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The End By Pyro

The 7th Adventure Race World Championships closed in fine style last night at the Hotel Estoril Eden.

The assembled racers, support crews, race staff, organisation and media gathered in the hotel to receive and return the acclaim of representatives from the local communities, who have supported the race from its conception to realisation, from the start in Cascais to the finish in Peniche.

Race Director Allesandre da Silva first introduced the President of the Estoril Tourist board, who congratulated all the racers, saying that "everyone gave their best to win", and that every year of the XPD so far the race had seen new scenery and new areas of Portugal, wishing the teams a good journey home and a return trip next year.

Next, the Mayor of Peniche, expressed his gratitude to the race, adding that it was wonderful for his town to receive two world-class events in such a short period (the Rip Curl World Surf Championships was held at the same beach as the ARWC finish only three weeks ago).

A representative of the Schist Villages (Aldaies do Xisto), who have been a major sponsor of the race, spoke next, saying that her first involvement with the AR World Series had been at the last Raid Bimbache, where she had watched the racers and concluded that they were all "lunatics". She added that now, having followed the race, that she could see the athleticism and endurance required of the racers, but that perhaps they were all a little lunatic also.

Geoff Hunt, AR World Series director, took his turn next, with a message for the teams: If one racer in the room [Tom Gibbs of Helly Hansen Prunesco] can fail to finish in four World Championships, then be on the winning team in his fifth, then anyone who hadn't achieved their aims, or fallen short, should take a lesson from that - "don't be disappointed, be determined, and maybe one day you can be on the top step of that podium too". Hunt also commented on the strategy required to win the race, something with some teams had not figured until the latter stages ("some haven't even figured it out now" came as an addendum). The strategic element, and the race format, haven't been popular with all the racers, especially those used to a more linear 'first over the line' format, but it is something which teams recognise has led to a race which has been thrilling right to the finish. Lastly, he thanked those who have had the greatest input to the race and the least acclaim - the volunteers, the support crews, the local communities, the organisation team, and lastly, the racers themselves.

The Race Director himself wrapped up the speeches, introducing not only Antonio de la Rosa, who will direct next year's World Championships, but all the directors of World Series events present - Raid in France, Huairisinchí, Explore Sweden, Costa Rica Adventure, Raid Bimbache Extrem and Untamed New England. They each introduced their races and pitched their concepts to the crowd, with Allesandre's message that 'networking is important'.

Lastly, the part everyone had been waiting for eagerly: the crowning of the new World Champions. Each team was called up in ranking order, to receive a small token from the local communities, then the top five teams each to receive their winners cheques. In fifth, the Polish team Navigator Raidlight. Fourth, Orion Health, the previous world champions. Third, Lundhags Adventure from Sweden. In second, Team Nike, hard fighters to the end. Mike Kloser acknowledged the standard of racing this year, praising what he called "the toughest field ever assembled at a World Championships". He also remarked that their strategy had had to change after day two, when they realised that clearing the course was not going to be realistic.

And lastly, the new champions, Helly Hansen Prunesco, took the podium to receive their US\$35,000 prize, Nick Gracie paying homage to not only his team, and the organisers, but to everyone there "whether you're Mike Kloser or a weekend warrior". Gracie also complimented the members of their team, Tom Gibbs their navigator and strategist, his long-term race partner Warren Bates and Nicola MacLeod, who was only brought into the team for this race three weeks in advance. The team, and their support crew of James Thurlow and Nicola Wiseman can return to the UK as well deserved champions, with this title being the culmination of many years of experience and effort.



Team Helly Hansen Prunesco

