



International Selections

Mar 21 2003



On Sunday, 19 January 2003, 32 men and women from 16 Nations congregated at Eastnor Castle in the United Kingdom for International Selections. Their purpose: To determine the final 16 competitors who go through to the Land Rover G4 Challenge. The International Selection event was as much about training as it was about selection. Before selecting the final 16, all 32 competitors were trained to the same level in 4x4 driving, kayaking, orienteering, GPS usage, first aid, abseiling and more. In the end each of the competitors was assessed on his or her skills and abilities, and the best competitor from each Nation was selected to take part in the 2003 Land Rover G4 Challenge.

The conditions during the event were cold, wet and muddy. Competitors camped each evening, and cooked most of their own meals using boil-in-the bag food. For 16 of the competitors, International Selections ended in disappointment – the rest go through to the Land Rover G4 Challenge: Next stop New York City!



Land Rover G4 Challenge goes global...

Mar 29 2003



The start is close, the last minute preparations are being made and the competitors are checking their cars and kit at a parking lot close to the start location in New York City.

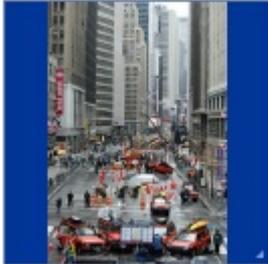
Follow the action online as it happens Sunday 30th March, direct from downtown Manhattan.

Get ready for the ultimate global adventure!



Top 8 announced

Mar 30 2003



The top 8 competitors from International selections were announced this morning on Broadway and 37th by Matthew Taylor, managing Director, Land Rover.

Even the rain and cold couldn't dampen the spirits of the competitors and crowds of people watching!

The top 8 are as follows:

1. Chester Foster, South Africa
2. Erik den Oudendammer, Netherlands
3. Franck Salgues, France
4. Jim Kuhn, Canada
5. Nancy Olson, USA
6. Inigo de Lara, Spain
7. Tim Pickering, UK
8. Dirk Ostertag, Germany.



The 8 teams for Stage 1 chosen

Mar 30 2003



The Team Partnership selections took place shortly after the announcement of the top 8 on Broadway at 11am this morning.

The top 8 competitors from International Selections selected their team mates from the bottom 8, and will work together now for the next 5 days until the departure for South Africa.

They are as follows:

- Team 1. South Africa/Australia
- Team 2. Netherlands/Turkey
- Team 3. France/Arabia
- Team 4. Canada/Belgium
- Team 5. USA/Russia
- Team 6. Spain/Italy
- Team 7. UK/Ireland
- Team 8. Germany/Japan.

To read about the top 8 competitors selected, have a look in latest news...



Day 1 results

Mar 31 2003



The teams attacked the day's activity with enthusiasm and excitement today, as they began on a technical 4x4 course taking up several blocks of Broadway.

Next up was a tough on-foot orienteering challenge through New York, locating markers at 6 key iconic New York City attractions. These included Times Square and the Empire State Building.

At the end of these challenges and prior to the 4 hour drive to Campsite 1, the following Day 1 results were announced:

| | | |
|-----|---------------|-----------------------|
| 1st | | UK/Ireland |
| 2nd | | Netherlands/Turkey |
| 3rd | | SouthAfrica/Australia |
| 4th | | Canada/Belgium |
| 5th | USA/Russia | (Joint) |
| 5th | Germany/Japan | (Joint) |
| 7th | France/Arabia | (Joint) |
| 7th | Spain/Italy | (Joint) |



Day 1 - evening

Mar 31 2003



If Sunday, and the first day of the Land Rover G4 Challenge on Broadway was all show, Monday brought the 16 competitors in the world's newest and most taxing adventure down to earth with a bump.

"We've gone from five star hotel to five star tent and from the glitz of 5th Avenue to minus 5 degree temperatures in the space of...well about 5 hours," chuckled South Africa's Chester Foster. "But, hey, anyone can rough it in a hotel!"

In spectacular convoy, with whooping sirens and flashing lights from a squad of NYPD patrol cars, the 49-strong convoy of Land Rover Freelanders and their Discovery, Defender and Range Rover support vehicles were led from Manhattan over the Hudson River and north into the Catskill Mountains of New York State for the remote section of stage 1.

"This has been one of the hardest winters on record up here," said event director Nick Horne. "Yet last week the temperatures were up in the seventies. But, hey presto, come the start of this challenge and we get snow. Fantastic."

Half a foot of crisp white powdery snow coated the aptly named Frost Valley camp site as the teams arrived late in the evening, tired and in a state of culture shock.



Day 2

Apr 1 2003



Dawn rose shortly after five on Monday, a cloudless sky lighting up the snowscape in spring sunshine. By six o'clock, the campsite resounded with the noises of the army of adventurers awaking from its slumber. The air filled with the smell of coffee, boil-in-the-bag breakfasts and coughs and splutters of bodies bursting into life.

"Welcome to the Strategy Pit," bellowed Nick Horne, welcoming the teams to the daily moment of decision. The Challenge is about strategy, speed, strength and stamina. Each day, 8 pairs of competitors must decide, in The Strategy Pit, in which order they will complete up to 6 physical tasks per day.

Navigation proved to be a major stumbling block for many of the teams. Pickering and McCarthy instantly made a wrong turn from Frost Valley, to get to their first activity - running and showshoeing on the Sprucetown Trail. McCarthy, navigating, cursed under his breath at his mistake. Pickering might have raised an eyebrow, but these relationships are new, fragile and not yet fiery enough to warrant a tirade of temper. The moment passed without incident.



Day 3

Apr 2 2003



Most of the activities today were around Lake Placid, home to the 1932 and 1980 Winter Olympics. Memories of Olympic history are evoked with the sight of massive ski jumps looming above the maple and pine forests.

"I'm real glad we don't have to fly off the end of one of those," laughed Arabia's Chris Perry, who is still acclimatizing from 40 degree heat at home in Dubai to minus ten degrees in the Adirondack Mountains. Perry is teamed for this first, five-day, stage of the Land Rover G4 Challenge with France's Franck Salgues, an engineer from Marseilles.

Chris and Franck suffered on Monday when there was a misunderstanding over the rules for one of the Hunters. They missed out on a checkpoint – something that could have cost them a possible 50 points, a massive amount in the closely fought tussle for early supremacy. In another incident, they left their visa, the time card needed to start each Hunter activity, behind.



Day 3 - Late Breaking News

Apr 2 2003

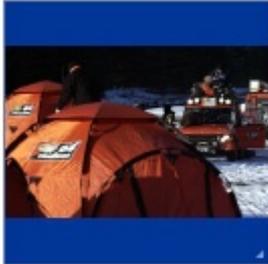


Late Breaking News: We have just learnt that both the South Africa/Australia and the USA/Russia teams were stripped of all the points they gathered yesterday, as they missed the camp curfew. In South Africa's case the lights of the camp were in sight, but they arrived too late to salvage the situation. Details of this will follow in the next report.



Day 4

Apr 3 2003



Thirty seconds to ten o'clock on Tuesday night. Three hours on the road after successfully completing five 'Hunters' (competitive tasks), the Freelander driven by Chester Foster and Guy Andrews arrives at the Land Rover G4 Challenge's overnight campsite. Thankfully for them, they are just thirty seconds the right side of the deadline given to teams to return to base without losing all that day's hard-earned scores on the highly-competitive, brain-straining and body-breaking round the world adventure challenge. Or so they think.

In the black night, the teams cannot find the exact spot where they must register their arrival with an electronic key or 'dibber'. Mercilessly, the clock hits ten, and fifteen hours and more than 300 miles of hardship have been erased in a heartbeat. "I couldn't believe it. I mean, we were a hundred feet from the marshal. Just a hundred feet. Nothing. I was gutted," gasped Foster, from Durban, South Africa. "I didn't know whether to scream, cry. Instead I felt numb. I know Guy did too. What a waste."



