next challenge...

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The Comrades Marathon is a truly massive event however you look at it – 20,000 runners take part, over an 89km course, restricted by a 12-hour time limit. Every South African Stephen has talked to has watched this event - it's live on TV for the duration. The benefits over the traditional week-long ultra are clear - it's just one day of effort. But, there is a time limit, so it'll be intense effort. And Stephen and his team mates have to get the rhino around the course to it'll be extremely intense effort. And that sounds like the kind of challenge he will enjoy!

Chris Derksen



Chris is a South African citizen (born in 1975) who for his sins has Angus Innes as one of his best and most inspirational friends. His family also owns a farm, to which white rhino was successfully introduced over a decade ago... but he is not a runner. He is committed to the cause, and will do his best not only to support this initiative but also his mates in doing so but cannot give any guarantee that he will be physically able to walk (or run) a distance of close to 90kms, although he has cycled it once. Wish him luck.

Sam Dickie



Sam travelled to East Africa where he saw an abandoned baby rhino in the Ngorongoro Crater about two years ago and fell in love with the place. He ran for the Save the Rainforest charity in the New York marathon but specifically wanted to give something back to Africa and its inhabitants. So this great charity, coupled with a lazy 89km hill run in Africa ticked all the boxes. Sam is looking forward to wearing the rhino suit and is especially excited about wearing it during the celebrations afterwards.

Sam is a Kiwi and is looking forward to the challenge.

Gus Innes



Angus was born in Brisbane, Australia a long time ago and the years have not been kind. He is attempting to run the Comrades basically because he is a sad old git who can no longer cut the mustard in competitive rugby or rowing, and is looking for something that will allow him to feel still partially young and fit. The threat of 89kms, the fact there is no guarantee of being able to finish something like this, and the chance to do it with some very close mates essentially sold Angus on the Comrades.

Angus is a Patron of Save the Rhino and has run the New York Marathon for the charity before, as well as having spent time with the rhino on his fellow "comrade" Chris Derksen's reserve in Transvaal. He wants passionately for future generations of his family to live in a world where they can still see animals like the Javan, Sumatran and Indian rhino wild and live, rather than in a zoo or museum, and believes strongly in the benefits Save the Rhino brings not only to the animals but the communities around their habitat. Angus would like to thank all supporters and ask them to feel free to take joy from the immense pain he will experience on this venture.

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Daniel McGrath



Daniel McGrath is Australian, having been born in Sydney and then later attending high school and undergraduate university in Brisbane. Whilst in Brisbane, Dan was involved in many sports, but primarily spent his days on the cricket and rugby fields. After qualifying as a solicitor in Brisbane, Dan attended Cambridge University where he obtained a Master of Arts. Dan is employed by Challenger Financial Services Group, based in Sydney but is currently working on projects for Challenger in Europe.

Whilst imbibing a few coldies one evening, Dan was convinced by Gus Innes that an 89 km “sightseeing” tour of South Africa in the spring was a worthwhile pursuit, and therefore now finds himself treading the pavement most days in order to get in shape for the famous Comrades marathon. Other than the considerable achievement that will come with tackling and finishing Comrades, Dan is particularly focused on completing the challenge for the Save the Rhino programme – a great cause that has received such wonderful support around the world.

JP O'Reilly



JP O'Reilly was born in Botswana and then spent 12 years in Africa and the Middle East before returning to school in England; with most of that time spent on various sports fields. From school he went out to play rugby in Australia before returning to play professionally in England (initially for Sale) whilst also attending Manchester University. JP was then lucky enough to spend the best part of the next eight years playing rugby for a living with Leicester, Leeds, Worcester and travelling the world with it. After retiring he moved to London to work in the City, and is still in the wonderful world of finance.

Since retiring from professional sport JP has felt he has constantly been on the hunt for things to fill the void of missing the adrenaline, challenge, camaraderie and sense of pride and fulfillment that team sport brings. So, when, on 20 July 2009 he received an email from Gus (a fellow Comrades team member) regarding Comrades, he knew straight away the void was about to be filled! It was exactly the sort of ‘ridiculous’ challenge JP had been searching for and to be able to do it with friends and for a great cause meant he was definitely in.

Save the Rhino International: *Connecting conservation and communities*

Registered charity number: 1035072

Save the Rhino International works to conserve viable populations of critically endangered rhinos in Africa and Asia. We recognise that the future of wildlife is inextricably linked to the communities that share its habitat. By funding field projects and through education, our goal is to deliver material, long-lasting and widespread benefits to rhinos and other endangered species, ecosystems and to the people living in these areas.