



Challenge a hit at Frankfurt show 11/09/2007

The Frankfurt International Motor Show saw Land Rover announce a new humanitarian partnership to be supported through the Land Rover G4 Challenge.

After two global adventures in 2003 and 2006 the next Challenge programme – which will run across 2008 and 2009 – was given a public unveiling in front of thousands of onlookers at the Land Rover stand.

And the big news was the competition's commitment to raise more than £1m over the next two challenges for one of the largest humanitarian organisations on the planet - the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Land Rover Managing Director Phil Popham said: "The Land Rover G4 Challenge is an incredible programme and we are delighted that we can now make the most of the Challenge's success and leave a lasting positive legacy.

"Land Rover is a strong brand that has a natural fit with humanitarian organisations in general. We are now looking forward to forging closer links with the International Federation through the Land Rover G4 Challenge."

A large crowd of journalists attended the partnership announcement – and the reveal of a major change to the competitive concept of what has become recognised as the one of world's most exciting global adventure events.

This Challenge will now focus on national teams – with one man and one woman selected from each of the 18 participating nations, the emphasis on team work will be greater than ever before.

Challenge manager Ed Tilston said: "The introduction of national teams will put a real focus on national performance – and this time each national team will have the expectations of their country on their shoulders'.

"Team relationships will be a big part of the Challenge and it is going to be an emotional rollercoaster for all the competitors as they battle their way through the selections and through to the Finals."



New Nations make Challenge field strongest ever 20/01/2008

The 2008/09 Land Rover G4 Challenge will be fought out between some the worlds strongest nations – after Land Rover confirmed the return of the United States and Canada and the arrival of China in the line-up for the 2008/09 event. Challenge Manager Ed Tilston said: “The appeal of the ultimate global adventure has again drawn interest from around the world. With the US and Canada rejoining and the confirmation of China’s participation, we have the strongest line up of national teams yet.

“With the addition of these large nations, the stakes are even higher. Recruitment quite literally spans the globe, from the coasts of Australia to the tips of the Canadian lakes we expect thousands of hopefuls to sign up for the chance to take on the Challenge.”

A new dual team also joins the list of nations as Norway team up with Sweden to represent the Scandinavian countries while South Africa are back to defend the crown won for them by Martin Dreyer in a dramatic competition climax in Bolivia back in 2006.

Belgium – who won the first Challenge in 2003 and came second last time around – will be among the favourites again in 2008/09 while Land Rover’s home nation, the UK, will be determined to better the 10th place finish they achieved last time.



International Federation partnership begins to build 03/12/2007

The new partnership between the Land Rover G4 Challenge and the International Federation has got off to a flying start – with many of the participating nations already generating funds for the global cause.

Described by Sir Nicholas Young, Chief Executive of the British Red Cross, as a partnership that will “quite literally save lives”, the new association will allow the global adventure competition to leave a lasting legacy throughout the world.

More than £1m will be generated over the next two Challenges and the UK got their fundraising efforts started at the British Red Cross London Ball, where a limited edition Defender, experience day and Challenge recce trip was auctioned for £50,000.

Land Rover ambassador Zara Phillips presented the first of 200 special edition 60th anniversary Defender SVX vehicles to the highest bidder in the annual fundraiser auction – funds from which will support Red Cross projects in the UK and overseas.

One of the aims of the partnership is to help the International Federation reach a younger audience, as Sir Nicholas Young explained: 'I think the Challenge is really going to help us reach vibrant, passionate people who really care about the world they live in.'

“The International Federation is going to start seeing an impact right from the word go in terms of recruiting more volunteers and helping us generate more money. As the Challenge gets going I expect to see that benefit multiplied and magnified over the years.

“These are two great global organizations, there are tremendous synergies between the two of them and I think as Land Rover and the International Federation work together we will see more and more opportunities for really expanding the benefit.”



Competitors back Challenge donation 31/01/2008

The decision to support the International Federation and to donate a vehicle to the winning team's National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society could entice even more entrants to apply for the 2008/09 Challenge – according to the finalists from 2006.

South African Martin Dreyer triumphed and took home a brand new Land Rover after the 2006 Challenge – but this time the prize will be donated in addition to the £1m being generated for the International Federation over the next two Challenges.

Former Dutch competitor Thijs Maartense said: “On the last Challenge there was the feeling that it was a pity that there was such a big prize for just one person. Now everyone is competing for a good cause – and to do something for your National Red Cross Society is better than winning a car for yourself.”

As the organisers begin their search for the 18 men and 18 women who will compete in the Challenge Finals in 2009, Brian Reynolds, the Land Rover G4 Challenge Team Spirit Award winner from 2006, said: “This new partnership is fantastic and it will show just how big a lasting legacy the Challenge can leave.

“We all won a fantastic adventure of a lifetime in 2006 and fact that Martin went away with a brand new vehicle was just the icing on the cake for him. Now anybody going on the Challenge can help a charitable society in their country by winning - and that should motivate them even more!”

The Challenge has always been committed to sustainable adventure, carefully considering the environment in all areas of the event while also giving back to the communities through which it passes.

In 2006 Reynolds helped his fellow competitors to re-build two schools during their four-week global adventure and he acknowledges the new partnership will allow Land Rover to have a positive impact on a much, much greater scale.