Day 4 - Part 2

Apr 3 2003



"We could have won this stage, easily," muses Chester. "But what we don't want now is to be the fourth best pair. That will leave us with the worst choice of partners for the South African leg. But we can't throw away today as well. We have our pride at stake. It was all going so well!" It is especially hard on Chester. He was top of the pile at the start of the week.

He has more media interest than almost any other competitor, and on Saturday will return for his home leg of the round the world adventure with his tail between his legs. "I have to show them that I can win this, despite our mistake," he says, blasting out of the car for the driving slalom at Equinox. By the time they are back in the car, all that burned energy seems to have returned them to a better state of mind. Briefly. On the road section to their next Hunter, orienteering on foot, bike or snowshoe, they mull more over their misfortune. "Neither of us has snowshoed, neither driven on this side of the road, neither read this kind of map," reads the list of possible causes for the favourites' temporary fall from grace.

Things don't go well at the next Hunter. They opt to take their mountain bikes, but as other teams return on foot, it is clear that the bikes will slow them down. "It is one of our problems. We are both leaders and both had opinions as to what we should use to reach the Hunter," says Guy, three times Aussie Ironman Triathlon champion, and possibly the fittest competitor on the Land Rover G4 Challenge.



Day 5 - maximiser results

Apr 5 2003



Five days, three New England states, more than a thousand miles, and 21 competitive elements later, the first stage of Land Rover's round-the-world G4 Challenge produced its first set of results on Thursday, with three week-long stages to go, each in a different time zone.

The results of the maximiser are as follows:

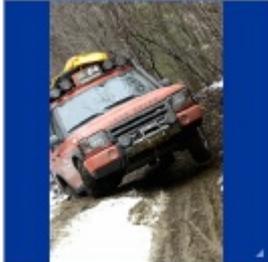
- | | |
|----|--------------------|
| 1. | Netherlands/Turkey |
| 2. | USA/Russia |
| 3. | UK/Ireland |
| 4. | Canada/Belgium |
| 5. | Africa/Australia |
| 6. | France/Arabia |
| 7. | Germany/Japan |
| 8. | Italy/Spain |

Final results of Stage 1 are the subject of another news article.



Day 5 - Stage 1 results

Apr 5 2003



The results of the two Maximisers, 18 Hunters and International Selections combined have produced a new top eight competitors, although the actual order of merit will not be revealed until that top eight are about to choose a team mate from the remaining eight at Team Partnership Selection in Cape Town, at the start of Stage 2 this weekend.

The top eight, in **alphabetical country order**, are:

Arabia - Chris Perry, Belgium - Rudi Thoelen, Canada - Jim Kuhn, France - Franck Salgues, Ireland - Paul McCarthy, Netherlands - Erik den Oudendammer, Turkey - Cüneyt Gazioglu, UK - Tim Pickering



Day 1 - Stage 2

Apr 6 2003



An early start, the teams met for the Stage 2 briefing this morning at 7am, prior to their vehicle and kit familiarisation in the hotel car park outside. As dawn broke, it was clear that the weather was going to be scorching - and as time ticked by the sky cleared of the early morning mist to reveal Table Mountain in glorious sunshine.

The competitors are now preparing themselves for Team Partnership Selection once again, where the Top 8 from Stage 1 will choose their partner for this stage on Signal Hill at Noon, after the noon day gun sounds.

From there the teams launch immediately into the first 'Maximiser' of the stage, which involves a series of physical challenges around Cape Town. After this they will head for the first campsite.



Stage 2 - new teams

Apr 6 2003



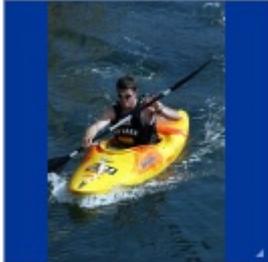
| | | | | | |
|------|---|-----|--|---|-----------------------------|
| Team | | 1 - | | | Canada /South Africa |
| Team | | 2 | | - | Belgium /Australia |
| Team | 3 | | | - | UK /USA |
| Team | 4 | | | - | Ireland /Germany |
| Team | 5 | | | - | France /Spain |
| Team | 6 | | | - | Netherlands /Japan |
| Team | 7 | | | - | Arabia /Russia |
| Team | | 8 - | | | Turkey /Italy |

The teams above in bold define the top 8 competitors/countries from the end of stage one, in numerical team order i.e. Canada ranked first after Stage 1, Turkey ranked eighth etc.



Day 1 - Part 5

Apr 7 2003



After some serious kayaking on the V&A waterfront and back on dry land, the competitors were able to snatch a bite to eat before the day's final challenge, a testing off-road circuit constructed on the edge of the bay.

For the South African leg of the Challenge, the competitors have swapped their Freelanders for a Defender 110 TD5. The 'classic' Land Rover remains the ultimate off-road tool and more than proved its capabilities on the demanding course. As the Land Rover G4 Challenge now heads into the remote stage, the Defender will be tested to the max as they make their way Northeast to finish in George.

To increase the difficulty of an already technical course, the organisers had placed a series of "Land Rover G4 Challenge" markers on the ground, over which one of the front tyres had to pass. It was an extreme test of the coordination and understanding of these still fledgling partnerships.



Day 1 - Part 4
Apr 7 2003



For event leader, Canadian Jim Kuhn, a high-speed tumble off his mountain bike left him with lacerations to his left elbow, left knee and right wrist. After attention from the Land Rover G4 Challenge medical team, Kuhn was patched up and returned, defiantly, to complete the driving course.

"I will do everything I can to continue," he declared, to rapturous applause. Chester Foster performed excellently all day, but was understandably concerned for his teammate welfare. "Jim's my teammate, and I'll help him all the way," he said.



Day 1 - Part 3

Apr 7 2003



The high temperature was taking its toll on the 16 competitors. Even local hero, Chester Foster claimed that he was "surprised about how hot and hard the climb was."

The only person who seemed to be revelling in the conditions was Chris Perry, the representative of Arabia. "It's like a nice spring day for me," joked the Dubai resident who spends his time managing a water park.

Having sprinted back down the hill, the competitors swapped leg for pedal power. What followed was a tricky, off-road descent on mountain bikes back towards the city centre. After a hot and exhausting run the challenging bike course tested competitors endurance, skill and focus with several tumbles occurring as challengers pushed themselves against the clock and each other.



Day 1 - Part 2

Apr 7 2003



There was barely time to discuss strategy before the sound of the Navy cannon marked the start of the second stage at noon. The competitors' first task was to scale Signal Hill, a vicious, rocky ascent that exposed them to the full venom of the South African sun.

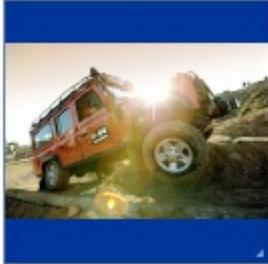
Half way into the gruelling course the competitors were already strewn across the hillside with Germany's Dirk Ostertag, Belgium's Rudi Thoelen and Guy Andrews of Australia leading the way. At the rear, there was a special cheer for Japan's Shinichi Yoshimoto, who at 43 is the G4's oldest competitor.

This early test was not without drama. Pickering lost his ID microchip, without which he would be unable to score points. The plucky Brit ended up climbing the hill twice before he found the tag. The two female competitors – Nancy Olson (USA) and Alberta Chiappa (ITA) – also found themselves in difficulty. After taking a wrong turn, they missed crucial checkpoints and would score no points on the section.



