*Press Release*

*For Immediate Release*

**Inspirational Cyclists to Ride the Amashova Durban Classic**

The Amashova has traditionally been a race where people and communities come together to help uplift and inspire others – particularly those in need, with riding for a cause being quite commonplace as part of the cyclists’ experience on race day. Billy Macleod, a dedicated cyclist from Pretoria, is gearing up for an extraordinary journey on the 106km route of this year's Amashova race. This year he is riding the Amashova Durban Classic not just for the thrill of competition but to raise awareness about the shortage of organ and tissue donors in South Africa following his triumphant return to the sport after a life-threatening battle with heart disease, resulting in a miraculous heart transplant just 12 months ago.

With an impressive racing background that includes 10 Iron Man competitions, multiple Cape Epics, and a myriad of other races, prior to falling ill Macleod was considered a competitive athlete. In his last Amashova race in 2013, he rode a tandem with his wife as a green number rider, securing a notable 4th place finish overall. Inspired by his love and passion for cycling, the sports enthusiast founded a successful business called All-In-Events in October 2010 that transported bikes to major cycling events.

However, in 2013 life threw him a curveball. Macleod recalls, “I began experiencing extreme fatigue, which was initially attributed to my rigorous sporting activities. By 2014, I was informed that I actually needed a pacemaker due to an abnormally low heart rate. After the procedure, I experienced a period of recovery and even resumed riding and competing.”

In 2016, Billy's health took a severe downturn. He started experiencing blackouts and severe headaches, leading to an MRI scan that revealed the spread of a rare disease called Sarcoidosis to his heart. Over the next six years, he endured two complete flatlines, received 25 shocks from his Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD), underwent 26 hours of ablations, survived two strokes, and battled nose cancer.

Macleod explains, “In August 2022 I had reached a point of despair, after speaking to my wife and daughter about the decision, I was ready to turn off my ICD as I could no longer endure the shocks. My heart seemed beyond repair, and I was placed on the heart transplant waiting list at Milpark Hospital. For five days, there was no match, highlighting the dire donor shortage. I made peace with the idea that I might not survive. The following day after being discharged, my wife received a phone call. She turned to me and said that I should pack a toothbrush because a matching donor was found”.

Within days of his heart transplant, Macleod was up and walking, defying all odds and determined to embrace life and cycling once again. In January 2023, he fulfilled his promise to his wife by embarking on a 10km tandem ride, and since then, his recovery and training have progressed steadily.

Macleod is now on a mission to give back the gift of life he received. He wants to highlight the critical shortage of organ and tissue donors in South Africa, especially within the competitive sports community, where many may not consider themselves at risk. He is a proud member of Hero777, an organisation dedicated to raising awareness about organ donation, and he invites everyone to explore their tribute to donors at the Botanical Gardens in Durban.

In honour of his donor and their family, as well as all other donors, Billy is participating in this year's Amashova race to create awareness. He will be joined in the race by a group of dedicated school kids, thanks to Kerry Bartholomew from Maritzburg College and a few members of the public, who have rallied behind this inspiring cause and are also riding to raise awareness. Billy's story and mission also led him to participate in other awareness rides with organisations like Revive Pulse, in an effort to further emphasise the importance of life-saving devices like pacemakers and ICDs.

“I want to thank my donor’s family for the amazing gift of life they bestowed upon me and to give them peace of mind that their legacy lives on within me in every breath I take. Every day I wake up and pray to God for my blessing! I am determined to make a significant impact through talks at schools and companies, with the goal of expanding the donor base and increasing awareness about organ donation. I also hope to contribute to an inclusive cycling future by advocating for the use of E-bikes to accommodate riders with various abilities,” expressed MacLeod.

Billy Macleod, along with Janet Legemaate from Hero777 and Kerry Bartholomew from Maritzburg College, urges everyone to support their drive for organ and tissue donors. You can contribute to their cause by visiting <https://www.backabuddy.co.za/champion/project/billy-macleod-cycles-106km-amashova-1-year>

Another Amashova participant with an inspiring back story is Gordon Reid. At the age of 40, Reid underwent five surgeries within a year, which motivated him to support the Childhood Cancer Foundation of South Africa. This year, Gordon and his friends plan to complete the 65km journey on BMX bikes sponsored by Cyclesphere and wearing Traderoot Active gear, to raise funds for the Salt40 Foundation in memory of Gray Braedvedt, who was a regular rider in the Amashova that tragically lost his life in a hit-and-run cycling accident.

The Salt40 Foundation is a non-profit organisation dedicated to disability services and support. They are preparing for their next initiative, which involves 15 children from Groutville in Kwa-Zulu Natal, set to participate in a bike project launching at Holla Trails early next year. To contribute to this cause and help Gordon reach his R30 000 goal, please visit <https://thesaltfoundation.org.au> or go to <https://www.givengain.com/project/gordon-raising-funds-for-salt40-foundation-65998>, as well as connecting with Gordon Reid on social media (Twitter - @luckygordy), (Facebook - Gords Reid) and (Instagram - @luckygordy\_).

Also to be found at this year’s starting line-up for the 106km Amashova event is the inspiring Karel Dolak, who at the age of 80 years old will be tackling the challenging route from Pietermaritzburg to Durban with his son who is flying in from Scotland to ride with his dad. This octogenarian cyclist from the Czech Republic only started riding at the age of 66 with a road bike that was gifted to him. Known and loved by many cyclists who frequent the Cradle area in Johannesburg for training rides, he is currently an active member of Club 100 in Johannesburg and rides at least four times a week.

“Every year it never ceases to amaze us the type of exceptional people that ride in the Amashova and use our race as a platform to give back to their community or people in need. We wish the best of luck to all the exceptional cyclists who are taking part in this year’s race and encourage the public to support them on the side lines and in their efforts to raise awareness and funds for worthy causes”, says Amashova Race Director, Annie Batchelder.

For those who haven’t yet entered but would like to still participate in this year’s race, late registration is available at the Suncoast Globe on Friday 20th and Saturday 21st October for the race that takes place on Sunday 22nd October 2023.

For more information, please visit [www.amashova.co.za](http://www.amashova.co.za)

**ENDS**

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**Amashova Classic**

**About Amashova**: The Amashova Durban Classic began in 1986 making it SA’s oldest ‘classic’ cycling race. The idea of having a bicycle race on the route of the world famous comrades marathon was the dream of veteran Springbok Cyclist, Dave Wiseman and his friend Tony McMillian. Over the years the improvements on the route and road closures, accompanied by a steady increase of entries year after year and the involvement of some of the country’s top sponsors has helped make the ‘Shova’ one of the most loved and KZN’s biggest cycling race.

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