



Hi everyone:

Here is the July Special Edition of the Newsletter with more information for you about your up and coming adventure across the Simpson. We will be including some info for support crews as well as information about staying hydrated.

There are some beautiful inspirational photo's that we would love to share with you too to get you all psyched for the race! So read and enjoy!

-Kyria Chapman



### Support Crews AVAILABLE!

Do you know of anyone who is thinking of heading out to the Simpson this year but hasn't entered yet because they have no support crew? We now have three support crews on standby without riders. Two crews are from Adelaide and one is leaving from Mildura. So tell your friends! **Entries close August 31st** so don't let your friends miss this great opportunity.

If you know of anyone who would like to enter who doesn't have a support crew please contact us via our email address: [riders@desertchallenge.org](mailto:riders@desertchallenge.org)



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## Packing the car for the race

The big question for support crews: how to fit a cyclist, bike, assorted cycling equipment, support crew members, bedding, tent, clothing, food, water (lots) recovery gear, spare fuel, table, chairs, stove, lighting, shade tarp, and who only knows what else into a standard 4WD?

Don't forget that you need to be able to pack this all up in the dark at around 4:30am & load and unload twice a day. Probably on your own as your rider is going to be sod all help once he or she starts cycling .....

A roof rack is pretty much essential. This is useful for securing a tarp for shade at the lunch break, as well as storing lightweight, bulky items such as personal items and bedding. It's a good place for a second spare tyre too. Empty water containers can also be tossed up on the roof rack as the trip progresses. Rubbish can also be stored there until we reach the disposal point in Birdsville.

Inside the vehicle keep the weight low and forward as much as possible. Water is ideally transported in 20 -25 litre containers of heavy duty plastic. Replace the taps with the flat bungs so the taps don't get damaged. Sheets of heavy cardboard in between containers can help prevent damage in transit.

Bikes are easiest to transport if boxed and stored inside the vehicle. The flattened bike box can later be used as a platform on which to park your bike, protecting the tyres from thorns. Store cycling gear: helmet, shoes, hydration pack, sunnies, gloves, knicks & tops, pump, spares and tools, in a storage bin or soft bag up on the roof rack until race start.

Minimise the amount of personal gear you lug along – keeping it simple keeps it easier. One warm outfit is useful for cold mornings. Include gloves and beanie. Otherwise a couple of sets of shorts/t shirt and a pair of protective shoes (lots of thorns around) are adequate.

You will need chairs for each member of your group – those that collapse into a compact tube are easiest to pack; and also a sturdy table.

Fluorescent lights which run off a vehicle cigarette lighter are useful and can be hung off the roof rack. Store these in an easily accessible place in the front cabin of the vehicle. Sunset is around 6pm so the evening meal is often cooked after dark.

There are inexpensive, basic camp stoves with a single burner which run off small disposable gas canisters available. The flat, fold out model is compact and easy to use. Or there are countless more elaborate options.

Accommodation is a matter of personal preference. Those using swags are much envied as they roll up bed, mattress, pillow and bedding in a blink of an eye and toss the bundle up on the roof rack. Although they are less envied should it start to rain.

If you decide to bring tents – avoid the large, multi-room family model that takes six people half an hour to put up in calm conditions. The Desert is renowned for howling winds so go for something one or two people can manage easily.

Heavy duty plastic bins are useful for stowing food, cooking gear and odds and ends that you need to get to easily. You will also need a variety of straps and tie downs to secure the load. As food supplies diminish the empty bins can be used to store bagged rubbish (up on the roof). Food-wise: try to keep glass and packaging to a minimum. Decant items into resealable snaplock bags where possible.

Vehicle recovery equipment should include a minimum of shovel and snatch strap. A number of vehicles in the convoy will be carrying heavy duty compressors (for reinflating tyres) and winches, so these are not essential for all vehicles. A second spare tyre is recommended, however the majority of punctures seem to occur on the way in to Purni Bore. Keeping your speed down and slightly dropping your tyre pressures once off the bitumen and on to the stony tracks leading in to the Desert will help prevent these.

A note on tyre pressures- There are a number of differing views on the exact amount of pressure that is needed in your tyres but the consensus seems to be that when travelling over dunes make sure your tyres are running at about 18 psi. This can make all the difference in your car getting bogged or rolling over a nice soft dune with ease. During the race it is essential that you check your tyre pressures every morning before you set out to make sure that your psi is running low enough as it will increase during the day in the heat. If you are passing through Oodnadatta drop into the Pink Roadhouse where you can get some excellent information on tyre pressures. We will also have a number of crews from Summit Trax 4x4 club joining too who have a lot of experience when it comes to crossing the Simpson!

## ***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%. Just sitting in the shade sucks the moisture out of you!

This lack of humidity 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.

Support crews need to get used to drinking a lot of water too as they can suffer the effects of dehydration just as easily as the riders- be wary as it is vital that support crews are alert and not suffering the effects of dehydration too!



## 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 Leon Malzinkas (Dr Mal)  
Medical Officer  
SDBC

## The joys 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 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.



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### Signing off

I hope you have enjoyed this special edition of the newsletter. We will be sending you some information soon in the August edition so keep your eyes peeled, enjoy your planning / training and take care until then!

- Kyrfia Chapman.



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