

Simpson Desert Bike Challenge Newsletter

April 2007

Race dates for 2007: 2nd – 6th October

Hi everyone,

Race entries for the 2007 event have now opened. Entries are coming in steadily, with former rider and occasional Medic Leon Malzinkas (aka Dr Mal) leading the charge. Actually several people overheard Dr Mal vowing that he would NEVER ride the Desert again after 2006, but clearly he was a little overwrought at the time and can no longer recall this heartrending pledge. Although your medical skills will be missed, Dr Mal, we do look forward to assessing your cycling attire each morning....., last year's efforts definitely added a certain something to the race each day.



The first female entry has also been received with Dr Mal's daughter Cara no longer wishing to be confined to the support vehicle. Having been known as 'Cara of the Sox' during last year's event we look forward to seeing if she elects to challenge her father's sartorial elegance in the fashion stakes.

The international challengers are already making their presence felt with entries looming from the UK and NZ.

Race Preparation:

With six months to go, aspiring competitors should now have a good base of road kilometres under the belt. Now is the time to introduce some hills into your training mix.

The first five stages of the race involve repeated high intensity efforts as you cross the sand dune system in the desert. Strong head winds, extreme heat, deep sand and relentless corrugations can make these stages the most difficult of the race. While most of the dunes are relatively small in height terms, they can be topped with drifts of deep sand and the approaches are rough.

Start by adding a sustained climb of up to ten kilometres in length to your road riding each week. Then look for a short sharp climb of around 500 metres and practice repeated efforts, allowing a couple of minutes recovery between each attempt. Ideally this should be off-road, rough but rideable, without the need for granny gear.

Hydration Tips:

For many past competitors, failure to complete 100% of the race can be put down to the effects of dehydration. Some preplanning to cope with the potential for dehydration can go a long way in getting you across the Desert.

Give some thought as to how you plan to collect your water supplies from the Water Stops. The majority of competitors use a hydration pack to carry the bulk of their fluid supply while cycling. Many hydration packs are insulated and thus keep fluids cooler, and they make it easier to drink without having to reach for a bidon on rough terrain.

Most competitors elect to pick up bidons of water at each Water Stop to top up their hydration pack. The fluid that you collect can be a pre-prepared electrolyte mix, but in hot conditions this may be somewhat less than appetizing by the time you receive it. An alternative is to provide powdered additive with each water bidon (measure into a snaplock bag & attach to each bidon with a rubber band) & add this as you go.

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Another option is to bring four basic hydration packs. Instead of collecting bidons at each Water Stop you collect a prefilled pack and drop off your empty one. This saves having to muck around topping up your pack but does mean that you need to think about carrying your tools/spares/food etc. The inner bladders themselves are considered too fragile to be supplied separately for collection at Water Stops.

It can be useful to set your watch alarm to go off every fifteen minutes while racing to remind you to drink regularly. It is more effective to sip small amounts frequently rather than to try and neck a litre of fluid as you approach the next Water Stop.

Start the race well hydrated by consuming a litre of fluid before race start. It might be cool at 5:30am but it probably won't stay that way for long.

You will be weighed before and immediately after each stage of the race to check for any fluid loss. You might think that losing 2 kilos in six hours is the best thing since Jenny Craig but you can be sure that the Race Medics won't feel the same way.

Profile: 2007 Race Committee

Eight worthy individuals who have made their mark on the Desert over many years make up the 2007 Desert Challenge Race Committee. This newsletter profiles two of the 'Desert Chicks' whom you can expect to see out there for the umpteenth time in 2007.....

First up is current Medical Coordinator **Louise Mikzsa**. Daughter of revered Medic Dr John Hill and keeper of the secret "Sheep Dip' formula (magical bottom-soothing salve), Louise was originally enticed out to the Desert by her father in 1996. She began as Medic One 'Receptionist' and stepped up into the Medical Coordinator position in 2003.

She lists the incredible sound of frogs croaking amongst the sand dunes following the heavy rains

experienced in 2004 as her strongest memory of the ten years she has spent supporting the race.



Louise and Doctor 'Dad'

Next up is Race Timekeeper extraordinaire **Su Spencer**. Su has been timekeeping out in the Desert since 1994, and despite the heat, flies, ornery cyclists, sand that infiltrates her computer equipment and crazed drivers trying to get her to the finish line (ahead of those elite cyclists who long for the ultimate accolade of reaching the finish line ahead of her), she keeps coming back. For many years Su drove 'Suzy' the little Suzuki, in which she accomplished some hair-raising dune crossings which stopped more than a few hard men in their big beefed up 'serious' 4WDs in their tracks. In 2001 Su found love amongst the dunes and has since teamed up with John 'Murf' Murphy, creating the partnership fondly known as 'The Smurfs'.



Su

General Update:

Mountain Biking Australia Magazine

Andrew Weller of Vivid Adventures led a photography tour which followed last year's race. His article and photos from the race can be seen in the Feb/March edition of Mountain Biking Australia.

Fundraising efforts from this year's event are being directed to *4Wheels 4Sean* – this is a charity originally created by Huw Kingston of 'Wild Horizons' to raise funds to buy a specially adapted vehicle for Canberra mountain biker Sean Fitzgerald, who became a quadriplegic following a mountain biking accident in the Northern Territory in 2001.

Following a successful campaign which saw surplus funds passed to the Paraplegic Benefit Fund, the charity was about to close. However *4Wheels4Sean* is now being relaunched, backed by major cycling bodies including the Bicycling Federation of Australia, MBTA, Cycling Australia and BMX Australia.

4Wheels4Sean will provide assistance to cyclists severely disabled as a result of a cycling injury.

More information about the charity and how you can fundraise for this year's event will be available soon.

See you out there ...

Gaye (Flipper)



Mark Polley on his 5th desert crossing