Day 1 - Maximiser results

Apr 7 2003

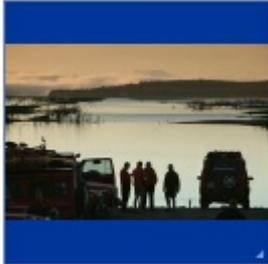


1. Rudi Thoelen (Belgium) - Guy Andrews (Australia)
2. Franck Salgues (France) - Inigo de Lara (Spain)
3. Paul McCarthy (Ireland) - Dirk Ostertag (Germany)
- =4 .Chris Perry (Arabia) - Sergey Polyansky (Russia)
- =4 .Erik den Oudendammer (Neth) - Shinichi Yoshimoto (Japan)
6. Tim Pickering (UK) - Nancy Olson (USA)
- 7 .Jim Kuhn (Canada) - Chester Foster (SA)
- 8 .Cuneyt Gazioglu (Turkey) - Alberta Chiappa (Italy)



Stage 2 - Day 2 - Part 5

Apr 8 2003



There were some weary but contented smiles on the faces of the competitors as they set up camp at Cape Agulhas, which is Africa's most southerly tip. As boil-in-the-bag food was brought to life on their Defender's still warm manifolds, they were able to reflect on a tough but enjoyable day.

"We didn't score many points today, but we learnt a lot about the African conditions and had lots of fun," concluded Turkey's Cuneyt Gazioglu. When they awake tomorrow, the competitors will be faced with a stunning view out to sea, and a host of new challenges.



Stage 2 – Day 2 – Part 4

Apr 8 2003



Today, minutes after strategies were posted, the competitors' orange Land Rover Defenders were seen travelling in convoy across the horizon. Using a combination of Global Positioning Satellite technology and a map, the teams had to navigate themselves across on-and off-road sections to their chosen Hunter.

For the Italian and Turkish pairing of Cuneyt Gazioglu and Alberta Chiappa there were early frustrations when a locked gate blocked the access to a path that led directly to their Hunter. A forty-minute detour followed and Gazioglu admitted "it made a mess of our strategy for the whole day."



Stage 2 - Day 2 - Part 2

Apr 8 2003



The event organisers had a sorry announcement to make before the strategy pit. Canadian Jim Kuhn had accepted the advice of the medical staff and withdrawn from the Challenge. Kuhn's wounds, sustained in a mountain bike accident yesterday, had required thirty stitches and the doctors felt that the risk of infection was too great for him to continue.

The popular Canadian was leading the event at the time of the accident and the dignity with which he accepted his misfortune typifies the spirit in which the Land Rover G4 Challenge is being contested. Kitt Stringer, who finished second to Jim in the International Selections, is being flown out to join the Challenge and will inherit his compatriot's score. Kuhn meanwhile, has accepted an offer to stay with the Challenge and to work in the event HQ, where his skills as a computer software expert will be invaluable.



Stage 2 - Day 2 - Part 1

Apr 8 2003



"Wow, there's a mouse down here," yelled Sergey Polyansky from the bottom of the cave. "That's not a mouse, it's a bat," replied his teammate, Chris Perry, as four of the tiny winged creatures took to the air and flew past the Russo-Arabian pairing. Set in the heart of what was a nineteenth century goldmine, the Hansieskloof Hunter was just one of a number of unusual hazards to face the Land Rover G4 Challenge competitors on day two of the South African stage.

The competitors were awoken at 5.30am by the soothing voice of U2's Bono, played through a Range Rover stereo. It was a typically early start, but the view across the mist-strewn Theewaterskloof Dam was worth an hour's sleep. Having packed their bags into their Defenders, the competitors readied themselves for the Strategy Pit.



Stage 2 – Day 3 – Part 4

Apr 9 2003



For South African Chester Foster, the home stage of the Challenge has been testing. Foster had the honour of being selected to partner top ranked Canadian Jim Kuhn for the stage, a partnership which combined Kuhn's tactical thinking and Foster's local knowledge and peak fitness. However, this was not to eventuate, as injuries sustained by Kuhn in a mountain bike fall on Sunday led to the Canadian's retirement from the competition.

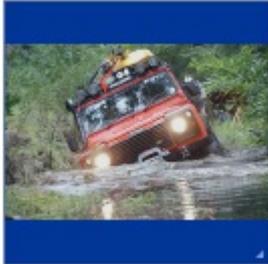
Foster has shown terrific spirit in a difficult few days that has seen him competing alongside one of the event support staff, but true to his nature he has bounced back well. "We're trying to complete the Hunters quickly so as to squeeze in as many as we possibly can," said Foster.

Tomorrow he will be teamed with Kitt Stringer, Canada's reserve contender who is flying in to fill Kuhn's position. In a baptism of fire, Stringer will join Foster for a final day of remote Hunters before culminating the South African stage of the tour with the remote Maximiser in Kranshoek.



Stage 2 – Day 3 – Part 3

Apr 9 2003



Rudi Thoelen and Guy Andrews are also looking formidable. The quick strategic thinking and razor sharp navigation of the Belgian fighter pilot seems an ideal foil for the physical prowess and gutsy determination of the Australian. Today they completed no less than five Hunters and this pairing could be the one to watch in Friday's all-important Maximiser.

After a steady drive West, the teams arrived at the Bontebok campsite. Tomorrow they will be joined by Kitt Stringer who is flying in from Canada. Stringer is joining the Challenge after Jim Kuhn was forced to withdraw due to injury. Stringer inherits Kuhn's points tally and will start the Challenge teamed with South Africa's Chester Foster. This will undoubtedly change the dynamic of the group and provide yet another interesting twist in what's already proving to be a fascinating tale.



Stage 2 – Day 3 – Part 2

Apr 9 2003



Although the Caledon Hunter drew the most attention today, other Hunters proved no less challenging or exciting. The Irish and German team of Paul McCarthy and Dirk Ostertag returned to camp raving about the Waenshuiskrans Hunter. This required the team to navigate their way along a beach and into a cave, which was marked by a tiny opening. "I really enjoyed running along the beach," said McCarthy, "it reminded me of my home town of Dingle in Ireland."

As the event progresses, the character of the individual competitors is becoming more apparent. Dutchman Erik den Oudendammer, for example, is rarely seen without a broad grin on his face. When it disappeared from his lips on the ascent of the Caledon Hunter, a marshal voiced his concern. "Don't worry," he replied. "When I concentrate, my smile is only on the inside."



Stage 2 – Day 4 – Part 5

Apr 10 2003



Most contenders will be hoping that the sun returns tomorrow, but Australia's Guy Andrews seems to be revelling in the tricky conditions. He and Belgian teammate Rudi Thoelen managed to paddle their kayaks past two other competing teams in the first Hunter of the morning. The performance was made more remarkable when it was revealed that Andrews had been towing Thoelen using a rope attached to his kayak. "We've been pushing hard today," said the Aussie as he returned to camp, "but there's a long way to go."

On Thursday, the teams face their final Hunters in South Africa before the all-important Maximiser on Friday. As we approach the mid-way point of the Land Rover G4 Challenge, the competitors are learning to maximise their energy and to guard against long-term fatigue. A steady, consistent approach could well prove the key to success.



Stage 2 – Day 4 – Part 4

Apr 10 2003



For the past three days, Foster has been competing alongside a stand-in teammate.. This followed the injury that forced the withdrawal of Canada's Jim Kuhn. Kuhn's replacement, Kitt Stringer arrived in camp this evening and quickly reacquainted himself with his new teammate. "I've spent the last 25 hours catching a bunch of different flights," said Stringer. Jokingly he added: "I'm exhausted but looking at the rest of the competitors, I'm in good company."



Stage 2 – Day 4 – Part 3

Apr 10 2003



Poor weather conditions also took their toll today. Chester Foster of South Africa arrived at the Gysmanhoekpas Hunter to find that the drizzle had reduced visibility to just a few feet. What's more, the water had made the rock-strewn ascent perilous. "Just keeping your balance was really difficult on the rocks," said the local boy. "If we'd slipped, it would have been a really nasty fall."

But Foster was revelling in the water later in the day. Having scrambled up a cliff face, he was required to abseil around 100m into water. "The view was amazing", said a clearly elated Foster, "it was the most fantastic feeling." Both Foster and the Netherlands/Japan team of Erik den Oudendammer and Shinichi Yoshimoto completed this tricky but exciting challenge.



