

Today is long tunnels of sandy track through archways of thorn scrub. The low hanging branches whip and tug at us. The sandy maze splits, crosses, splits, meanders across flat featureless bush, and soon we're all lost again, another roadbook error! Then my mousse goes. I'm suddenly riding a mushy marshmallow. Thanks to fellow rider Terence, James and our local Kalahari bush mechanic I'm on the road again.

My lead is gone and I'm right at the back so really irritated I start chasing the pack, my regular stops for photos forgotten. Again my navigation helps and I catch and pass most of the pack, coming across Gavin at an accident. The rider with him, Walter, hit a huge rock and flew off landing unconscious. Gav stayed with him till medics arrived. When I arrived about 45 minutes later the medics ask us to help pull him onto the board. As he's being strapped to a board, bleeding, dusty and hurt he says to Gav "Is my bike OK????"

#### Day 5,

we leave Botswana and head to Hakskeenpan. It's a 750 km day with a short 200 km special.

The special is a lovely ride down desert highways today for 200 kms of deep deep sand, the ancient ocean bed beneath our wheels. Some saw lions and gemsbok, I just stood and rode my weaving bouncing 500 as fast as I could. The road is straight as an arrow but the sandy ruts twist this way and that like cooked spaghetti. My normal range is 300km, I hit reserve at 170km and splutter out at 220km on the finish. Gavin crawls in mad, it's his 3rd mousse in 4 days. The result he's lost huge time and his lead.

Hakskeenpan, the bivouac, is word class, with Artic style containers with showers, toilets and an international raceway for the world speed record attempt.

#### Day 6,

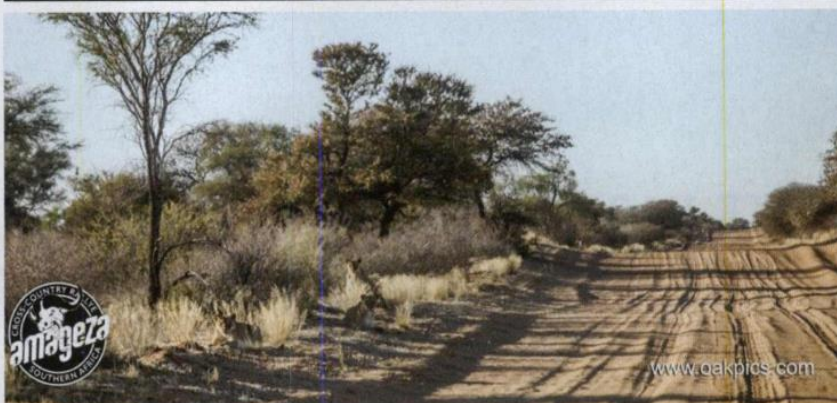
750 k's long racing. I suspect it will be the hardest day, ending in Springbok. I'm less than a km out and in the insane dust of the start hit a rock and destroy my ICO. It does not help that the roadbook has another error, missing a turn, Alex has given us GPS points, and we find the route.

It's a wonderful riding day. Desolate rocky valleys with jagged red and black rock. Nothing grows. You realise that desolation and harshness like that is enjoyed most by the traveller who can relish its murderous lack of life and pass on. Those who must survive, by herd or crop, see reality and their admiration is of an adversary not a soul-fulfilling view.

After the rocks we enter great grassy flower-covered plains with rocky outcrops. Great vistas of gold grass, delicate purple flower carpets and yellow, white and orange Namaqua daisies.



Wild animals including lions were seen on the route



A pride of 4 lions on the route



Dave Griffin of RAD launching into the special stage



Roger Caine-Berman of Ryder Motorrad Pinetown fame finished third overall on his KTM 450 RR.