

FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO (08/17)

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Justin Chadwick 10 March 2017



“The difficulties you will face in life, do not come to destroy you.....they come to show you exactly what you are made of and just how strong you really are.” Anon

FALLING INTO HUMILITY (A SOMEWHAT PERSONAL STORY)

When I woke up on Sunday morning I realized it had not been a nightmare – I actually had broken my femur in two places and had a metal rod inserted. But this long story is not about breaking legs – it is about the people who helped me and the global citrus family – and the spirit of South Africans. It started out a beautiful Saturday morning at 5 30 – a long ride was planned through the sugar cane which was cut short as I came down a hill, and hit a stream that was as slippery as ice. Before I knew it the wheels of the bike had slipped out from under me, and with me cleated in I came down onto solid rock with my full body weight. As I hit mother Africa I felt things breaking, and I writhed in agony in the stream, screaming for my riding mate, CGA’s Mitchell Brooke, to come help. He rode back as I thrashed around in the small stream. We were in a very remote area with no cell phone reception – so Mitchell headed off to find help; I lay in the stream as I did not have pain lying still; any movement sent pain waves through my leg and into my body. It was actually quite pleasant lying there; I could see birds in the trees and the gurgling water kept me numb. Mitchell came back to say the ambulance was on its way, and that he was going off to guide them in. I lay in the water and thought about life. As I lay there five other riders came down – and they refused to leave me; what a pleasure to have fellow cyclists who did not know me from Adam but were prepared to wait with me and impact their riding time. Two further riders slipped as they tried to cross the stream on foot. Mitchell came back with the ambulance – and Sugren and Krish (the first medics on site). They quickly assessed the situation and realized that they were not qualified to assist me; they could not administer morphine or deal with trauma. I had now been in the stream for an hour; and they did not want to move me. One of them headed off with Mitchell to get cell reception and phone the advanced trauma unit. Bongi arrived in his golf but could not get to me, and so he caught a lift with Konrad in his ambulance. Bongi and Konrad assessed the situation and decided to move me out of the stream. I thought that I have been exposed to pain before (such as kidney stones) but rolling me onto the carry board was the most pain I have ever experienced, as was the dragging of the stretcher to dry land (or so I thought). Once on dry land they lifted me up and onto a stretcher – and then the fun started. Because I had been in the stream for almost two hours my veins had shut down; diverting all blood and warmth to my core. They tried to find a vein in the back of my hand, behind the elbow and in my wrist – both hands but nothing. They took off my sock and dug around in my foot – nothing. They then tried to warm me up for an hour; and dug around again – still nothing. Last resort – “Black and Decker” – drilling straight through the shin bone to administer the pain killer into the marrow. Now I realized what pain REALLY is – I swear if I had a weapon I would have killed Konrad; anything to stop the pain. But that even failed. Konrad then phoned for a helicopter – he could not risk taking me across the bumpy roads with no pain killer. He phoned and phoned and eventually got authorization. Now to move me from the stretcher onto his evacuation mattress – through all that pain again. Through all this Konrad, Bongi, Krish and Sugren could not have been more professional and sympathetic; the whole time I felt safe and that a solution was coming – I never lost faith in these saviours from Netcare 911. After another hour we could see the weather was closing in, and we could hear the chopper overhead. Conrad set off a flare and guided the chopper down near the ambulance. Out jumped Shaik and Sham, and the pilot (Kevin). They now needed to move me onto the scoop – thankfully leaving me on the evacuation mattress. They were careful as they lifted me into the chopper – out over the toxic EnviroServ dump site, then over the Pavilion and then down onto the helipad at St Augustine’s hospital. The entire hospital staff was out to see the patient arrive – I felt a little guilty that there was not more guts and gore!! All the nurses told me how they were taking photos and selfies as a medivac did not happen every day. Then into the ambulance for a five minute ride to the trauma unit – with Shaik and Sham with me the entire time. Straight into the admissions (hundreds of forms, vital signs, ECG, Blood pressure, blood tests and blood sugar tests). Then into X Ray – and I would not allow them to move me off Konrad’s yellow mattress; and finally to theatre. Dr Seedat explained that it was a bad break in two places – and that there was no option but to stick a pin through the femur. In the next ten minutes I had been prepped by the Anaesthetist and was wheeled into theatre. I woke up in the general ward with nurses keen to see the “helicopter patient”. From the moment I arrived at St Augustine’s I was treated with compassion and professionalism of the highest order – thanks to all the angels. With Shane and the physio’s pushing me I got discharged on Wednesday. Unfortunately this meant that I never got to the Summit (I am on crutches for a month with no pressure on the battered leg). I want to thank all the citrus family from southern Africa and around the world for their good wishes; I have had calls and messages from all corners of the citrus world and can truly say that we work in a GREAT industry. We may compete and disagree on issues, but when it’s about the person the caring and thoughtfulness is humbling.

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