



Maurizio Fondriest celebrates his 60th birthday at Gravel Burn 2025

World champion embarks on emotional off-road journey through South Africa

Maurizio Fondriest starts 2025 off with the ultimate thrill of new challenges. For his 60th birthday, the 1988 World Champion from Ronse is preparing for an adventure where he will relive some of the most memorable moments of his career and beyond. This time, the goal is Gravel Burn 2025, a seven-stage gravel race in South Africa that will take place from 26th October to 1st November.

"I'll start from my childhood, through my first victories, the World Championship and all the incredible experiences I've had," explains Fondriest. "My daughter Carlotta will be by my side and we'll ride together for seven days. Every evening after the stages we'll gather around the campfire, the perfect setting to relive those memories. Storytelling is the key to this journey, a deeply meaningful element, just like the people I've met over the years, especially my family. My wife, Ornella, and my children, Maria Vittoria and Lorenzo, will join us for the last few days to complete this adventure together and share the emotional feeling of crossing the finish line".

The idea for this journey came from a conversation between Fondriest and Kevin Vermaak, the creator of the Cape Epic and organiser of the Gravel Burn, a pioneering event in the gravel cycling scene. The aim is not only to reflect on the most poignant moments of his career, but also to delve into childhood memories, his introduction to cycling and the dreams and achievements that followed. The run-up to the race will be a deeply introspective journey, with friends, family and fellow champions all contributing anecdotes, preparation insights and technical tips.

"Maurizio and I first met 15 years ago," said Vermaak, "when he came to Cape Epic for the first time. It's an incredible honour for me that he is returning to South Africa this year to celebrate such an important milestone in his life, coinciding with the debut of our race. I'm looking forward to showing Maurizio and Carlotta the breathtaking gravel roads of the Karoo and immersing them in the community spirit of the Gravel Burn, which is shared with off-road riders from all over the world."

While Fondriest does not intend to compete, the Gravel Burn stages are fully competitive. Each of the seven stages averages 110 kilometres, with a climb of between 1,000 and 2,000 metres. The real highlight of the event is the stunning scenery: from Knysna to Shamwari, riders ride through the heart of extraordinary landscapes, with unspoilt nature reserves and raw, untamed beauty.

"I love the idea that the route reflects what we experience in life," reflects Fondriest. "It demands adaptability; sometimes the path is rough and uncomfortable. But it is only by pushing ourselves and going beyond our limits that we can discover the beauty that lies ahead".

Tomorrow, Saturday 11th January, at 18:30 on Rai 2, there will be a special programme giving more details of this unique adventure. The journey begins now and embodies the values that have always defined Fondriest's career: sacrifice, gratitude, perseverance, passion and family.