



## **SOUTH AFRICA**

### **SOUTH AFRICA CONQUERS MONGOL DERBY BAREFOOT**

**MEDIA RELEASE – FINAL**

**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **BAREFOOT SA ACES MONGOL DERBY/1**

Charles van Wyk, the only South African amongst 25 international riders taking part in the inaugural Mongol Derby, crossed the finish line in Dadal on Sat, 29 August 2009 together with Mongolian Rider, Shiravasambo "Gala" Galbadrakh, a mere 7 days after the start in Karakorum on Sat, 22 August 2009. This epic endurance event for humans involved more than 700 horses across the Mongolian Steppe and recreated the ancient postal system of the great Chinggis Khan during the 13 century.

Van Wyk is a competitive endurance rider, breeding Arabian horses in South Africa for the endurance market. He has been riding since he was 7 years old and is the official Barefoot South Africa Ambassador, riding with a full Barefoot kit, including girth and special pad.

The Southern African distributors of Barefoot Saddle System, Horse Etc based in George, South Africa supplied the saddles for the Mongol Derby. As the revolutionary Barefoot Saddle is treeless, it fits any horse which was a major concern for The Adventurists, the UK based organizers of the Mongol Derby. Barefoot is an extremely humane way of riding horses as it creates optimum wither and spinal clearance and is completely shock and pressure absorbent, distributing the weight of a rider evenly over the horses' spine.

Taking part in the Mongol Derby certainly put the Barefoot Atlanta Endurance saddle through its paces and proudly passed the test of 1000km of undulating hills, open steppe, torrential rain, 12 – 14 hands semi-wild horses and experienced riders completely unfamiliar with the saddle. All riders complimented Barefoot on the comfort, versatility and durability, adding that this was the only saddle that would work in an event like this.

Riders rode distances from 20 – 40kms changing horses at each Urtuu (horse station) and covering an average of 60 – 80 kms a day. Van Wyk surged ahead from the pack at the early stages and together with the silent companionship of his various steeds and "Gala", they managed to cover a staggering 120 - 180kms a day, navigating with GPS and local instinct.

Astringent vet checks were in place during the entire race, with a qualified European and Mongolian Vet at each station monitoring the wellbeing of each horse participating. A delegation of South Africans sourced by Barefoot SA, together with New Zealand and Scottish vets made up the compliment of foreign vets. A back up medical team from the UK were vigilant to assist with any medical emergencies. Saddle sores, aching muscles and bones were the major complaints!

South Africa has an incredible affinity with Mongolia – the vastness of the steppe, the gentle, kind, hospitable yet hardy herdsmen and families of the Steppe who graciously looked after all riders and backup team. Barefoot SA hopes to continue growing and supporting the successful Mongol Derby. The greatest aspect behind this epic event is the charitable humanitarian motivation: necessary funds through the proactive fundraising by the various riders have been generated for Mercy Corp for the upliftment and sustainability for the local herdsmen. It is hoped that further ties with the South African government is forged to promote tourism, commerce and industry in general to Mongolia. Horse ETC also will be entering into negotiations to import necessary horse equipment and feed for the wellbeing of the incredible horses of Mongolia – the catalyst for the Mongol Derby.

For more information and high resolution images, please contact Charles Van Wyk at the press conference of the Mongol Derby or Lynn Giles, Brand Manager of Barefoot in South Africa. For more information and updates on the Mongol Derby, please visit <http://mongolderby.theadventurists.com/>

**ENDS**

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START OF MONGOL DERBY 2009 – KHARKHORIN, MONGOLIA

CHARLES VAN WYK - LEFT REAR



**CHARLES VAN WYK – START OF MONGOL DERBY – 1<sup>ST</sup> HORSE**



**CHARLES AND "GALA" – WINNERS OF MONGOL DERBY 2009**



**EAST MEETS WEST**

**MONGOLIAN VS BAREFOOT SADDLES!**



**OUR FLAG CERTAINLY FLEW HIGH, EVEN OUTSIDE ATYPICAL MONGOLIAN HOMESTEAD, A "GER"!**