



Media Release

FINKE A HAPPY HUNTING GROUND FOR HUNTER

Mud, rain and power steering issues failed to halt the charge of Hunter Racing, which has taken yet another class win in the legendary Finke Desert Race.

Colin Hunter, Margot Knowles and their V8 Jeep Grand Cherokee compete in 'Extreme 4WD' in the Australian Off Road Championship. This used to be known as Class Eight and is open to highly modified 4WD vehicles with engines not exceeding 6000c.

The Finke Desert Race is run over two days every Queen's Birthday weekend, from Alice Springs to the small Aputula (Finke) Aboriginal community and back. Heavy rain leading into this year's event (Round Three of the 2008 AORC) made conditions grueling.

"We started as Car One for the Prologue which was a huge disadvantage because we were simply carving a track in the mud for everyone else to follow," says Hunter.

"That left us seeded in 33rd spot which would have been disastrous if it was dusty but was not so bad in the muddy conditions."

Day One would prove to be a tough one. The team lost its intercom for about 10km which made things hard for both driver and co-driver, but that was not the end of it.

"While the windscreen wipers were working, our demister and windscreen washers weren't up to the job, which made it really hard to see," Hunter says.

"Then we had oil which made its way onto Margot's side of the windscreen that wouldn't clean off. It wasn't until 60km out of Finke, when the power steering failed, that we realised it was power steering fluid on the screen.

"That made the last section very hard work, but they were reasonably minor problems for the crew to resolve, which they did during the overnight stop at Finke and we had an event-free run back to Alice Springs for Day Two."

Hunter Racing finished the event 20th outright, first 4WD and first in class, which now puts them at the head of the leaderboard for the 2008 championship points tally in Extreme 4WD, chasing a fifth consecutive class crown.

"Aside from the dramas, I was very happy with the car," Hunter says.

“The team has done a fantastic job and the handling is really good. The new five-tube Radflo bypass rear shocks fitted to the car for this event gave it a lot more control on the high-speed sections. The guys also changed the diff ratios in the lead-up to Finke so we had more top-end speed for what is a very fast track, and it worked exceptionally well.

“And our Goodyear tyres proved themselves winners again. I think it’s testimony to the quality of the product that we ran the whole event on the one set! And with nearly 500 kilometres of racing that’s quite exceptional. We had no flats and conditions that varied from mud, soft sand and rocky sections and the grip was fantastic in all conditions.”

The Finke Desert Race is a 460km ‘race track’ split into two segments by the overnight stop (and party venue) at the Aboriginal settlement. During the event, competitors cross the Finke River, believed to be the oldest river in the world.

This year’s track was about five kilometres shorter both days after the organisers decided to exclude the Prologue section from the main event as it had been badly chopped up during Saturday’s qualifying session following the heavy rain.

Hunter Racing is competing in the 2008 season with support from Goodyear, Modena Engineering and Chrysler Jeep. The team’s next event is the Sunraysia 500 at Mildura, on the weekend of July 12-13.

- Ends -

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About Goodyear

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