Stage 2 – Day 4 – Part 2

Apr 10 2003



Arabia's Chris Perry simply described the Gouritz Bridge experience as "absolutely awesome." He's a veteran of several jumps but his teammate, Sergey Polyansky, was new to the experience. The Russian was visibly nervous and as he stepped forward to jump, he said to the crowd, "please remember me as a jolly person." With an epitaph like that, how could anyone do otherwise? Needless to say, he's still in one piece and grinning broadly.

For Perry, the jump came near the beginning of what he later claimed was "an extremely difficult day." The distances between many of the Hunters were longer than in previous days and many were in isolated locations, requiring long sections of off-road driving before they could be reached. Indeed, by the end of the day, the only thing that had worked harder than the competitors were their Defenders.



Stage 2 – Day 4 – Part 1

Apr 10 2003



I'd always said that I'd never do a bungee jump," said the UK's Tim Pickering. "But if I don't, we'll lose the points." The plucky Brit smiled, took three steps forward and on the shout of "bungee", dived headfirst off a 65-metre bridge to an awaiting boat. This event, the Gouritz Bridge Hunter, was the undoubted highlight of today's action in the Land Rover G4 Challenge and it was completed by five of the eight teams.

This Hunter encapsulates the qualities that make this event so special. Having driven off-road to the start point, the teams had to prepare their own equipment and run to the base of the bridge. Once in position, they had to attach their jumar equipment to a rope, before starting the 65-metre ascent. Jumar is a strange technique, which requires the athlete to "walk up" the rope, while sliding the handgrips or 'jumars.' It's as technically difficult as it sounds, and an exhausting test of leg and forearm strength.



Stage 2 – Day 5 – Part 5

Apr 11 2003



Canada's reserve competitor, Kitt Stringer arrived last night and made a solid start to the competition. His teammate, South Africa's Chester Foster, was on hand to offer advice. "It's my third teammate in a week," he said, "so I'm used to building relationships." Having finished runner-up in the Canadian National Selections, Stringer is already familiar with the Land Rover G4 Challenge philosophy and is an excellent mountain biker. It will be fascinating to see how he performs in the Maximiser tomorrow. Will his lack of fatigue counterbalance his inexperience?

On Friday the teams will compete in what is being described as a "remote Maximiser" near the town of Knysna. The event organisers are keeping tight-lipped about what lies ahead but they're promising "the toughest and most exciting activity of the Challenge so far." After giving their all tomorrow, the Challengers will stay in George before leaving for Karratha in Australia on Saturday. It's been quite a week and it's not over yet.



Stage 2 – Day 5 – Part 4

Apr 11 2003



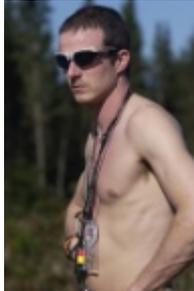
Some of the other teams were also experiencing frustrations. During a difficult abseiling and swimming Hunter, Germany's Dirk Ostertag lost his all-important identity chip. Without it, he would lose all the points that he'd scored so far this week. It was a tense moment for the German/Irish pairing and his teammate Paul McCarthy joined in the hunt. "Eventually we found it but it took many dives to the bottom of the river," said a relieved Ostertag. "It was a frightening moment."

The UK/USA team arrived at camp in a positive mood. "We've had an absolutely fabulous day," said the UK's Tim Pickering. "Definitely our best day yet both in terms of the activities and our performance. We've had huge fun and scored plenty of points." Asked to name his highlight, he replied: "Oh, that would be when (USA teammate) Nancy (Olson) let go of her abseil rope and fell into the water with a huge splash. It was fantastic to watch." If there was a prize for the funniest and happiest pairing in the Challenge, team UK/USA would surely win.



Stage 2 – Day 5 – Part 2

Apr 11 2003



At 7.30am, Andrews and Thoelen joined the rest of the 16 competitors in the Strategy Pit. Each team is given a map and description of the day's tasks or 'Hunters' and they must decide which they intend to visit and how many teams will have visited the Hunter before them.

There's added pressure because the first team to reveal their strategy can leave immediately, while the others have to set-off at five-minute intervals. It's an intense period that requires quick thinking and mental flexibility. Get it wrong and it is difficult to score highly.



Stage 2 – Day 5 – Part 1

Apr 11 2003



After the bungee jumping heroics of Wednesday, competitors in the Land Rover G4 Challenge were looking forward to a solid day of point scoring before the all-important Maximiser in Knysna. As the campsite slowly came to life at around 6.30am, some of the competitors were admitting to fatigue.

“It’s definitely getting harder to get up in the morning,” said Australia’s Guy Andrews as he gathered sticks for his storm kettle. “But although I’m tired, I’m feeling physically stronger than I did earlier in the week. And my partner, Rudi Thoelen can just run and run.”



Stage 2 - Day 6 - Maximiser results

Apr 12 2003



- | | |
|----|--------------------|
| 1. | France/Spain |
| 2. | Belgium/Australia |
| 3. | Ireland/Germany |
| 4. | Turkey/Italy |
| 5. | Canada/SouthAfrica |
| 6. | Arabia/Russia |
| 7. | Netherlands/Japan |
| 8. | UK/USA |

The maxmiser began Friday morning at 7:30am, and after a quick briefing the teams shot off on mountain bikes, to be followed by a run and then 'coastaleering' - a term associated with 'running' (or clambering!) across rocky and trecherous coastline before trekking up a perilously steep slope to the finish.



Stage 2 - Day 6 - Top 8 competitors

Apr 12 2003



| | | | |
|-------------|------|--------|---------------------|
| Arabia | | Chris | Perry |
| Australia | | Guy | Andrews |
| Belgium | | Rudi | Thoelen |
| France | | Franck | Salgues |
| Ireland | | Paul | McCarthy |
| Netherlands | Erik | Den | Oudendammer |
| Spain | nigo | | Lara |
| UK | | | de Tim Pickering |

The above competitors all fall within the top 8, and are listed only in country alphabetical order. They will be choosing their team mates from the lower 8. The exact rankings will be revealed in Australia at the start of Stage 3!



Stage 3 - 8 Teams selected

Apr 13 2003



1. **Belgium**/Germany
2. **France**/Turkey
3. **Arabia**/South Africa
4. **Netherlands**/Canada
5. **Ireland**/USA
6. **Australia**/Russia
7. **UK**/Italy
8. **Spain**/Japan

The Top 8 competitors appear above in **bold**, and begin the third round of the Land Rover G4 Challenge on Monday morning.



Stage 3 - Day 1 - Part 1

Apr 14 2003



The undoubted stars of Day One were the South Africa/Arabia pairing of Foster and Perry. The only blemish on an otherwise perfect day was a burst mountain bike tyre, which saw Foster running most of the mountain bike section. They managed to visit three Hunters during the day – a feat equalled only by Australia/Russia team of Guy Andrews and Sergey Polyansky. Team South Africa/Arabia, however, accomplished the positions they predicted at all three locations, whereas Andrews and Polyansky managed only one.

Having been the first pairing to post their strategy earlier that morning, Andrews and Polyansky planned to visit the locations nearest the Strategy Pit first, leaving them with enough time for the long drive to the first campsite. However, it quickly became clear that communication between the team members was not yet refined, and several navigational errors cost them vital time.

"In the end we managed to visit three Hunter locations, which compared well with the other teams," says Australian Guy Andrews of their performance, "but unfortunately we managed only one prediction, which puts us behind the top teams."



Stage 3 - Day 1 - Part 2

Apr 14 2003



Having endured four flights to reach Karratha in northwest Western Australia from George on South Africa's Garden Route, the gruelling travel schedule began to take its toll on the competitors on the first day of Stage Three. More than one team commented that sitting on aeroplanes for 36 hours doesn't help to relax aching muscles – it just aggravates the situation. One team that was especially hard hit was the USA/Ireland pairing of Nancy Olson and Paul McCarthy.

"My legs just couldn't do what they've been doing all along," explained Olson, "I know I am capable of pushing harder, but my legs are simply not up to it anymore." Despite this, they still managed to visit two locations, scoring maximum points at each by visiting them as predicted during the morning's Strategy Pit.



