



# MEDIA RELEASE

## 2014 Tatts Finke Desert Race .....Truly A Race of Champions

To claim that the field entered for the 2014 Tatts Finke Desert race is the best ever probably becomes a matter of personal judgement, but no-one could deny both its quality and depth among both bike riders and drivers in the four-wheeled division.

Last year's bike winner Todd Smith from Condoblin in NSW heads the list of the two-wheeled brigade but the list of his classy opposition is extensive.

Included among those in the 431 bike field are previous recent winners Toby Price from Maitland NSW who won in 2012 and 2010, and Ben Grabham from Bathurst NSW (victor in 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2011).

Recent podium placed riders competing again this year include Jacob Smith (brother of Todd Smith) second in 2013, Josh Green from Soldiers Point NSW third in 2013, and David Walsh from Alice Springs NT who placed second in 2012.

Other previous bike winners competing this year include Ryan Branford (Alice Springs NT) who won in 2006 and had podium finishes in 2007 and 2008, Darren Griffiths from Kalgoorlie WA ) 2003, and Rick Hall from Alice Springs NT who won in 1999 and 2002.

Rick Hall this year has a special reason to ride, competing in the Finke classic with his daughter Isabelle (aged 18), reportedly the first time a father/daughter duo has taken part.

Todd Smith's winning bike time in 2013 was 4 hours 2 minutes and 8 seconds.

**(cont.)**



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The 91 vehicle strong car field is equally star studded and is headed by last year's winner Hayden Bentley from Port Pirie in SA who also won in 2007.

Other stars include Brad Gallard from Renmark in SA who took victory in 2012, Greg Gartner from Penola SA who won in 2011, Dave Fellows from Tennyson SA (a multiple winner - 2010, 2009, 2008, 2004, 2001, and 1992 as a navigator), and Shannon Rentsch from Warrnambool Victoria who won in both 2005 and 2006.

Add to that list podium placed drivers such as Beau Robinson from Inallo in WA, Andrew Kittle from Alice Springs NT, and the legendary Bruce Garland from Sydney in NSW and it's clear that the elite of off road racing have come to compete in Australia's greatest desert event.

Hayden Bentley's victory in 2013 came with a total time for the event of 3 hours 42 minutes and 38 seconds.

### **Background:**

The Tatts Finke Desert Race is the nation's most prestigious off road event, and to taste success in the "Finke" is the ultimate goal for competitors on four and two wheels alike.

Commencing as a bike only event in 1976, cars/buggies joined the field in 1988 to make this classic race what it is today.

Staged by the volunteer Finke Desert Race Committee the competition is staged as two days racing from Alice Springs to the small settlement of Aputula (Finke) and back to the start in Alice Springs over a total distance of 452 gruelling kilometres in the heart of Australia. **(cont.)**



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As the largest event in Central Australia and one of the largest in the Northern Territory, thousands of competitors and spectators converge on Alice Springs for what is now a week-long off road motor sport spectacular commencing on the Monday prior to the start with entrant registration and finishing on the Monday after the event with a huge presentation dinner and celebration.

The scrutineering night held at the Blatherskite Park is more like a carnival with thousands in attendance, bands, bars, food outlets, and displays from the top buggy and bike teams competing.

The prologue, to decide the start order, is another huge day on the Saturday at the start/finish with all competitors vying for the fastest time on the 8 kilometre track that gives them a taste of what is to come.

Complete with a super screen showing all the action, merchandise outlets, and food and drink stalls, prologue attracts a huge crowd before enthusiasts head down the track to set up camp in readiness to watch the race over the following two days.

The crowd returns to the Alice Springs finish line to welcome the competitors back on the Monday and then it's party time that evening with the gala presentation event at the Alice Springs Convention Centre.



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## **2014 Tatts Desert Finke Race Schedule**

**Monday June 2- Thursday June 5 Competitor Registration (Start/Finish line)**

**Thursday June 5 - Finke Family Night (Lasseters Hotel Casino)**

**Friday June 6 – Scutineering (Blatherskite Park)**

**Saturday June 7 – Prologue (Start/Finish)**

**Sunday June 8 – Race Day 1 (Start/finish – Finke)**

**Monday June 9 – Race Day 2 (Finke – Start/finish)**

**Monday June 9 – Presentation Night (Alice Springs Convention Centre)**

**For further information contact:**

**Mike Drewer m 0419 273 333 e [m.drewer@bigpond.com](mailto:m.drewer@bigpond.com) or**

**Penny Gordon m 0408 842 363 e [pgordon@picknowl.com.au](mailto:pgordon@picknowl.com.au)**



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