

Dane Wilson and Reuben Van Niekerk para team @ Epic

Dane Wilson (30) will be teaming up with Reuben van Niekerk (28) for this year's Absa Cape Epic as team Driepoot Toyota. Wilson will be participating in his second Absa Cape Epic. He was the first para-cyclist to successfully complete the race in 2009.

Wilson, who works as a project manager for Junk Mail Publishing Digital, says that his race partner volunteered for the 2012 edition to secure an entry. "We've been riding together on the track and road for a while, and thought it would be a fantastic challenge to complete the Absa Cape Epic as the first 'para-cyclist' team," says Wilson.



Dane Wilson during the 2012 Absa Cape Epic

Wilson and his partner train together for 2 to 3 days a week, depending on how their schedules overlap. "We mostly ensure that we do at least one long ride together a week," says Wilson. He follows a programme compiled by his long-time track cycling coach Sheldon Bole, who mixes up his training through the week with a combination of road, mountain biking and track sessions to range between 12 to 20 hours a week. He follows a healthy eating pattern, sticking to the basic principles of only taking in carbohydrates during the day and protein and vegetables in the evenings. He believes in moderation and balance.

Wilson reckons the most important ingredient to complete the Absa Cape Epic successfully is to stay positive whilst suffering. "Although base fitness is a given requirement, it takes a certain kind of mental perseverance to make it through the 8 days," he says. "The route looks tough as always, otherwise Dr Evil [Leon Evans, route designer] and his team could not call it an Epic!"

Wilson feels that being a para-cyclist will not affect his participation, or be a challenge. "I just need extra preparation and need to ensure that my prosthetic is up to the challenge. Thankfully my partner and I have the support of one of the world's best sports prosthetists in Johan Snyders from Icxpress.

When asked what has played the biggest role in adapting to his disability, Wilson says: "Having been born with my left hand and forearm missing, was probably an advantage in the sense that I've known no different, making the adaption process easier than for example Reuben, who lost his lower leg later in life. I've got incredible respect for guys like Reuben who've made the adjustment. Other than that, I think the question should be 'who' played the biggest role. I believe my parents in raising me as a fully able child, never once allowing me to think I cannot do something - certainly an immense amount of tough love."

In 2013, Wilson is hoping to achieve personal best results in the various Para-cycling South African Championships on track and road, and maintain his selection in the South African Para-cycling track team to compete in the 2014 World Track Championship. "This is going to be an important building block year towards Olympics in Rio 2016, which is my mid to long term goal."

Wilson further comments on the Absa Cape Epic: "Besides being a fantastically organised event, taking one through some of the most spectacular parts of our country, it's of course an immense challenge, and this time it's going to be a great achievement for both of us to complete the event as a team given our circumstances."

Wilson describes himself as first and foremost a father and husband who tries to provide and lead to the best of his abilities, as well as passionate about having a purpose in life, and often a little too serious. When asked about his free time he comments: "What's that? Between my two gorgeous, but incredibly busy daughters, and training for the Epic, there's not much room for anything else!"