Stage 3 - Day 1 - Part 4

Apr 14 2003



The mudflat incident suffered by Teams UK/Italy and Belgium/Germany had a wider impact on the fortune of others and cost Team Canada/Netherlands valuable points. "We made our predictions, and headed for the Hunters," explains Canadian Kitt Stringer. "Unfortunately for us, two other teams got lost and bogged down, which meant that we were unable to stick to our predicted finishing orders." They managed to visit two Hunters, but each of their predictions were out by one place.

Their bid to make up points saw one of the most dramatic finishes to a Hunter so far in the Challenge. The Hunter at Python Pool ended with a long abseil, after a murderous mountain biking trail and uphill hike. Team Canada/Netherlands managed to make up time on Team USA/Ireland during the Hunter, and if they managed to finish in front of Olson and McCarthy, they would hit their prediction.

Stringer and teammate Erik den Oudendammer were within reach of the team in front of them, but McCarthy reached the abseil lines first, thereby securing the abseil for him and partner Olson.



Stage 3 - Day 2 - Part 1

Apr 15 2003



Tuesday was the teams' second day in Western Australia, and the second day trying to complete a selection of six Hunters. Offering a stunning labyrinth of deep gorges and iron red peaks, the Karijini National Park provided the setting for most of today's Hunters.

Standing at 1,235 metres, an energetic walk to the summit of Karijini's Mount Bruce would normally take 2-3 hours. Triple Australian Ironman Surf Champion, Guy Andrews blasted to the top and back in an hour and ten minutes.

"That man's a machine," said Turkey's Cüneyt Gazioglu, as he and his French teammate Franck Salgues prepared to take to the hill. At stake: the most points for any of the day's Hunters. And it was easy to see why.



Stage 3 - Day 2 - Part 2

Apr 15 2003



All over Karijini National Park, stories of Mother Nature getting tough with the competitors were trickling out. "This is by far the harshest place we've been to yet, and so far we've endured minus twenty degrees in America and a week in the African bush," said the UK's Tim Pickering. "This place is beautiful but hellish. It's 35 degrees, there are flies at you all the time. It sucks the energy out of you."

The only team begging for worse conditions and hotter weather were one of the top seeded pairs, Chris Perry and Chester Foster of Arabia and South Africa. "We were expecting forty degree temperatures. Because we are used to the heat that would have played right into our hands," said Perry. "But even without the heat, this whole competition is getting more and more intense. Those who are struggling are making big mistakes."



Stage 3 - Day 2 - Part 3

Apr 15 2003



Even the fittest competitors were finding they were starting to eat into their body's reserves. Chester estimates that he is burning up to 6000 calories a day, three or four times the male average. "There is just no way you can eat that much to replenish the body," he explained. "You just have to eat when you can and sleep as much as you can."

The physical strains are not the only problems starting to afflict the teams at just past half distance in the Land Rover G4 Challenge. With the overall standings made public on Sunday, some of the early camaraderie is being replaced by the competitive instincts of those in the frame for victory. "It's nothing nasty, but maybe teams that were willing to help out in the past are now less forthcoming when so much is at stake," said Canada's Kitt Stringer.



Stage 3 - Day 2 - Part 4

Apr 15 2003



Chris and Chester were involved in a standoff with the French/Turkish pair. Both arrived at the end of the Hamersley Gorge Hunter hoping to be the third team to finish and score maximum bonus points for an accurate prediction. In the end they flipped a coin and Chris and Chester took their 3rd full score of the day.

Buffered by a staircase waterfall at one end and an icy blue plunge pool at the other, there was no time for sightseeing in the gorge. The aim for the teams was to find a handful of location markers in the gorge before scrabbling for grip like mountain goats back up to the finish on the escarpment above.



Stage 3 - Day 3 - Part 1

Apr 16 2003



The mid-week Maximiser was an intense affair that tested the strength, endurance, navigation and nerves of both competitors and organisers alike, and for Australian adventure racer, Guy Andrews, the day did not go well.

Andrews was one of 16 international competitors participating in Wednesday's 'Maximiser' – a strenuous three-hour mix of mountain biking, kayaking, rock climbing, swimming and running through the gorges of the Karijini National Park, southwest of Port Hedland in Western Australia.

Andrews was leading the first pack of competitors into Knox Gorge at the end of a mountain bike and running section. A wrong turning at the foot of the gorge left him and three others heading away from the next challenge in the Maximiser - a combined kayak and swim.

This article continues in Part 2.



Stage 3 - Day 3 - Part 4

Apr 16 2003



The winning score was the aggregate time of the two partners. In the case of the South African / Arabian duo, Chester Foster and Chris Perry, the success of one was nullified by the disaster of the other. Foster won his route but Perry was one of the trio lost with Guy Andrews. Foster could not believe his bad luck, which has struck again for the third time in three stages of the Challenge.

"This was going to be my pay day," said Chester. "Since getting to Australia, I had halved my deficit to the leaders. Today I thought I could get up into the top four overall.

"I was on form. I was faster than Franck (Salgues, of France), and Franck is a machine. But Chris's problems have killed it for me. I am running out of days fast now. It's not over yet but I need some good luck and soon."



Stage 3 - Day 3 - Part 5

Apr 16 2003



Franck Salgues of France was second on his route and his partner Cüneyt Gazioglu of Turkey won the other, making them the winners of the Maximiser. Cüneyt revealed his secret weapon:

"I found a really comfortable way to carry the kayak across my back and that made the portage really bearable and really fast," he said. "But this was the most difficult and most dangerous Maximiser of all. One slip and it could result in injury."

"The Maximiser also revealed a lot about the competitors. I was in the group that took a wrong turn. I went 200 metres the wrong way but then got out my map. I wasn't going to say anything to the others but Erik (den Oudendammer of the Netherlands) shouted out. They didn't listen to him but what he did was really good. He gets my vote for team spirit on this event."



Stage 3 - Day 3 - Part 2
Apr 16 2003



?undefined



Stage 3 - Day 3 - Part 3
Apr 16 2003



?undefined



Mid-week Maximiser results

Apr 17 2003



1. France/Turkey
2. Belgium/Germany
3. Netherlands/Canada
4. Ireland/USA
5. UK/Italy
6. Arabia/South Africa
7. Spain/Japan
8. Australia/Russia

After the Maximiser, the convoy moved 200kms north east to the hottest town in Australia – Marble Bar – in preparation for the final day of West Australian competition. Fittingly, as the teams arrived at Marble Bar the thermometer read 32 degrees centigrade. And it was 10 o'clock at night!

The competitors must endure another day of the harsh Australian Outback before relocating to Sydney for the Urban Maximiser on Sunday. This is sure to be spectacular as it includes many of Sydney's famous landmarks.



Stage 3 - Day 4 - Part 1

Apr 18 2003



The flies start biting at five. By seven the thermometer is past 30 degrees centigrade and by lunchtime the mercury is simmering nicely at 39. But there is good news; the record for Marble Bar - Australia's hottest town - is another ten degrees higher up the Centigrade scale.

"In the summer you melt here. You cannot go outside and you cannot go far from the air conditioning," said the local petrol station owner. Today is a good day for her. Forty-nine Land Rovers have filled up at her pumps - as many vehicles as normally visit in a week.

The Tangiers orange vehicles make up the convoy for the Land Rover G4 Challenge global adventure. Marble Bar has been the penultimate halt in the event's week of grueling competition in the harsh but stunning northwest of Australia.



Stage 3 - Day 4 - Part 2

Apr 18 2003



"It was a big drive out there but there were more points for that one Hunter than any other so far on the Challenge," said Shinichi Yoshimoto of Japan. Unfortunately he and his partner, Inigo de Lara of Spain, got more than they bargained for on their adventure. A large rock damaged part of their vehicle's steering and they had to camp out overnight whilst they fixed it. "To camp out on our own under the stars is almost worth it."

