

Joburg in a spin after The Amazing Race for Charity

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The Amazing Race for Charity, held on Saturday, saw entry numbers double from the previous event held in September 2008. This year, 195 teams, dressed in wacky costumes and sporting brilliantly decorated cars, gathered at Q.ba in Bryanston to support this bi-annual charity event.

"We were overwhelmed by the response. We had a gradual increase in participants over the past three years but it suddenly doubled this year," says race director Dean Oelschig, PenQuin International Special Projects. "People literally begged me to extend the deadline so that they could enter a team. When they showed up on the day wearing outrageous outfits and having spent hours dressing their cars, I just couldn't turn them away. They'd put in so much effort."

The Amazing Race for Charity teams set off, in frenzy, from Q.ba, in Bryanston, as they battled to be the first to start. Clues directed teams all over Johannesburg, from Zoo-lake to Kya Sand, with many Joburg suburbs in-between. Entrants conceded that the clues were brilliantly conceived and difficult to decipher, with some involving number codes, anagrams and non-English languages. Tasks involved watching and photographing a specially produced CNBC Africa television commercial, looking for a fake political poster, tracking skydivers and playing paintball, action cricket and poker.

The event rules specify that the driver of the team's vehicle 'must, will and always has to be female'. "Female drivers are generally more responsible for an even of this nature. Driving fast has nothing to do with winning. Changing the status quo and asking females to drive their boyfriends and husbands under pressure is hilarious," Oelschig explains: "The competitiveness of the drivers was nothing short of epic as they manoeuvred through alleys and tried to outfox each other."

For the first time, a four-person team, on mountain bikes, entered the race. "What a fantastic event!" says Lisa de Speville, editor of [www.AR.co.za](#), South Africa's adventure racing website. "Aside from the fun of riding all over Joburg, the support and festive vibe from the cars was phenomenal. Throughout the afternoon we were cheered on by the other entrants who hooted and shouted encouragement." The team covered almost 50 kilometres and although they did not complete the entire course, they did visit seven of the ten locations, and one of the three additional locations. "We'd definitely do it on bikes again, even if we don't stand a chance of completing the whole course. It was just so much fun to take part in this event," de Speville adds.

And how amazing was The Amazing Race for Charity? "As amazing as 11 complicatedly cryptic clues, nine devilishly difficult destinations, four fluorescent hubcaps, three terrific team mates and one cramping clutch foot," says Tessa Kerrich-Walker, driver for the Shag-wells team.

The Amazing Race for Charity raised R75,000, which will be donated to the SOS Children's Village.

The next The Amazing Race for Charity is scheduled for Saturday, 26 September 2009.

For more information, please visit www.penquin.co.za/race.

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