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DWR Distribution, Absen and Omega are delighted to sponsor two riders taking part in the 2026 Absa Cape Epic - the man with the 'lekker' strong legs, Andrew Hermanson, Senior Account Manager from Omega Digital Solutions, and DWR's own Robert Izzett, Director and Head of Sales.

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(Above): DWR's Robert Izzett and Andrew Hermanson from Omega Digital

The Absen Cape Epic, taking place between 15 to 22 March, has been compared to the mountain bike version of the Tour de France and is known as one of the most gruelling races in the world. The physical grind takes second place to the mental challenge of getting on your bicycle each day to cover 707 kilometres through raw South African wilderness, with 15,900 metres of climbing. The route stretches from Meerendal Wine Estate to Montagu and Greyton, finishing in Stellenbosch. They say it's where legends are made, and every year the race seems to get

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harder.

“At first, I thought they were both crazy,” laughs Tiens Lange, Omega Sales Director. “However, Omega and DWR have shared a special relationship for many years. An adventure and challenge like the Epic is exactly what our partnership has been built on. Once again, I am confident that we will achieve a successful outcome, just as we have done through so many joint challenges faced together over the years.

Riding the Epic has been on Andrew’s bucket list for the past 15 years. Now in his early 40s, he has dedicated himself to rigorous training, given up alcohol, overhauled his diet, improved his sleep, and even shed 12kg in preparation for the race.

“I have always been a sporting person. Growing up, my dad was a big cyclist, and I started riding when I was around three years old,” Andrew recalls. “At school, I rode BMX and received provincial colours in Grade 8 or 9. I’ve ridden motocross, mountain bikes, road bikes and gravel. Ever since I first saw the Epic, it was something I always wanted to do.”

While the race is daunting, Andrew has been training since the start of August 2025, riding 20-24 hours a week. That’s over 400km a week, with an additional two to three gym sessions in between. To keep up with family demands, he often takes his bicycle along to meet his partner and son wherever they are. His partner has been incredibly supportive, and he is grateful for her encouragement.

“I haven’t been this fit since my 20s,” he smiles. “It’s been a journey. I don’t think I could have asked to ride with anyone other than Robert Izzett. Rob is such a good guy with a great personality. He’s super handy, has a search-and-rescue background, and, having participated in the Epic before, I don’t think you could ask for a better partner. I haven’t done anything longer than three days before. With the Epic, we’ll be riding tough terrain for six to nine hours a day. That’s where Rob’s mental strength will outweigh my fitness.”

Andrew’s first real encounter with Robert was at Berg & Bush, where Rob was riding in a support capacity. He drove past Andrew, noticed his broken brakes and stopped to repair them. They had a beer afterwards, and the rest is history.

“Rob keeps saying I should pick a different partner,” Andrew laughs. “But it’s not about that. You need someone beside you when you’re hurting and in a dark place.”

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For Robert Izzett, the build-up has meant waking up most days at 3:30am to train for two hours before dropping the kids off at school, heading to work and then collapsing at home later in the evening. All self-inflicted, he admits. He has lost an impressive 10kg too.

“I’ve been training hard, and I’m really excited to take on the challenge,” says Robert, who previously rode the Epic in 2018. “Andy is in great shape and brings such positive energy. Riding together is going to make the whole experience even more special. I’m really looking forward to sharing this adventure with him — it’s going to be an incredible and a lot of fun!”

The Epic route changes every year, and the organisers make it tougher each year. Rob recalls

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crashing in a previous race and breaking his knuckle. “To get through it, you have to finish it,” he says. “That’s the first thing. It’s eight days in total. You can crash five metres before the finish line on the last day and walk away with a DNF.”

But the aim is to reach the finish line while keeping your spirits up. “That’s why you do this race with a partner. You have days when you’re strong, and they’re not, and vice versa,” says Rob. And this will certainly be one of the adventures retold around a fire long after the dust has settled!

“On my side, I’d just like to thank Ian Shang from Absen for being a sponsor,” said Rob. “It’s incredible that Absen is supporting not only DWR but also Omega Digital, one of Absen’s biggest resellers in Africa. Absen has been amazing.”

Tiens ends, “I’m really proud of how dedicated Andy is, especially in the way he prepares. He shows real grit and tenacity in everything he takes on, and in doing so, perfectly reflects the values we hold as Omegans. Success earned through hard work and dedication is what defines Omega, and that’s exactly what makes Andy and Rob’s adventure so special and so close to who we are – doing the right things, to the best of our capabilities.”