There was drama elsewhere in the Hunters. Sergey Polyansky of Russia was lucky not to hurt himself when he fell whilst abseiling off a razor sharp cliff. He was saved by his Australian teammate Guy Andrews, who yesterday came close to setting off a rescue search when he took a wrong turn in the snake-infested bush.

"It was a nasty place to slip and I am very pleased Guy and some others were on the end of the safety rope," said Sergey.



Stage 3 - Day 4 - Part 3

Apr 18 2003



In another abseiling task, based in the Comet Gold Mine on the outskirts of Marble Bar, Italy's Alberta Chiappa dropped the electronic key that she and the other competitors use at the start and finish of the Hunters. After recovering her key she had to climb a 75-metre chimney to find the next checkpoint.

"It was a tough climb but the view from the top was amazing," she said. "I could see about 30 kilometres out across the -what do they call it? - Outback!"

Her teammate Tim Pickering of the UK had a fright as he ventured into a cave on the same task. One of the first teams into the cave, he startled some bats, who flew right at him. "Luckily I have done a lot of caving and was half expecting it," he said. "But it certainly got the heart racing."



Stage 3 - Day 4 - Part 4

Apr 18 2003



The harshest Hunter of the day was an orienteering test round through hot rocky terrain teeming with snakes and carpeted in razor sharp spinifex grass. It caught out South African Chester Foster and Chris Perry of Arabia.

"We expected the checkpoints to be up high but the first one was buried in the grass. It took half an hour to find it and that was the time we'd expected to do the whole thing," revealed Chester. "This stage has not gone my way. I am now just looking forward to a day off and the Maximiser in Sydney." Friday is the long awaited rest day.

The teams will chill out on the sugar white sand of Eighty Mile Beach between Port Hedland and Broome. "I don't know what I am looking forward to most, lying in, having a shave and shower, or a few beers," said Rudi Thoelen, who started the Australian stage as leader. "But really I want to get going and win this."



Teams relax on Eighty Mile Beach

Apr 18 2003



After a demanding week that has seen the competitors travel over 2,000 kilometres between Karratha, Mount Florence, Karijini National Park, Marble Bar and Eighty Mile Beach, Western Australia, competitors have been treated to a well-earned rest day.

Completing the remote segment of the Australian Stage at Eighty Mile Beach, competitors enjoyed a sumptuous BBQ and beautiful surrounds, settling in for their first day of rest after nineteen days of solid competition.

The Land Rover G4 Challenge competitors and crew spent the day recuperating aching muscles, soaking in the sea and nourishing depleted energy stores.



Stage 3 - Day 7 - Maximiser Results

Apr 20 2003



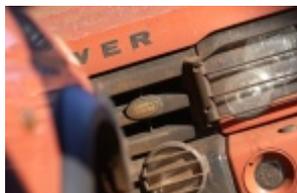
1. South Africa/Arabia
2. Australia/Russia
- =3. Belgium/Germany
- =3. Ireland/USA
5. France/Turkey
6. Netherlands/Canada
7. Spain/Japan
8. UK/Italy

After catching a few waves surfing on Bondi beach, the competitors were dropped off by boat at Bradleys Head on the North shore of Sydney harbour to begin the Maximiser. This began with a 3 km sea-kayak along the river, to a point just under the famous Sydney Harbour Bridge where they began their 6 km run to Wharf 8, Sydney Harbour where the technical driving course waited for them on a 100m long barge!



Stage 3 - Top 8 competitors

Apr 20 2003



| | | | |
|--------------|---|----------------------|-----------------|
| Arabia | - | Chris | Perry |
| Australia | - | Guy | Andrews |
| Belgium | - | Rudi | Thoelen |
| France | - | Franck | Salgues |
| Ireland | - | Paul | McCarthy |
| Netherlands | - | Erik den Oudendammer | |
| South Africa | - | Chester | Foster |
| Turkey | | - | Cuneyt Gazioglu |

The above 8 competitors were announced as being the top 8, and appear in **country alphabetical order only**. Their rankings will be announced before Team Partnership Selection on Monday evening in Las Vegas, at the beginning of Stage 4.



Stage 4 - Team Partnership Selection

Apr 21 2003



| | | | |
|------|---|---|----------------------------|
| Team | 1 | - | Belgium /Germany |
| Team | 2 | - | France /UK |
| Team | 3 | - | Arabia /Spain |
| Team | 4 | - | Australia /USA |
| Team | 5 | - | Ireland /Canada |
| Team | 6 | - | Netherlands /Japan |
| Team | 7 | - | Turkey /Russia |
| Team | 8 | - | South Africa /Italy |

The 8 teams are now set for the fourth and final stage of the inaugural Land Rover G4 Challenge. The countries in **bold** were the ranked competitors.

The scene is now set for the first Maximiser of Stage 4 in Snow Canyon tomorrow, before moving up through the desert, finishing in Moab with a spectacular head-to-head competition on Saturday 26th April. Images to follow!



Stage 4 - day 1 - Maximiser Results
Apr 22 2003



?undefined



Stage 4 -Day 2 - Part 1

Apr 23 2003



As the Land Rover G4 Challenge teams opened their tent flaps at around 6am this morning, they met with a shock. The Coral Pink Sand Dunes had turned a whiter shade of pale. Over five inches of snow had fallen during the night and transformed the scene in the camp. Fleece, hats, jackets and gloves were summoned from the competitor's waterproof bags and 16 mummies duly arrived at the Strategy Pit.

"We thought we'd left these conditions behind three weeks ago when we left New York," said the UK's Tim Pickering, echoing the sentiments of his fellow competitors. The team of Arabia and Spain was the first to post their strategy and were followed by the pair of Belgium and Germany. "It's like being in a marriage," said the event leader Rudi Thoelen as he and Dirk Ostertag jumped into their Discovery.



Stage 4 - Day 2 - Part 2

Apr 23 2003



The cold conditions and the high altitude – many of the Hunters were above 2000m – took its toll on the tired athletes. Spain's Inigo de Lara explained: "It can be difficult to breathe properly at times and it's tough when your muscles are cold. But it gets easier once you warm up and the adrenaline starts to flow."

His teammate, Arabia's Chris Perry, started the week in third place and is adopting a cautious strategy. "We're not going to take any big risks," he said. "As long as I'm still in the top four on Saturday, I'll be able to compete for the Range Rover in the final Separator." The jovial Arabian is used to 40 degrees temperatures in Dubai, but he was characteristically unfazed by the cold conditions.



Stage 4 - Day 2 - Part 3

Apr 23 2003



By lunchtime, the clouds had been summoned elsewhere and they'd been replaced by clear blue sky. The snow disappeared and the sandy splendour of this magical area was unveiled. Russia's Sergey Polyansky was enthusing about the view at the top of the Kodachrome Hunter. "I reached the control at the top of the cliff and it was just 'wow'," he said. "We've made our prediction and now the adrenaline's really pumping." Polyansky and Turkish teammate, Cuneyt Gazioglu, were having a good day and their rapport was self-evident. "I'm feeling stronger now than when I started the competition," said Gazioglu. "All I need now is another two weeks to catch the leaders!"

Other competitors questioned Gazioglu's optimism. "I don't believe that he's feeling fitter," said Germany's Dirk Ostertag. "I'm still in good shape but I'm definitely aware of the fatigue." Nevertheless, he and Rudi Thoelen had another good day and are working brilliantly together.



Stage 4 - Day 2 - Part 4

Apr 24 2003



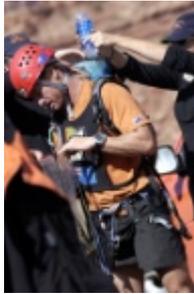
While Thoelen and Ostertag reached four Hunters, Eric den Oudendammer from the Netherlands and Shinichi Yoshimoto of Japan, only managed to reach two. "Our strategy was OK," explained the Dutchman, "but we took too long to complete each event. In the end we just ran out of time."

