



## Cyclists begin epic journey across Europe and Asia

- **Race to Rugby World Cup 2019™, Japan, starts in London**
- **DHL as the tournament's Official Logistics Partner supports cyclist on extreme expedition**
- **Journey aims to raise significant funds and awareness for children and young people in disadvantaged communities in Asia**

**London, February 1:** Tomorrow cyclists Ron Rutland and James Owens will begin their remarkable quest: to cycle 20,093 km through 27 countries, as part of a unique initiative to give disadvantaged children in Asia the opportunity to take part in sport and learn vital life skills through rugby for development program ChildFund Pass It Back.

Setting off from Twickenham tomorrow, Ron and James will spend 231 days on the road in Europe and Asia, with DHL, official logistics partner for Rugby World Cup, providing essential support for this mammoth journey.

Saturday morning Head of Rugby World Cup, Alan Gilpin will present both Ron and James with the official match whistle to the opening Rugby World Cup 2019™ match between Japan and Russia which the guys will courier from Twickenham Stadium – home of the 2015 Rugby World Cup™, all the way to Tokyo Stadium, Japan for tournament kick off on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2019. DHL will track the match whistle through each of the 27 countries allowing fans to follow this unique countdown to Rugby World Cup 2019™ from [www.racetowwc.com](http://www.racetowwc.com).

Ron Rutland, who cycled through Africa to reach the Rugby World Cup™ in England in 2015, is excited about this new adventure: "We'll have the challenge of a European winter, crossing the Himalayas (twice), the mountains of Asia to negotiate in the middle of summer, and every type of terrain and weather in between.

"And of course, the highlight of any expedition will be the people we meet. This will include Asia's newest generation of rugby players and coaches who we will meet in Vietnam and Laos as we travel through ChildFund-supported rural communities."

DHL has supported Ron's adventures from day one. As he notes, without the company's support in Africa, he'd probably have been six months late for the kick-off! DHL Express Global



Head of Sponsorship Fiona Taag adds: “We are so happy to be supporting Ron and James’ epic journey. We will be behind them for every kilometer and will even have some of our staff cycle alongside them on occasion.”

“And while we’re looking forward to tracking what they cover on their bikes, we’re even more excited to see the donation tracker tick over as the global rugby community rallies together to raise much needed funds for ChildFund Pass It Back.”

For James Owens, a former staff member of ChildFund, the trip has significant personal appeal. Having helped to establish the ChildFund Pass It Back program in Asia, he is keen to see the program expand to more children.

James says: “The ChildFund Pass It Back program does more than just give young people a chance to play rugby. It gives them valuable life-long skills and knowledge.”

CEO of ChildFund Nigel Spence adds: “We believe that every child should have the right to play, learn and grow, and the funds raised by Ron and James will help children who face significant challenges around poverty and inequality.

“We wish these intrepid cyclists the very best on their journey, and thank them and DHL for their support and commitment to helping children in developing communities.”

For more information, visit <https://www.dhl-in-motion.com/en/rugby/race-to-rwc/>

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Video and stills of Ron and James can be accessed here:

[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/s9gzjj87ihhng9i/AADT7XfO8P2qS\\_Te3aRAi6P3a?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/s9gzjj87ihhng9i/AADT7XfO8P2qS_Te3aRAi6P3a?dl=0)

## **About the cyclists**

Ron Rutland, from South Africa, is a former amateur rugby player and entrepreneur. He has previously embarked on two extreme expeditions in his life – a world-first unsupported solo bicycle journey through the entire continent of Africa followed by world-record-breaking hole of golf across Mongolia. Having worked with Hong Kong Rugby Union, Ron has been exposed to sport for development and the work of so many inspiring rugby projects in Asia. With Rugby World Cup coming to Asia for the very first time, Ron saw a once-in-a-generation opportunity to “Race to RWC” and raise money and awareness for ChildFund, World Rugby’s principal charity partner for Rugby World Cup 2019.

James Owens, born and raised in Hong Kong, has played and coached rugby. He is passionate about using sport as a tool for social change and in 2015 joined ChildFund to work on its rugby for development program, ChildFund Pass It Back. James has been inspired by the program’s commitment to utilising sport to help children and youth in disadvantaged communities, and its success in building the resilience of participants and their ability to face the significant challenges associated with poverty and inequality. James is now an Ambassador for the program as well as Ron’s cycling partner during Race to RWC.

## **About DHL**

DHL is the leading global brand in the logistics industry. Our DHL family of divisions offer an unrivalled portfolio of logistics services ranging from national and international parcel delivery, e-commerce shipping and fulfillment solutions, international express, road, air and ocean transport to industrial supply chain management. With about 360,000 employees in more than 220 countries and territories worldwide, DHL connects people and businesses securely and reliably, enabling global trade flows. With specialized solutions for growth markets and industries including technology, life sciences and healthcare, energy, automotive and retail, a proven commitment to corporate responsibility and an unrivalled presence in developing markets, DHL is decisively positioned as “The logistics company for the world”.

## **About ChildFund**

ChildFund is a global alliance of child-focused international development organisations which assists more than 14 million children and their families in over 60 countries. With a long-standing and trusted presence in many of the world’s poorest communities, ChildFund works in partnership with children, their families and local organisations to achieve lasting change, respond to



humanitarian emergencies and promote children's rights. ChildFund is World Rugby's principal charity partner for Rugby World Cup 2019.

## **About ChildFund Pass it Back**

ChildFund Pass It Back is an innovative sport for development program led by ChildFund in partnership with World Rugby and Asia Rugby that delivers an integrated life skills and rugby curriculum for children and young people in disadvantaged communities across Asia. With a focus on gender inclusion, more than half of all players and coaches are female. The program's objectives are to equip children and young people in Asia to overcome challenges, inspire positive social change and 'pass it back' to their communities. ChildFund Pass It Back is a key component of World Rugby's Impact Beyond 2019 Programme.