



## THE HERO DUBAI: REINVENTING THE INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN BIKE MARATHON

The countdown started yesterday at the Dubai Sports Council press conference: not long to go now until the debut of the mountain bike race which will kick off the HERO World Series 2020 international circuit. The HERO Dubai's first edition will take place on Friday, 7 February, on the routes of the HATTA MTB Trail Centre. Countless elite athletes are expected to participate, including current UCI Mountain Bike Marathon World Championship Leonardo Paez as well as the previous season's World Championships silver medallist Blaza Pintaric from Slovenia.

Abdulla Bin Habtoor, of XDubai: 'The event represents an opportunity for Dubai to become an international destination with untapped potential for sport tourism.'

Hashtag: #HEROWorldSeries #HERODubai #HERODolomites #HEROThai #XDubai



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Dubai Sports Council – from left: Leonardo Paez (UCI Mountain Bike Marathon World Champion 2019), Gerhard Vansö (CEO HERO World Series), Khalid Al Al Awar (Director of Sports Events Department Dubai Sports Council), Abdulla Bin Habtoor (XDubai), Mohammed Alkaabi (Hatta MTB Centre)  
<https://www.facebook.com/DubaISC/>

Dubai (UAE) 9 January 2020 – The cream of the crop will be competing in HATTA in light of **HERO Dubai's** first edition, the marathon mountain bike competition which will kick off the HERO World Series 2020.

On 7 February, the starting line will feature the entire male podium of the UCI Mountain Bike Marathon World Championships held on 22 September 2019 in Grächen, Switzerland: the winner, **Leo Paez** from Colombia, the silver medal **Kristian Hynek** from the Czech Republic and, awaiting final confirmation,

**Samuele Porro** from Italy. The three bikers represent the best of the best in mountain biking in their countries, to the extent that they will wear their national jersey at the starting line (except for Paez who will, obviously, be wearing the World Champion jersey).

Registrations for professional athletes are still open. The Organising's Team hotline is constantly ringing – while we wait with bated breath to see who signs up next, we can already confirm **Peeter Pruus**, the Estonian mountain bike champion, will also compete.

Among the women athletes, **Blaza Pintaric** has already accepted the challenge: the Slovene caught the world's attention in 2019 for placing second during the European Marathon Championships in Norway last July and having conquered another silver medal at the World Championship in Switzerland. Vying for a place on the podium, **Katazina Sosna**, the Lithuanian champion specialised in marathons; **Ariana Dormitorio** from the Philippines has also confirmed her presence: the athlete has made a name for herself in MTB in Southeast Asia. Indeed, besides having won three consecutive national marathon races, she also boasts 100,00 Facebook and Instagram followers.



All eyes will be on **Leonardo Paez**, an undisputed champion in marathon races, so much so he boasts a vast number of marathon victories, among which the six victories at the **HERO Südtirol Dolomites**, the toughest mountain bike marathon in the world, stand out. He is also the inspiration behind the HERO World Series circuit.

Paez says that *'the HERO's professional format has enhanced our image as bikers specialised in marathon distances and,*

*for this reason, I want to participate in the three stages of the 2020 circuit. My aim is clear: win all three to conquer the final trophy.'*

To ensure nothing is left to chance, the Colombian athlete has already tried out the terrain near Hatta, testing the race route and all the relevant logistics. *'Beautiful and interesting routes: sounds like a blast!'* he commented during the press conference.



**WATCH THE VIDEO**

The HERO Dubai will feature two routes and, obviously, **Paez will target the 60-kilometre marathon route featuring 1,600m elevation gain; the second route boasts 30 kilometres and 800 m elevation gain.** Both wend their way along the trails of the HATTA MTB Trail Centre, the new-fangled sport centre dedicated to off-road cycling which will also double as the event's HQ.

**Abdulla Bin Habtoor, of XDubai**, says that, *'hosting the HERO event in Dubai represents a great opportunity to showcase the sport opportunities in Hatta to the world of international cycling and sport tourism. It will allow us to position Dubai as a world-class green destination.'*

Right from the start, HERO Dubai stands out as a super race even just considering the prize money: a good 100,000 AED are up for grabs (approx. 25,000 EUR). The race is open to everyone: professionals as well as amateur bikers can take part. The latter can compete in the **'Hobby'** category as long as they are adequately trained and want to discover a new destination on their mountain bike.

The Dubai event will kick off the **HERO World Series 2020** season, and the marathon race circuit will continue with a further two races: it will return to Italy with the HERO Südtirol Dolomites on 20 June and end in Thailand with the HERO Thai on 10 October.

For further information, visit [www.herodubai.com](http://www.herodubai.com) and [www.heroworldseries.com](http://www.heroworldseries.com)

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