At the day's end, the teams settled back into the comfort of their Land Rovers and began a long drive towards the campsite at Stanton Creek, on the edge of Lake Powell's Bullfrog Bay. It was a chance to relax their muscles and take in the extraordinary scenery of the Capitol Reef National Park – there is good reason why this area was known as the "wild west."



Stage 4 - Day 3 - Part 1

Apr 24 2003



From the camp this morning, most teams made their way to the White Canyon Hunter, arguably the most spectacular of the whole event. After parking their Land Rovers, the teams ran a short distance to the top of the Canyon. This marked the start of a dramatic abseil to the ravine below. For the watching spectators, it was a scene of extraordinary beauty, but for the competitors, it was a test of nerve and agility.

And it caught out Guy Andrews. The Australian abseiled past a control and was forced to take a lengthy detour to recover his position. He was in 4th place at the start of the week and with only the top four competitors able to compete for the Range Rover in Saturday's Separator, Andrews was feeling the pressure.

"I'm thinking too much about the man behind me and not enough about myself," he said. "I had brain fade in the Strategy Pit this morning. I just wasn't mentally on it, and now I've made another mistake here." It remains to be seen how these errors will affect his overall position.



Stage 4 - Day 3 - Part 2

Apr 24 2003



Russia's Sergey Polyansky was also having a tough day. On the White Canyon Hunter he dropped his GPS unit during the abseil. The device, which the teams use to navigate, smashed on the bare rock face. Without it, Polyansky and Turkish teammate Cuneyt Gazioglu would be unable to complete the task, but the Canada/Ireland team of Kitt Stringer and Paul McCarthy came to their rescue. They needed the Russia/Turkey pairing to finish ahead of them if they were to complete their prediction and score maximum points. They therefore guided their rivals through the Hunter, to the benefit of both teams.

It was a relief for the Russian, but he'd scarcely had time to recover his composure when he was hit by another stroke of misfortune. At the testing Bear's Ears Hunter, Polyansky was struck twice by falling rocks. He was initially stunned by the impact, but he recovered quickly and ran to the finish. "Are you OK?" asked his worried teammate, Cuneyt Gazioglu. "Don't worry," replied Polyansky heroically, "I'll run it off!"



Stage 4 - Day 3 - Part 3

Apr 24 2003



Another competitor struggling with an injury was the UK's Tim Pickering. "It feels better than it did yesterday," said Pickering, pointing to his damaged calf, "but I'm still in considerable pain." The Englishman's plight was exacerbated by the obvious strength of his teammate, France's Franck Salgues. "He must have massive lungs," said Pickering. "I'm under pressure just to keep up with him. But it's making me dig deeper, which is a good thing. I'll be exhausted at the end of the day."

The need for strong lungs was made all the more important by the altitude. The Bear's Ears Hunter climbed to over 2600m, and many of the competitors found themselves gasping for oxygen. South Africa's Chester Foster, though, was unconcerned. "I often train at Underberg in South Africa. The Sani Pass is over 3500m high so I'm used to these conditions," he said. His reflexes proved to be equally important on the Hunter when his teammate, Alberta Chiappa, fell on the same loose rocks that injured Polyansky. Thankfully, Foster was on hand to catch her. "I guess that's the advantage of being small," giggled the Italian, whose diminutive proportions have earned her the nickname 'Thumbelina.'



Stage 4 - Day 3 - Part 4

Apr 24 2003



At the day's end, all the teams made their way to the Looking Glass Rock Hunter, which was close to the evening's camp. This created a problem. With most of the teams having predicted that they would finish in 4th or 5th place, nobody wanted to stamp their identification chip or "dibber." The debate that ensued revealed a great deal about the competitors' characters.

"I get enough stress at work, this is only a bit of fun so I'm not getting involved," said Ireland's Paul McCarthy, who, as the man in 5th place, potentially had the most to gain. "But my teammate (Canada's Kitt Stringer) loves it, so we'll let him have a bit of fun." Sergey Polyansky and event leader Rudi Thoelen were also happy to sweat it out. When this situation occurred earlier in the competition, the teams tossed coins, but this time they managed to agree a solution. It had been an amicable end to a tricky situation and everyone left with a smile on their face.



Stage 4 - Day 3 - Part 5

Apr 24 2003



Guy Andrews explains "Franck (Salgues) and I are both racers," he said. "If the contest was only about physical ability we would be one and two. But it's not. This really is a unique Challenge that also requires mental dexterity and powers of negotiation. That's why Rudi Thoelen's leading. He's fit, a brilliant navigator and mentally very sharp."

Andrews' teammate, American Nancy Olson, was looking weary at the day's end. "In the US Marines we call this 'op-tempo,' which means full steam ahead," she said. "I'm giving my all to help Guy stay in the top four and if I do that, I'll also improve my own position." Like all the competitors she's looking forward to rest and recuperation after the Separator on Saturday. "But then I'll want to start the whole competition again," she said with a grin.



Stage 4 - Day 4 - Part 1

Apr 25 2003



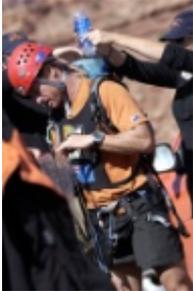
Today was the final day of Hunters and also the final chance for the competitors in the Land Rover G4 Challenge to improve their score before the all-important Separator tomorrow. It would be a critical day for the top teams, and amid the usual banter in this morning's camp there was an obvious air of tension. The top four places were still up for grabs and all the leaders knew that an error could cost them the chance to race for the title and a Range Rover.

At the all-important Strategy Pit, there was a moment of light relief when teammates Erik den Oudendammer and Shinichi Yoshimoto were the first to post their strategy. The pair have gained a reputation for a steady, measured approach, and the sight of the Dutchman and the Japanese sprinting to their Discovery drew a round of applause from the support staff.



Stage 4 - Day 4 - Part 2

Apr 25 2003



Guy Andrews, who started the West Coast leg in 4th place, has endured a tough week and he was conscious that today would be "make or break for my chances." Yesterday, the Australian admitted that he was feeling the pressure and "caring too much about the people behind me." It had led to series of costly errors and within an hour of the start today, Andrews and his American teammate, Nancy Olson, made another.

They arrived at the Crows Nest Hunter five minutes behind the Arabia/Spain pairing of Chris Perry and Inigo de Lara. Anxious to catch up and overtake their rivals, Andrews rode off without reading the instructions. They started from the wrong place and while Perry and De Lara completed the course in forty minutes, the Australia/USA team didn't return for an hour-and-a-half. "We took a wrong turn and went about 700m in the wrong direction. We thought we'd blown it," said Perry. "It was a relief to return in first place and make our prediction." Andrews was downbeat at the finish: "We took the wrong road and had to double back," he said.



Stage 4 - Day 4 - Part 3

Apr 25 2003



Today's Hunters were located around the town of Moab and their close proximity meant that the teams had little time to recover between activities. The most difficult Hunter of the day was called 'Fins 'n' Things' and was a tough test of driving and navigational skills. The competitors had to drive a preset route and every time their Land Rovers' bodywork touched the ground, they suffered a five minute penalty. "My teammate Sergey [Polyansky] and I are really excited by this event," said Turkey's Cuneyt Gazioglu. "We really enjoy the driving tests."

Mid-way round the course, the teams had to leave their Land Rover and navigate their way to a control gate at the top of a rock on foot. "We added a bit of spice by giving the teams a distance and a bearing to the control, instead of the usual latitude and longitude coordinates," said the marshal, Mark Cullum. "At least half of the teams have been caught out by this." What seemed a simple task on paper was, under the stress of competition, proving exceptionally difficult.



