

Simpson Desert Bike Challenge Newsletter

Feb 2007

Race dates for 2007: 2nd – 6th October

Hi everyone,

Entries open on 1st March for the 2007 Desert Challenge. This year you will be able to **enter on-line**, thus saving yourself the toil of having to download, print and mail an entry form. See the website www.desertchallenge.org

Preparations are in full swing for this year's race. The Desert Parks rangers confirm that recent rains have set things up for a nice display of wildflowers this spring.

Upcoming Events:

There are some great cycling events on around Australia over the coming months. Participating in other events is a good way to assess your fitness and get comfortable with lining up on a start line with a mob of other riders. It is also a good opportunity to give your bike and cycling gear a thorough test run - find out what works and what doesn't well before you get out to the Desert.

The Berghaus Polaris is a two day MTB – orienteering event which takes place in NSW on the weekend of 10/11th March. Teams of two ride together accumulating points from each checkpoint they can locate. The higher the point value of a checkpoint – the more pain involved in reaching itit's a fun weekend with a great bunch of riders of all ages and abilities.

See www.wildhorizons.com.au for more information.

MTB endurance events are becoming increasingly popular and there are now 24 Hour Challenge events on in most states.

For Queenslanders the Kooralbyn Valley in Queensland is hosting the Merida 24 Hour Challenge on 21st April – participants can go

solo or as part of a team, taking turns to tackle laps of the 12 km course.

See www.twowheelpromotions.com.au for details of this and other events in the south-east Queensland and northern New South Wales region.

For those in the Sydney area, the Dirtworks 100km Classic takes place on Sunday 6th May from St Albans. The course follows the historic Convict Trail through Dharug and Yengo National Parks, using a mix of fire trails, technical single track and rocky descents. See www.maxadventure.com.au

Bike Preparation:

A couple of riders in last year's race used a Cane Creek suspension seatpost, the 'Thudbuster'. Their post-race feedback on this product was pretty good. This could be a useful upgrade to a hardtail bike if you are looking to improve comfort and handling without the cost of changing to a dual suspension bike. I've got one ordered direct from www.thudbuster.com and will report back once I've had a chance to give it a go. Short and long travel versions are available – cost is US\$129.00 plus shipping.

Profile: Andy 'Grim' Griffiths

Aka the 'Grim Sweeper', Andy achieved notoriety in the race between 1998 and 2001 as the meanest, most ornery 'Sweep' ever to pursue struggling cyclists across the Desert. Some might expect him to have been more sympathetic, having felt the dreaded sting of the 'Sweep' on occasion himself.

But despite knowing exactly how it feels as a competitor to see the ominous approach of the sweep vehicle cresting the dune behind, 'Grim' still seems to delight in the moment

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when he raises his dreaded sickle, blows his whistle and nabs yet another victim.

Most resist his approach, trying to display at least a token effort to thrust the pedals and edge out of his reach; finally giving in as his vehicle draws alongside and all hope of escape withers and dries up like a shriveled camel carcass.

Strangely enough, there have been riders who seem to have embraced the arrival of the 'Grim Sweeper'. Riders have been known to toss their bike onto his ute with a certain amount of glee, and leap happily into the back seat where, rumour has it, the music is excellent, the air-con works well and refreshments may even be available. Of course, no-one will own up to this sort of behaviour but you know who you are.

'Grim' is rumoured to be heading back out to the Desert this year, perhaps in hopes of surpassing his 'personal best' performance in 1999 – when he 'swept' all but two of the forty five competitors in the horrendous conditions of the day two morning stage. Although elated at his extraordinary effort that day it was obvious he was more than a little disappointed at having missed a heaven-sent opportunity to become the first 'Sweep' ever to nab the entire field.

In recent years improved track conditions have seen ever increasing numbers of riders elude the 'Sweep' and claim the elusive 100%..... a situation clearly worrying for the highly dedicated 'Grim'. Can these conditions continue or is the race long overdue for another diabolical 'Year of the Sand'?!



The Grim Sweeper in his element

Website Update:

A multimedia presentation on the event can now be downloaded and viewed directly from the website. This is a large download of 2.9 MB. Our thanks to all those who permitted use of their images for this presentation.

Our warmest thanks to all those who have jumped in to assist with distribution of Simpson Desert Bike Challenge posters and flyers in bike shops around the country - your help has been much appreciated.

Thanks also to the Fortitude Valley branch of Australian company World Wide Printing, who have kindly assisted with the printing of posters and flyers (www.worldwide.com.au).

See you out there ...

Gaye (Flipper)