

Little Blue Notebook Dolores Koan

Join the human bait-ball in his quest

My mate, Old Selbornian and veteran Kwa-Zulu-Natal journo, Fred Kockott, 56, has gone bananas.

On completing all eight Aquelle Midmar Miles last weekend, a feat that many colleagues doubted the "washed-up hack" would complete, Kockott was challenged to swim an expanse of sharky Wild Coast waters for a paltry sponsorship of 50c/km.

Kockott accepted! I guess the guy never passed matric maths, or even mastered the basics of arithmetic. Fifty cents per kilometre for the entire stretch of the Wild Coast amounts to little more than Kockott spends in ordering a drink and meal at his Durban North Beach local.

"R1 for the first shark," responded a Facebook friend, Inga Molzen.

Undeterred, Kockott has started a fundraising swim covering 22km of the Wild Coast earmarked, amid rock-like resistance from the community, for heavy-minerals mining by the Australian mining company, Mineral Resource Commodities (MRC).

The idea, says Kockott, is to raise funds for eco-tourism ventures along that stretch of coastline, as well as marine conservation initiatives and associated environmental journalism training.

Kockott hopes to be joined by several celebrities, including leading sports men



POTASSIUM-CHALLENGED: Fred Kockott is organising a pod of swimmers to slowly make their way along 22km of the Wild Coast to raise money and eco-tourism awareness. Picture: SUPPLIED

and women, and shall also invite top representatives of MRC and mineral resources minister Gwede Mantashe to take part – even if just for a 1km stretch.

While several swimmers have expressed tentative support, one colleague retorted: "Sure! Like I don't need both my legs!"

To allay such concerns, Kockott plans to enlist the support of Ocean Guardian, a manufacturer of shark shield devices that create electromagnetic fields to deter sharks. The devices are widely used in surfing, scuba diving, spearfishing, kayaking,

ocean fishing and for swimming protection around vessels.

In the meantime, Kockott reckons it was not feasting on bananas that gave him sustenance to cross the finish line of the eighth Midmar Mile at the weekend, but nougat bars made by Racefood.

In a twist of marketing, the former confectionary company Wedgewood has reinvented itself as an energy food supplier to athletes. It is now among official sponsors of the annual Aquelle Midmar Mile.

This year, Kockott was among 225 swim-

mers who collectively raised more than R3.8-million for various charities by swimming all eight Midmar Miles.

Leading the pack on the fundraising front, Robert Tout, raised R91,800 for Save the Rhino Foundation, followed closely by the founder of 8 Mile Club, Stan Kozlowksi, who raised R74,250 for the Wildlands Conservation Trust, and 15-year-old Muhammad Adam who raised R52,860 for Cansa.

And then there was the group of 16 milers – a dozen legendary marathon swimmers who on completing each Midmar Mile, swam back to the start in time to start the next race.

They collectively raised R133,797 for the Dusi Umngeni Conservation Trust (Duct) which champions clean rivers.

Kockott was the only 8 Miler swimming in aid of ocean conservation and is stoked to have got the issue on the fundraising agenda of the 8 Mile Club.

In an 11th-hour fundraising bid, Kockott challenged corporate sponsors to match R12,000 he has raised for Wild Oceans – the marine conservation arm of the WildTrust.

After all is said and done, perhaps Fred has not gone bananas.

People interested in supporting the Wild-Coast swim, can contact Kockott on 083-277-8907 or e-mail fredk@rovingreporters.co.za



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