

INSIDE SPORT

\$7.95 NZ \$9.95
#170 FEB 2006

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SPORT'S 10 MEANEST MOFOS



IS ANY NAG BETTER THAN THE DIVA?

Yep, and not just Phar Lap

INVESTIGATION
**SUN
STROKED**

Why Aussie surf sports are in



MIKE HUSSEY

Long shot to hot shot



- GREG WELCH
- DAVE SANDS
- CHELSEA GEORGESON
- NICK O'HERN
- LABINOT HALITI
- JUSTIN MADDEN
- JOANNE CARTER
- PETER HOLMES
- A COURT
- CHRISTOPHE BARRIERE-VARJU
- RIC CHARLESWORTH
- OSCAR PISTORIUS





THREE CHEERS (BUT NO BEERS) FOR JAMO

Our cranky and always deadly serious man of a thousand opinions, senior contributor and rugby establishment antagonist **Neil Jameson** (RIGHT), has won Australian sports writing's biggest prize, the 2005 Australian Sports Commission's **Best Reporting of an Issue in Australian Sport Award** for his '04 piece "Professional Foul", which, according to the judges, "suggested the new era of full-time professionalism which the football codes in



particular have adopted is a key factor responsible for the spate of poor off-field behaviour experienced in the last few seasons. Jameson contended that young men, often with limited education and life experience, suddenly find themselves with a good income, and courtesy of their professional status, too much time on their hands."

How bloody prescient, Jamo! If only Wayne Bennett had got his hands on the article, the Kangaroos' Great Britain debacle could well have been averted. Congrats from all of us at *Inside Sport*.



GONE IN 60 SECONDS CHRISTOPHE BARRIERE-VARJU



How long have you been racing motorcycles?

For about 20 years – in Africa, the United States, Australia and Mexico. I started in motocross at 16, but I'm now doing cross-country rallies. People think it's a dangerous sport for crazy people, but it's actually a strict sport that demands a lot from the body.

Are you a thrill seeker?

Yes. The thrill comes from fear, and my fear limit is further than most. When I fear something, I look at it and determine whether it is physically possible. A good example is a big hill in the US with a 90-degree drop. Most people said we were insane, but we looked at it sideways and knew that it was physically possible. The angle was right. It was just getting over the fear factor and the mental state that blocks you.

What are your limits?

My fastest is 210km/h, my highest is about seven metres and the longest distance I've jumped is 50m. When you're up in the air, you're always wondering how the landing will be. Everything is in slow motion and your speed, balance and technique have to be perfect.

What is your most memorable moment so far in your career?

Racing in front of 200,000 spectators in an international race against some of the best riders in the world, on a motocross track in Africa with jumps, turns and tabletops. When you're jumping in front of a supportive crowd, you don't hear anything – not your heartbeat, your breathing or your bike. It's just a huge roar from the public.

You're about to ride the toughest endurance bike race on earth – the 9000km Dakar Rally in West Africa. You'll be one of only two Aussies competing (along with Andy Caldecott on the Repsol KTM team). What's the attrition rate?

One third don't finish because of exhaustion, injuries, mechanical problems and getting lost.

People die trying to run it, don't they?

Yes, people die every year and lots of people get injured. Last year, two people died and because of that, the maximum speed has been reduced to 150km/h (monitored by GPS). I think it will create more accidents, because people will try to make up more time on the corners and brake later. You can easily go up to 195km/h on dirt roads, but one of the deaths last year was at 60km/h. He made a mistake and fell over the front of his motorbike. He cut his throat and bled to death.

What challenges are you expecting to face?

The physical side will be tough – about ten hours a day, riding 600 to 800km with little sleep. You're constantly looking for holes, rocks, deep sand and other vehicles. It's also about navigating through the sand dunes trying not to get bogged. The terrain varies from mountains, rocks and sand dunes to very, very soft sand and really fine red powder-like dirt, which is hard on the eyes, lungs, mouth and breathing. But even more difficult than that will be the constant mental attention that needs to be maintained through the race.

Fear is a big factor because you're crossing a huge continent without much sleep and there's the chance of getting injured... or worse.

The rally is deliberately designed to test the sturdiness of equipment and the stamina of participants. How will your bike hold up?

It's really easy to make mistakes there, so you must leave nothing to chance. My bike is a 650cc engine specifically designed for Dakar. Bikes must be prepared properly because there's a lot of vibration



between the engine, ground and the parts, so you have to make sure all the bolts are locked tight. If it's not done properly, the whole motorcycle will fall apart. The vibration causes the wiring to get damaged as well, so you have to put silicone between the frames and the wiring.

How much does the Dakar cost to enter?

It's one of the most expensive races that exists because of the logistics involved. I'm budgeting for \$200,000 – and I couldn't do it without sponsors, such as B&W Global. We travel through eight countries and it's going to be broadcast in 187 countries around the world.

What are you expecting the Sahara Desert to be like to race across?

It will reach up to 50°C during the day, and down to six degrees at night. Being in the middle of the desert with no-one around you leaves you only with choices. If you're lost and don't know where you're going, you try not to get scared. All the tracks from other people disappear because of the wind, and you don't want to waste fuel by riding in circles, because, if you do, you're not going to make the checkpoint on time and your race will be over. So, do you go left, right or straight?

What are you hoping to achieve?

I have absolutely no clue. I'm just hoping to reach the limits within myself and learn as much as possible. The results will be whatever they will be.

– Lisa Smith

Barriere-Varju's limitations are 210km/h, seven metres in height, 50m in length, or one bloody big sandpit.



• Australia has belatedly won another medal at the World Athletics championships following the drugs suspension of Tim Montgomery. The American 4x100m relay team has now been suspended.