



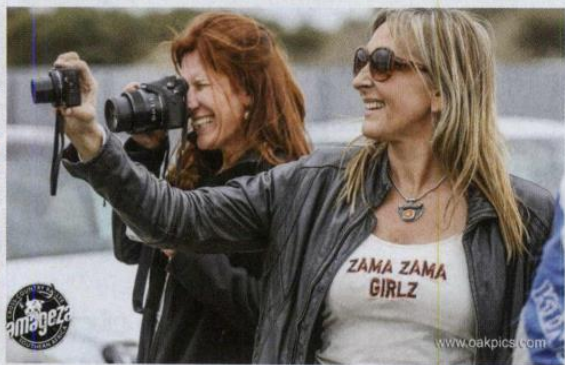
GG, the photographer and writer of this article's bike is no. 108.



The thorns are nicknamed Botswana daisies.



Gavin Morton and GG at the end.



The famous Zama Zama girls Mishka & Sue

everyone riding in circles in the sandy bush causing much swearing at Alex, the Amageza founder and organiser. At the end of the special we still have to ride an unexpected last 115km to camp - a sting in the tail and more swearing at Alex.

Our beds that night are the Van Zyl's Rus hostel, a bunch of rickety beds and threadbare blankets in one large room.

Amageza Day 2 to Kang in Botswana. 40 km Liaison, 533 kms racing stage. We expect sand monsters, we find sand monsters. I get lost but keep stopping to take pictures, lovely red dunes and deadly Botswana daisies... The thorn scrub. Springbok leaping past and ostrich running alongside. Hard to believe there is so much nothing and unpopulated barren places. Lots of wild horses and

cattle... Scores of donkey carts. Then the race is stopped, the rescue helicopter is stuck in SA. We must do a 500 km detour by road to Kang via some spot called Tshabong. We're all desperately low on fuel, Dave Griffin, Gavin and I are riding when Gavin's tyre's mousse goes, his bike hops around like a frog, we call Johnny to come fetch Gavin. Dave and I ride on slower and slower until he runs out of fuel. I tow Dave and his 690 for 55 km then I run out and Alex in his jeep tows us the last 5 k to fuel. Dave and I ride in the dark, cattle and donkeys fill the sides of the road, we share lights and it's like a dim tunnel through the wilderness and it is 8pm when we ride into bivouac after a long 815km ride.

Day 3 Kang to Ghanzi.

Good news for the day, a shortened stage and its good bye to the thorns and thick sand. Gavin starts in second, I'm 20th, and James sets off last having missed two days due to his fuel pump. It's a fast, very sandy track is straight as an arrow. I catch up to Gavin and all the top guys who are lost and are having a conference. Lots of swearing, lots of riding up and down, and we

get going on a crisscrossing maze of sandy tracks with mysterious ends. It's another day of fuel shortage. I stop at a little spaza shop I ask for fuel. I get a blank look and a shaking head. I find out later, everyone else asked and got those blank African looks. I switch to my best (not so good) Tswana and knowledge of rural people, I greet, I ask the child playing in the dust her name, I apologise for my Tswana, its Gauteng style. The gogo smiles at me, reaches into her blouse and shifting her breast from one side to another pulls out her cell phone. "OK I'll send him" she says, directing me to 5 litres of precious fuel. I fill up and race off, blitzing past fuel starved riders including Gavin at high speeds. Gavin runs out with 5km to go, I return with fuel for him, he nearly kisses me but his helmet gets in the way! James comes in late, exhausted and dispirited. The rider in front of him hit a kudu, the kudu drops dead, but luckily the rider flies over it and lands, shoulder broken and bruised but otherwise alive. The ride has taken its toll emotionally rather than physically on James, he decides to withdraw. He's not the only one. Johnny's WhatsApp group post that night. "Estimate about 52 riders left. The morning bivouac looks like a refugee site with forlorn bikes all broken and strewn around the site. Sleep is an issue with service teams working through the night up until start each morning trying to keep riders in the race." We are not even halfway through yet!

Day 4

I start ahead of Gavin, my navigation and Tswana fuel sourcing sneaking me ahead.

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