

# Simpson Desert Bike Challenge Newsletter

## March 2008

Race dates for 2008: 30<sup>th</sup> Sep – 4<sup>th</sup> October

Hi everyone,

Six months remain before the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> Simpson Desert Bike Challenge. All intending competitors should be well into their race preparation. This newsletter focuses on the potential problems that can be experienced during the race, and how to avoid them. Many competitors spend hundreds of hours training, months in planning and a truckload of cash on equipment - so it doesn't make much sense to crash out early in the race due to a few mistakes.....



### The Devil Dehydration:

The number one reason for not completing 100% of the race is dehydration. It is impossible to be unaware of the risk of dehydration during this event - by the time you front up on the start line at Purni Bore you will be tired of hearing about it. The Simpson Desert is not only hot, it is also extremely arid with a year round average humidity of under 20%. This contributes to dehydration & it is easy to think you are not sweating much, until you notice the thick crust of salt on your clothing.

Hydration packs are recommended as you tend to drink small amounts more regularly. Set a watch alarm to go off every 15 minutes to remind you to drink. Start drinking as soon as you wake in the

morning & take a water bottle to bed - sip whenever you wake overnight. If you have access to refrigeration, store your prepared hydration pack bladder in the fridge overnight so you start the morning stage with cool fluids. Unfortunately the location & nature of this event means that fluids you collect from Water Stops during the race are going to be lukewarm - so get used to it.



### The Joy of Sand:

Most mountain bikers rarely encounter much sand on the trails they ride. Day One of the race can therefore be something of a shock to the system. Loose sand can throw you off line, bury your front wheel and send you slithering off head first into a pile of spinifex. A big factor in riding sand successfully is tyre pressure. Competitors are generally reluctant to drop tyre pressure because of a perceived associated loss of speed. In this race the ability to ride sand is often more important, particularly in the early stages through the dune system. Low pressures improve your ability to ride sections of sand where you would otherwise be walking. Carry as much momentum as you can as you approach a patch of sand, pedal smoothly in a comfortable cadence & keep your weight off the front wheel.

The best conditions of the race are the three hours between the 6am start and around 9am when things can start to warm up a bit. While not trashing

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yourself completely, this is a good time to get some distance between you and the pursuing Sweep. In the morning stages of the first three days the sand is easier to ride earlier in the day, when it's cooler. As it hots up the sand gets softer and looser & fatigue makes it more and more difficult to ride.



Ed Bourke dismounts over the handlebars as the bike comes to a sudden halt in the sand.

### Mechanical Woes:

To miss out in a 100% finish because of a mechanical failure is heartbreaking. Check everything before you leave home, including your spares. It's a real bummer to pull out a brand new spare tube mid stage & find it in two pieces. If you use French valves, consider drilling out your wheel rims so you can also use car valve tubes if necessary. Many a competitor has been saved from the Sweep by a passing rider who has been able to hand over a spare tube.

A number of riders seem to break chains (hello Kathy!) Carry a chain breaker & spare joining pins & know how to use them. Make sure things like cables, bottom brackets, freewheels & derailleurs are checked & serviced or replaced before the event. This is not the place to cut costs. The trip out to Purni Bore can be pretty rough - take the time to thoroughly check your bike on arrival & pay particular attention to the derailleur - these can get knocked out of alignment, which can have devastating consequences. If it all goes pear shaped - try & keep calm. It's amazing what you can do with a multi-tool, handful of cable ties & a bit of fencing wire when under pressure.....



A broken crank.. very rare but you never know. Breakages on the race include seat posts, handlebars, frames, derailleurs, chains.

### Bumming Out:

This is a familiar subject for Desert veterans. It's no fun to be in so much pain from wounds to your nether regions that you are unable to ride. Minimise your suffering by investing in a comfy saddle. Bring your featherlight, titanium railed racing seat if you must, but bring an alternative super cushy number that won't hurt quite so much for the last day or so. Much as we enjoy watching people cut up their pillows and trying to tape wads of foam on to their bike seats, we really prefer it when everyone can comfortably sit down at the Birdsville Pub after the race. The corrugations are not going to go away & most riders, strangely enough, seem to prefer the corrugations to the sand anyway.

Sitting around in your salt encrusted knicks at the end of a stage will speed skin breakdown. No matter how horrible you feel, have a cool wash & get changed as soon as you can after finishing a stage. Put on fresh cycling gear just prior to the start of the next stage. The only privacy in the Desert is your vehicle door so if you're the modest type bring a shower tent. Some chamois cream or silicon based cream can be helpful, or use the revered bottom soothing substance fondly

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known as 'Sheep Dip' provided by your friendly medical team.

On this theme a new prize to be known as the Megasaurarse Award has been donated to the race & will be presented for the first time in 2008 ... this is probably not something you should be aiming to win.....

### Hot, Damn Hot:

Yes, it can get warm out there. Although we have been surprised by riders actually suffering from hypothermia on the odd occasion. Mostly though, heat is a problem, especially for those coming from the southern states. Make sure your support crew is equipped with adequate shade - a small tarp is not enough. Carry sufficient water & top up with washing water just prior to leaving Purni Bore. Allow at least 15 litres per rider & 5 litres per crew per day for drinking water alone. A small pump spray bottle is essential for cooling yourself & others. A head scarf or sweat band that can be soaked & worn under your helmet is useful. Sunscreen is essential for exposed skin. All official vehicles including Water Stops have supplies of sunscreen for rider's use during stages. Feet tend to swell in the heat. Wear cycling shoes that can be loosened as tight footwear can be very uncomfortable.

### General Update:

Check out the latest issue of Enduro magazine for Rick Neale's story on the 2007 race. Also see the Audax members magazine Checkpoint for Dr Mal's race report.

A new section on the race website for Desert Challenge members will be available soon. This will contain latest news, minutes of meetings and general gossip.

See you out there ...

Gaye (Flipper)



Yes...even Flipper has had a few rough days out on the track. Here receiving the ministrations of the Doc and Mark Polley.