

MEDIA RELEASE
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HUNTER RACING HEADS FOR FINKE

On a high from success at the Hyden 450 last month, Queensland's Hunter Racing is heading for the iconic Finke Desert Race as the next step in their goal of a sixth successive title in the Australian Off-Road Championship.

The 460km off-road classic will be run over the Queen's Birthday weekend (June 5-8), starting and finishing in Alice Springs, with the overnight stop between the two legs at the tiny Aboriginal settlement of Aputula (Finke).

It's the second round of the 2009 AORC series in which Hunter Racing competes in the 'Extreme 4WD' class. That used to be known as Class Eight and is open to highly modified 4WD vehicles with engines not exceeding six litres.

"The Finke Desert Race is a terrific event which we've been doing since 1998 and we really enjoy it," says Hunter Racing's driver Colin Hunter.

"We haven't yet caught up with what the forecast is for the event but we're certainly praying for rain. Our car always does well in the wet and we'll be one of the first in Australia to use Goodyear's new Wrangler MT/R with Kevlars.

"It's Goodyear's first off-road tyre built with the toughness of DuPont™ Kevlar® for extra sidewall puncture resistance. This means we have greater strength in the part of the tyre that demands extra toughness when driving off-road," Hunter says.

After ending last year holding their fifth consecutive title, Hunter Racing settled into the start of the 2009 series with 17th outright and first in class in the ARB Pinjarra Engineering Hyden 450 run at Hyden, 330km east of Perth in April.

Finke will be the second round of the series and Hunter, paired for a second year with experienced co-driver Margot Knowles, is again driving the V8 Jeep Grand Cherokee that has brought so much success to the team.

While it will be sporting brand-new livery which will make it more visible in the ONE HD television coverage, it is essentially the same car as last year with the exception of several suspension updates and a new drive system to the front differential, all developed by the team.

Last year the team finished 20th outright in the Northern Territory and first in class, a feat they are hoping to repeat this year.

"We are definitely shooting for another top 20 finish this year," says Hunter.

"Our best ever result was ninth outright in 2001 which was a very wet year, but it's a big field this year and the competition is very strong, so matching last year's results will be an excellent achievement. Still, the car we're running is tried and tested, so we are quite confident."

Thousands of spectators are expected to line the track between Alice Springs and the small Aputula community when nearly 600 competitors (bikes, quads, cars, 4WDs and buggies) tackle one of the world's most difficult off-road courses in one of the world's most remote areas.

After a Prologue on Saturday, June 6 to determine the starting order, competitors race through the desert and across one of the oldest rivers in the world (the Finke) before camping out (and partying hard!) overnight. Any damage done on the first day (Sunday) must be fixed during the overnight stop before the field tackles the return run to Alice Springs on the holiday Monday.

Sponsored by Tattersalls, the Finke is the richest off-road race in the Southern Hemisphere. It started in 1976 as a 'there and back' challenge for local bike riders but soon grew. Cars and buggies (specialist desert racers) were introduced in 1988.

Hunter Racing is competing in the 2009 season with support from Goodyear, Modena Engineering, Extreme Motorsports and Chrysler Jeep. After Finke, the team's next event will be the Sunraysia 500 in July.

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