

## HOT HEELS AFRICA 2008

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Justin Boast always brings us some of the most epic event coverage on the 'fish and this time is no exception. Amazing downhill racing, stunning scenery, epic hill and a pack of arrogant baboons. What more could you ask for in a downhill competition. HOT HEELS AFRICA 2008 Final IGSA World Cup Event of the Year  
Pics taken by Sharon le Grange & Ben Malherbe

It's 7 o'clock on Wednesday evening and I'm trying to pack. We leave for the "bunker" in the Kogelberg Biosphere nature reserve tonight, and as always, there's too many things that still need to be done. T-shirts and race day information sheets still to print, boards, leathers, clothes, food and beer packed. By 11 everything's done and our convoy consisting of Anton Pratt, Richard Dweza, Ben Malherbe, Tibor Hery, Glen Phillips and myself hits the road. We arrive after midnight at the pitch-black bunker. The scene is eerie, real horror movie stuff. The bunker's up in the middle of the Hottentots Holland mountain range, a South African Navy relic left from the old days when this area was used as a missile testing ground. There's no electricity or hot water, but we manage to find some candles for light and get a fire started. This'll be home for the next two nights. We unpack our gear and chill by the fire.

We awake to a beautiful Kogelberg morning and three truck loads of about 1000 straw bails awaiting for us at the gate. With everyone helping pack the bails on the course the job goes quickly, but as we pass Baboon Bend and move on to the next corner, a big troop of the baboons come down and totally destroy some of our load, spreading the straw across the course causing a complete mess, but hey, the name says it all, we're on their turf after all. By the time we had managed to chase the resident troop back up the mountain they'd left straw strewn all the way up to Lloyd's left –& a tight left hander on the fastest section of the course, dedicated to Lloyd Mcpherson who tragically died in an accident just before the turn in 2004. We'd cleared most of the straw by the afternoon and got in a few chill runs down the middle section, taking in the beauty of Kogelberg before the event began and the hill flooded with adrenaline junkies.

Friday morning and there's still plenty of cleaning waiting for us on the course. We all work together to clean up, eager to get into our leathers and start our day of free riding. Jamie Kaiser, our race director eventually arrives, and with the medics in place we start riding the hill. The usual SE wind's blowing at the top half of the course and a tailwind down the straight at finish, with conditions staying pretty much the same during the day. Riders had the whole of the Friday to dial into the course and work around the windy conditions. By the end of the day there were smiles all round and with the Mitsubishi team helping us cart the riders back up the hill, we were able to get plenty of runs in for all.

Unfortunately, in one of their runs earlier in the day, Pete Connolly (UK) and Zeid Bataineh (Jordan) bailed hard together and injured themselves quite badly. They sat out the rest of the practice, choosing rather to recover a bit before race day (both came back to compete on Sunday and place in the racing). As the day ended we packed our gear and headed out to Hangklip Hotel, a rustic spot just outside of Pringle Bay where all the riders were crashing over the weekend. That night SAGRA organized a fish braai for all the riders and a big screen to show some local downhill vids before some riders retired to bed and others continued to party into the night.

On Saturday morning the SE wind was still blowing and conditions had'nt changed much from the previous day. As the riders got ready the marshals did a course check before the riding began. Saturday was qualifying day and the riders had plenty of time to find their lines and to perfect their tucks before the afternoon rolled in and time trails begun. During our afternoon lunch, knowing that the course was clear of riders and marshals, the troop of baboons came down to the baboon bend to get stuck into some straw bails. Eimer, a German race director in Cape Town to help with the races, had never encountered baboons before, was all too eager to join me as in chasing the baboons away. After lunch we squeezed in a couple of extra practice runs before we did our time trails. Canadian Mishco Erban was laying down solid runs on the Hot Heels Africa course and took the top position for time trails in stand-up. Benni Weber from Switzerland took the fastest time in buttboard (Classic Luge), arriving just before qualifying runs began and still managing to take the top time. Russel Naude from Cape Town was on top form and qualified first for street luge. Saturday night most of the riders came together at one of the chalets chilling and chatting about the past two days of solid riding over a few cold beers. The night came to an end relatively early with race day looming just a few hours ahead.

Sunday we got a call in the morning that there was smoke on the mountain with a possible fire threat. Ominous news for sure, but after a few phone calls we were told that the fire was nowhere near the course and morning practice could get under way. In 32 degree heat and with no wind, the course conditions had changed from the previous days and riders had to find their lines once again. In the practice runs there were plenty of riders crashing while trying to adjust to the conditions, but before the riders could get used to the no wind conditions, the SE wind came up again. The cool South Easter cleared the smoke and riders got ready for the final IGSA World Cup Race for 2008.

Hot Heels Africa is the last in the IGSA World Cup circuit and the longest running race on the series, 2008 being its 6th consecutive year. With limited buttboard entries the riders opted for a GP styled race. This means all the riders would race together in three races and after each race where you placed at the finish is where you would start on the start line. Konstantin Weigl from Austria crashed with Cape Town local Leander Lacey in the first heat but came back to win the final Classic Luge for 2008 with an injured ankle, just beating Russel Naude. Benni Weber took third and Abdil Mahdzan from Malaysia came in at fourth. Again with limited riders in the Street Luge category the riders once again chose to ride GP format. Leander Lacey won the final Street Luge race and in doing so became the IGSA World Cup Street Luge Champion for 2008, Russel Naude took second, Benni third and Abdil fourth.

In the final IGSA World Cup skateboard race, Mike Zietsman took the lead into Lloyd's Left but Canadian charger, Mischo Erban had the course dialed down. Mischo came from fourth, drafting the front pack and flew into Baboon Bend into the lead and held on, to win the last IGSA skateboard race for 2008. Mike Zietsman finished in second followed by Olivier Bareaud from France in third. Olivier crashed during practice, cutting open his chin and had to drive to a hospital to get 8 stitches, but still managed to make it back in time for the race and make finals &ndash; only to crash again with Aki von Glasow from Switzerland who came in at fourth.

It was an awesome three days spent on the Hot Heels Africa course! Chilling with a bunch of international riders and bombing an awesome hill. Huge thanks goes out to Mistubishi Paarden Eiland dealership for sponsoring the two Mitsubishi Tritons and getting the riders up the hill efficiently and fast. Another huge thanks goes out to Landyachtz Longboards for the boards, Abec11 Wheels and Oranatang Wheels for sponsoring wheels as prizes and Sector Nine for sponsored racing vests for the riders to wear while racing. To all the international riders that came and to all the riders that want to come...see you in 2009!

**LIVE IT LARGE!!**

Gotta clean all this up, now... Silverfish Longboarding.com supports all forms of racing. Get out there and do it and, if there's an IGSA, GSI, La Costa Boys, Coast Longboarding or other event going on, get out there and hit it! Don't be an idiot, wear a helmet, eat your vegetables and brush your teeth.