

African Championships and National Ranking

Greetings from cold and wet Wales, where spring is trying unsuccessfully to push back the winter weather!

In the last few weeks, I have competed in African Championships, won my first Welsh 'podium' and broken into the top 10 rankings in Britain – all at a time when my academic workload at school has been gradually increasing!



It was great to represent Lesotho at the African Continental MTB Championships, but also fantastic to spend two short weeks at home with my parents and sisters. I managed to work as hard as I could on my training through a very cold and wet winter, to get to a reasonable early-season form for the championships. The race itself went well and I am very pleased with my performance – although I am a little disappointed with my result – 20th. In any other year, my performance would have been awarded by a top 10, but this race was in South Africa and the organisers decided to allow an unlimited SA team, instead of the normal 6 man team. 18 of the riders who finished in front of me were white South Africans! Anyway I guess I have no complaints because on the day they beat me fair and square.

The pace of the race was very fast, but I was determined to keep up. Although I was in the youngest age group – the juniors – and we started 2 minutes behind the other riders, I managed to pass two of my team-mates from the older group in the first lap. In fact my lap times over the first 2 laps were faster than our elite rider, who finished 7th overall in the top category.

It was a fruitful trip for Team Lesotho as the results lifted us to 3rd nation in Africa and 42nd in the World MTB rankings.

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(left) Great to be back home in Lesotho sporting my Cardiff Jif Club Kit.

(above) Action shot from the famous Tree-House rock garden of the world-class XCO course.

(below) Another view of the "Tree-House", a section of the course that has seen the best riders in the world vying for position.



Thank you to Penarth & District Lesotho Trust, Tsela Tšoeu Cycling Club in Lesotho and Mr. Mokete from Vision Clinic in Maseru Mall for contributing to my trip (and a cool pair of sunglasses). Without your help it would not have been possible. Here's what the local newspaper has to say about my story <http://edition.pagesuite-professional.co.uk//launch.aspx?eid=902e800c-a98a-4134-a773-6d9cc1d15282> (go to last page).

My African result earned me some ranking points in the British cycling league and for a brief moment I was in 9th position out of all British Juniors. It is not easy to maintain such a lofty position as many of the races (especially the national series races with the most points) are too far away to travel up and down on the same day and we just don't have enough money to be travelling every weekend.



I did manage to race in a half-marathon 28km race last weekend in mid Wales. Typical for me, the bright weather we had experienced through the whole week turned into cold, wet and windy the day before the race and the route turned into a treacherous mud-mire. I was not sure of my position during the race as I had started at the back and worked my way through the pack. I was delighted to learn that I was actually 2nd overall behind the British youth champion.

I have another race this weekend – the Welsh XC Series #3. My bike is in need of a brake service, so I hope I can afford to get that done before the race – keeping a bike in top race condition is expensive. I think I am getting up to proper race fitness now, so it's time to see how I really compare to the other Welsh cyclists – let's hope for some sun!

Thank you to all my supporters and sponsors – I appreciate all of you. Every single action you take to help me in my cycling makes me a better rider!

Regards *Lichaba*

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(above) First line call-up for the Juniors category of the African Championships. That's me on the right.

(left) By the last lap I was really feeling the fatigue, but determined to hold off the South African competitor.

(below) Congratulations from African Cycling President Dr. Wagih Azzam.

