

Hi everyone,

Welcome to the April 2008 Newsletter. While the Simpson Desert Bike Challenge Website www.desertchallenge.org is packed with all the information needed to get you "there and back", this Newsletter is intended as an update of latest information to hand.

Riders intending to enter the 2008 Simpson Desert Bike Challenge should now be firmly focused on preparations required to reach Purni Bore early on Monday September 29th for a 0600 start on Tuesday 30th. Body, mind, bicycle, travel, support, should all be at the forefront of your planning, as each are essential to increase your chances of a 100% successful crossing of the desert – and return home.

It's not too late, but for anyone still thinking about entering, if you haven't a cycling background, and you are not in training, then 5 months is really the absolute minimum if you are serious in completing 100% of the Challenge. If, on the other hand, you wish to enter the SDBC purely as fun, to enjoy riding whatever distance you can, and just soaking up the desert, then you are welcome. The only essential requirement is that your vehicle, support crew and supplies are well prepared for what in its simplest of forms is a serious outback adventure.

Entries are now coming in. It is pleasing to see two of the earliest entrants are from overseas. The Cycling Chef from Bali, Heinz Von Holzen is returning for his fourth ride. One might wonder why a Swiss born chef, author of Balinese and Indonesian cooking, living at beautiful Nusa Dua, Bali would want to front for his fourth Desert Crossing? Perhaps he enjoys it! Of course if anyone wants to learn about Balinese or Indonesian cooking, I am sure Heinz's books are available. Slovakian, Roman Petr must enjoy the outback. Having ridden the famous Crocodile Trophy in 2007, Roman is now joining a number of others who have completed the double. Can Roman continue the 100% winning record of Jack Oldfield, Adrian Lang and Jaap Vergiever in riding the Crocodile, and winning the Simpson?

Perhaps it will be the trio from the Gold Coast, Paradise Waters area that will be on the money. From Paradise Waters on the Gold Coast, to the paradise of the Simpson Desert. Hard to imagine, and certainly something different to the Coolangatta Gold. Welcome to Lawrence Reece (50-59), a former placegetter in the prestigious Coolangatta Gold a few years back! Enjoy the experience, Lawrence, and look out for the dreaded Sweep who will be keen to claim a couple of scalps.

Jimmy Goode has some form from the Central Australian Bike Challenge a couple of years back. Seemed to pick up the awards for helping those towards the rear of field.



Heinz Von Holzen

INTENDING TO TACKLE THE DESERT?

We would love to hear from anyone who is planning to ride this year, or even knows someone who is planning to ride, but has not yet entered. It certainly helps in our preparations.

We would also like to hear from anyone who has a 4WD and is interested in supporting a rider. We always have riders who do not have access to a vehicle and crew so we do our best to help out.

Remember, the organising group behind the SDBC have a huge amount of information and expertise in all things concerning the Challenge and would be more than willing to provide personal advice to anyone who has any doubts or queries. Refer to the Contact section www.desertchallenge.org

EQUIPMENT

In the coming newsletters we will cover some of the essential things you need to have for your trip across the Simpson Desert. Vehicles, recovery gear, shade and camping equipment being just a few.

Being able to setup and dismantle camp quickly and effortlessly is essential. Space in a vehicle is always precious so it's important to being the right gear.



Having an organised crew with the right equipment can make a real difference to the recovery of the rider and the enjoyment of everybody.

FEATURE

Last month's Newsletter focused on The Devil Dehydration. This month, along a similar theme is an article on Heat Illness by Dr Leon Malzinskas. The article outlines the latest information from Sport Medicine Australia. This should be compulsory reading for everyone, regardless of how fit you think you are, or how many endurance events in hot weather you have ridden.



Dr "Mal" was medico on the ride in 2003 and 2004 and rode 2005, 2006 and 2007. He has driven the French line twice, 1996 and 2002. So not only can he "talk the talk, but he has ridden the ride".

Keep checking www.desertchallenge.org – it is a valuable resource for all things Simpson Desert. As with most Websites, there are regular updates occurring.

Good luck with training and continue ticking over the km's. Remember the old 7 P's cliché. Proper Planning & Preparation Prevents Piss Poor Performance.

