

# Paddlers can expect optimum conditions for Dusi

TOMMY BALLANTYNE

WITH only eight days to go to the start of the 2010 Hansa Powerade Dusi Canoe Marathon next Thursday, paddlers are keeping a watchful eye on factors beyond their control that are connected with the 120km three-day race between Pietermaritzburg and Durban.

Among these are water quality and quantity, the *E coli* bacterium count, the potential water hyacinth blocks and last, but not least, the presence of at least one two-metre-long crocodile on the approach to the finish at Blue Lagoon.

Race organiser Ray de Vries said yesterday that following a reconnaissance trip into the Umsindusi and Umgeni river valleys at the weekend,

## Dusi special

THE 2010 Dusi Canoe Marathon starts on January 21 and Independent Newspapers in partnership with Tops at Spar will be there to keep readers informed and updated. A full page appears in The Mercury on Wednesday, January 20, gives detailed background on the marathon, including the best spectator vantage spots, then a half-page in the Mercury on Friday, January 22, gives the latest race positions, a four-page wrap and a half page inside The Independent on the Saturday gives readers the full story in pictures and words. Finally, a double-page spread in the Sunday Tribune provides the full results.

he was more than satisfied with the conditions along the route and paddlers could look forward to optimum river conditions for the race on January 21-23.

"We are expecting many of the K2 records to tumble next week, with both rivers already flowing at good levels and generous water releases promised for the race by Umgeni Water."

De Vries said all the dams – Midmar, Albert Falls, Henley and Inanda – were spilling.

"The *E coli* count at the start at Camp's Drift is not just favourable, but good, in canoeing terms," said De Vries.

"The count is taken daily and can be viewed on the race website [www.dusi.co.za](http://www.dusi.co.za), along with other race information."

De Vries said that the recent widespread rains had helped to raise the water levels in the river systems, helping to "flush them

out" and lessening the chance of paddlers contracting the dreaded "Dusi guts" during the race.

"As for the water hyacinth, there is one major block at the top of Inanda Dam of about 300m where the river flows into the dam, but efforts are under way to unblock this in time for the race."

The invasive hyacinth had the potential to increase by 15 percent a day in hot and humid conditions.

De Vries said only one crocodile had been sighted and it posed no danger to paddlers.

"The trap for it is still set and baited, but we have not caught it yet," he said.

"But this is more a worry for the future than for this year's race."

In the absence of top canoeists

Len Jenkins and Hank McGregor, there appears to be little doubt that the powerful Ant Stott-Michael Mbanjwa combination will be unstoppable in the men's event, while Abbey Miedema and Robyn Kime are the odds-on favourites to win the women's race.

Other outstanding performances are likely to come from Glen Hilliar and Mike de Villiers, who are paddling in the sub-Masters category (45-50 years), but could finish before the first sub-Veterans (35-40 years).

Graeme Pope-Ellis and Phillip van Niekerk, in the sub-Grand Masters category (55-60 years), will probably make the top 50, and Mark and Angelique Mulder will take some beating in the mixed doubles.