Stage 4 - Day 4 - Part 4
Apr 25 2003





FINAL RANKINGS

Apr 26 2003



1. Rudi Thoelen - Belgium - **winner of the Land Rover G4 Challenge**
2. Chris Perry - Arabia
3. Franck Salgues - France
4. Cuneyt Gazioglu - Turkey
5. Guy Andrews - Australia
6. Paul McCarthy - Ireland
7. Sergey Polyansky - Russia
8. Tim Pickering - UK - **winner of the Team Spirit Award**
9. Chester Foster - South Africa
10. Erik Den Oudendammer - Netherlands
11. Inigo de Lara - Spain
12. Dirk Ostertag - Germany
13. Kitt Stringer - Canada
14. Alberta Chiappa - Italy
15. Nancy Olson - USA
16. Shinichi Yoshimoto - Japan



Stage 4 - FINAL DAY - Part 1

Apr 27 2003



Saturday dawned on the bank of the Colorado River. The competitors knew that the next few hours would determine who would win the inaugural Land Rover G4 Challenge and walk away with the keys to a new Range Rover.

The competitors went off in four groups of four, starting with those ranked 13-16. In each case, their points total was converted into time so that the person ranked 13th had a head start over the competitor in 16th place. The top four raced for the Range Rover and the winner would be the first person to slap their hand on the bonnet.

The positions of the each of the competitors were announced and the top four lined up as follows: 1. Rudi Thoelen, Belgium (3054 points); 2. Franck Salgues, France (3040 points); 3. Chris Perry, Arabia (2861 points); 4. Cuneyt Gazioglu, Turkey (2692 points). Every three points was worth one second, so Thoelen would start 4 seconds ahead of Salgues.



Stage 4 - FINAL DAY - Part 2

Apr 27 2003



The Separator course was deliberately designed to incorporate a range of different disciplines, and was made even more challenging by the dust storm which was whipped up by the strong wind during the morning. It could easily have been described as a 'mini G4 Challenge'. The competitors began by abseiling down a 16 metre drop. They then grabbed their mountain bikes and cycled to the edge of the Colorado River, where they swapped pedal for paddle power in a kayak ride upstream.

This was followed by a 'matrix' exercise that tested their mental dexterity. Completing the matrix released a key code that would enable them to start the waiting Range Rover. An off-road obstacle course followed before a testing "jumar" climb to the finish. It was an extraordinary test of both mental and physical ability, and one that competitors relished. "It was a really nice mix of all our skills, and a real challenge," said Ireland's Paul McCarthy, who finished a strong sixth.



Stage 4 - FINAL DAY - Part 3

Apr 27 2003



The competitors in 13-16 places started first and were soon providing a dramatic spectacle for spectators. Nancy Olson started in 13th but capsized her kayak in the rapids of the Colorado River. Having missed two buoys, she suffered a six-minute time penalty that had to be served on the riverbank. This dropped her to the back of the field but she recovered strongly to overtake Shinichi Yoshimoto on the jumar and claim 15th place.

"My legs had just gone today," she said, "but I've had the time of my life over the past month. Now I want a week off and then to start it all again." Kitt Stringer (Canada) also deserved praise for stopping to help Olson when she capsized, despite the intensity of the competition.

The second group contained the day's fastest competitor. South Africa's Chester Foster has endured some bad luck over the past month, but today he showed his strength as an athlete by recording the quickest time overall on the Separator. "You make your own luck," said an exhausted Foster at the end. "It's nice to win my group and set the fastest time. I feel like a winner just standing here with all these people."



Stage 4 - FINAL DAY - Part 4

Apr 27 2003



The penultimate group contained a number of competitors who have, at one point or another, occupied the top four places. Guy Andrews felt that he had a point to prove after dropping from 4th to 5th place during the week. The former Ironman Triathlon champion duly proved his physical strength by winning his group to secure 5th place. "The mountain biking across the sand was very tough," said the Australian, "but it's nice to win the group."

Ireland's Paul McCarthy also put in a strong performance to improve from 8th to 6th place. "It was a really good event for me," he said. "The variety of different disciplines suited me. I'm delighted with the result."



Stage 4 - FINAL DAY - Part 5

Apr 27 2003



At the finish, the 12 competitors who had already completed the course gathered to watch the first place shoot-out. The tension was palpable and the top four readied themselves for the abseil. They all set off at a startling pace and by the end of the mountain biking, Salgues had overtaken Thoelen. What happened next would be crucial to the outcome of the whole competition. Salgues missed the first buoy in the kayak challenge, and in attempting to recover his position he capsized his kayak. The Frenchman managed to right himself but the delay allowed Thoelen to build a sizeable lead.

It was a lead he was never to lose and as the other competitors cheered and high-fived, the Belgian slapped his hand on the bonnet of his prize, a new Range Rover. He slumped to the ground in exhaustion, his energies completely spent.



Stage 4 - FINAL DAY - Part 6
Apr 27 2003





Stage 4 - FINAL DAY - Part 7

Apr 27 2003



As the sun descended over the town of Moab, Land Rover's Managing Director, Matthew Taylor handed out the awards. "The event has exceeded all our expectations," he said. "It epitomises everything that Land Rover is about: adventure, authenticity and guts. But above all else, the brand is about having an experience. We're interested in inclusivity, not exclusivity."

The competitors wholeheartedly agreed, and every member was handed a certificate, recognising their achievement in completing the course. The extraordinary spirit of the competitors has been one of the finest features of this unique event but the attitude of one competitor drew special praise...



Stage 4 - FINAL DAY - The Winners

Apr 27 2003



Belgian fighter-pilot, Rudi Thoelen was today crowned as winner in the inaugural Land Rover G4 Challenge. The 31-year old, from Zoutleeuw, outwitted and outlasted 15 other men and women, who each represented their home nation in this four week-long global adventure Challenge.

"I have absolutely nothing left," he said, after recovering his breath. "I've given 150% but I wouldn't have made it without some fantastic teammates." The thirty-two year old, who spends his working life flying F16 fighter jets for the Belgian Air Force, was a popular winner. "Rudi has it all," said Australia's Guy Andrews, who finished 5th. "He's a brilliant navigator, has a sharp mind and is incredibly fit."

The Team Spirit Award was voted for by all the competitors and to a huge cheer, it was awarded to the UK's Tim Pickering. His chirpy personality and ineffable humour have contributed enormously to the success of this competition and the award was richly deserved. "I'm honoured to think that I have been able to contribute to other peoples enjoyment of this event," said Pickering. "To receive an award that's voted for by your peers is a privilege."



Two new G4 Edition Land Rovers 2003

Aug 22 2003



Two new G4 Edition Land Rovers, in the shape of expedition-ready editions of the Discovery and Defender, went on sale Sept. 1, 2003.

The vehicles were launched in celebration of the success of the inaugural Land Rover G4 Challenge. The Challenge has been dubbed the ultimate global adventure and spanned four time zones during four weeks of extreme sports and driving competitions. Sixteen competitors from around the world fought it out, with the victor driving home in a new Range Rover as the winning prize.

The G4 Edition Defenders and Discoverys came with a selection of specialist expedition equipment and convenience features. Specification highlights include A-frame front protection bars, front and rear lamp guards, new Black Mogul technical fabric seats, special colour schemes including Borrego Yellow and Tangiers Orange, air-conditioning and a CD player.



The Ultimate Global Adventure 2003

Nov 7 2003



For 16 men and women the inaugural Land Rover G4 Challenge provided a global backdrop for the ultimate adventure. Thousands of hopeful candidates applied to take part in the 2003 Challenge, with the best of the best going through to International Selections. Finally, only one competitor per nation was chosen to represent his or her country in the Land Rover G4 Challenge, making them a part of the history of the ultimate global Challenge.

A quiet fighter pilot from Belgium, Rudi Thoelen, emerged as the victor at the end of the testing four-week event. His ability to function as part of a strong team, together with a high level of personal fitness and the ability to make strategic decisions quickly and accurately, bagged Thoelen not only the crown in the Challenge, but also a brand new Range Rover.

With the 2003 Land Rover G4 Challenge behind us, the time has come to look to the future. Adventure remains one of the key words in the Challenge, and regardless of where and when the next event takes place, you can be assured that it will again have adventure at its core. So if you'd like to be a part of the next Challenge, or would simply like some more information, click 'keep me updated'. Go on - be adventurous!