HEAT ILLNESS

The terms used in heat illness can be very confusing. The original classifications such as heat cramps, heat exhaustion, heat fatigue and sunstroke were based upon clinical findings of military personnel exposed to extreme conditions in various conflicts in the late 1800's and in the Middle East during World War 1. Sports Medicine Australia (SMA) has recently updated its fact sheet on playing and exercising in hot weather. SMA defines two heat illnesses in sport being heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat exhaustion is where sports participants collapse after exercise but have a normal mental state and are most likely suffering post-exercise postural hypotension (drop in blood pressure). In heat stroke, participants show signs of altered mental function. SMA does add that a core body temperature of 41 degrees Celsius is the danger temperature level but does not integrate this into its definitions. Heat exhaustion is the more common of the two with heat stroke being rare but life threatening. Sports participants showing signs of confusion, loss of skill, loss of coordination or irrational behaviour should be stopped and removed from participation immediately as they are most likely suffering heat stroke. Other symptoms of heat illness may include light-headedness, nausea, fatigue, cessation of sweating, obvious loss of skill and coordination/clumsiness or unsteadiness, confusion, aggressive or irrational behaviour, collapse and ashen grey skin. Factors that increase the risk of heat illness are high intensity exercise, lack of fitness, previous history of heat illness or heat intolerance, aged over 65, high air temperature and high humidity, low air movement/no wind, prolonged exposure to hot conditions, heavy clothing and protective equipment, lack of acclimatisation, dehydration, current or recent infectious illness and chronic health problems. So, preventative steps that can be maximised to reduce risk are to get fit, maintain regular endurance training and acclimatisation to the environment in which you are to compete. Acclimatisation takes at least 5 days in hot and humid conditions progressing from moderate intensity and duration to more intense exercise as acclimatisation develops. Adjust training and competition intensity to conditions and take regular breaks. The benefits of breaks should be maximised by reducing clothing and resting in the shade, assist evaporative cooling with fans/fanning and wetting the skin, applying ice packs to the groin and armpits may also help and drink cool water or sports drinks. Clothing should be protective but also allow easy evaporation of sweat from the skin. It should be light coloured, lightweight and loose fitting and provide adequate sun protection.

Modify your warm-ups by reducing duration and intensity to minimise increase in body heat and temperature prior to competition. Substantial amounts of water are lost through sweating when exercising vigorously in the heat so drinking fluids is integral in reducing risk of heat illness. Replacing this loss is often incomplete but moderate levels of dehydration are reasonably tolerable. (See my article on the SDBC website for more detail) To minimise dehydration, drink 500-600ml in the 1-2 hours prior to exercise and try and keep up about 200-250ml each 15 minutes while riding. Dehydration is rarely the sole cause of heat illness but maintaining an adequate water intake assists temperature control. Carbohydrates and electrolytes in sports drinks help to maintain performance in endurance events but are difficult to drink when warm. Excessive water intake exceeding sweat loss can lead to hyponatraemia (low sodium in the blood) but this is very rare. Competitors coming from cooler southern states of Australia or from overseas to the Simpson Desert are more likely to not be acclimatised and at increased risk of heat illness. An acclimatisation program in these athletes is very important. Other things to consider are medical issues such as recent high temperatures with infections, diarrhoea or vomiting. These are reasons not to compete in strenuous exercise. People over 65 and those that have medical problems and/or are taking medication may be more prone to heat illness. So how do we treat heat illness? General measures include stopping activity, lying the participant down in a cool shaded area, raise their legs and pelvis to improve blood return to the heart and this increases blood pressure. Remove excess clothing and cool by wetting the skin liberally with a spray bottle or moist face washer and vigorous fanning. Apply ice packs to groin and armpits and give cool water orally if conscious. Most heat illness will be heat exhaustion and easily treated with the above methods. If the participant remains seriously ill with confusion, vomiting or altered conscious state or if you are in doubt about the diagnosis, treat as heat stroke. This involves continued cooling, placement in a shallow bath with ice if available and assessment and management by one of the race Doctors. I hope this brief overview of heat illness and its prevention and management is useful to both competitors, support crew and water stop attendants in preparation for this year's race.

Dr Mal