“It is great that Land Rover has the power to do this sort of thing,” added Reynolds. “This was shown in the 2006 challenge when we helped at the schools – what we did was so basic, so everyday to us, but at the same time it was so helpful to the community and it changed their lives forever.

“Now Land Rover can provide humanitarian support on a much, much bigger scale with the International Federation – and that will be absolutely awesome!”



London hosts Challenge competitor reunion 13/02/2008

A reunion of global proportions took place in London as six of the 18 competitors from the last Land Rover G4 Challenge gathered to talk about their experiences – and fit in a quick sightseeing lap of the city.

Australian Alina McMaster, Belgian Kris Janssens, Brian Reynolds from the UK, Dutchman Thijs Maartense and Gabriel Maldonado from Spain joined winner Martin Dreyer of South Africa to help promote the 2008/09 Challenge.

The competitive athletes could not resist a running tour of London and Dreyer said: “It was great to be back together, and we just had to go for a run! I was on a buzz, it was great to catch up with the other competitors after such a break.

“Running downtown across Hyde Park London our minds were in Laos and Bolivia, out there, just talking war stories! The experiences we had were so real and life changing and it reminds us we have been very lucky.”

The group took a run from Paddington through the parks to Covent Garden, taking in the sights and stopping off for a quick photo call on the lions of Trafalgar Square before pacing down the Embankment and back to the finish.

Two years had passed since the six had last been together – on that final nerve-racking day high in the Bolivian Andes where South African Martin Dreyer sealed a dramatic victory – but the memories flowed as they finally blew the post-Challenge blues away.

Dreyer added: “When we came home we didn’t have anyone there that had experienced the realness of it. Getting home after the Challenge was phenomenal for a week, because the body was at rock bottom, but after that I wished I was back on the Challenge.

“In my own head, my mind, I know it was very real, that it’s colourful, it’s bright, it’s the first thing I can think about when I wake up, but if it wasn’t for the video footage my mates just wouldn’t believe what I told them was possible.”

Dreyer continues to obtain his fix of adventure by competing in sporting events, however, and he looked exactly the same as he did at the end of the Challenge... having arrived the day after a 120km kayaking race. No shaking that Challenge feeling for some, then!



Challenge heads to Mongolia 30/05/2008

Land Rover's ultimate global adventure will head to the remote regions of Mongolia in mid-2009 after the country was chosen as the main location for the 2008/09 Land Rover G4 Challenge Finals.

Tough conditions, extreme climate and a varied desert, mountain and steppe landscape will await the 36 competitors who make it through the selections process – and entry is still open for people in many of the participating nations.

Challenge manager Ed Tilston said: "We are very excited to confirm Mongolia as the main location for the Challenge Finals. We are sure that this announcement will generate further interest and look forward to increasing applications from potential competitors.

"Our team on the ground have been working to find routes that will push our vehicles and the competitors to their limits. Mongolia is a spectacular country which will enable us to create a truly extraordinary Finals event."

Since the Challenge was launched at Frankfurt Motorshow last year the recce teams have been exploring the toughest terrain in Asia to find a suitably demanding environment to stage the culmination of the competition in 2009.

Mongolia will provide exciting remote locations but Tilston also hinted at a potential expansion of route and added: "We are also investigating the possibility of extending the Challenge into another area offering different extremes."

As part of the Challenge partnership with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, a donation has been offered to the Mongolian Red Cross to support their Social Care projects.

These projects aim to help the many vulnerable families in Mongolia and provide them with home care, referral services and a move to inclusion in the community. As a result of this it is estimated that over 10,000 people will be reached.

Chojilsuren Ariuntungalag, Social Care and Volunteer Programme Manager of the Mongolian Red Cross commented, "The Land Rover G4 Challenge is providing vital funding support to help the Mongolian Red Cross Society deliver a Social Care Programme which aims to improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable families in Ulaanbaatar."



Belgian couple win through National Selections 04/06/2008

An ex-Olympian and her husband will be amongst the four Belgium/Luxembourg competitors in the Land Rover G4 Challenge International Selections next February – after the pair beat the odds by both getting through to the next stage of the competition in an exhausting and dramatic National Selections event.

Min Dezillie, who has competed in sailing events at the Olympic Games three times, her tri-athlete husband Thibaut Debelles, 22-year-old student Eline De Muynck and adventure racer Wim Vancraeynest, won through a field of 86 hopeful competitors in the weekend event, held in the Belgian coastal town of La Panne.

Ed Tilston, the Land Rover G4 Challenge Manager, was in Belgium and commented: "Belgium has always been a strong contender in the Challenge and the field of competitors that turned out to this year's National Selections proves that once again they should be a force to be reckoned with.

"The event was in a great location and it went fantastically well. This was one of the early National Selections events for the 2008/09 Challenge, so we are looking forward to more enjoyable and highly competitive events as we head through this year."

Belgium is bidding to find a competitor to repeat the success of their 2003 winner Rudi Thoelen and the opening day put the participants through their paces as the notorious North Sea waves produced tough conditions for the initial swim and kayak event before a timed assault course in the energy-sapping sand.

This tough event saw 46 participants wiped from the scoreboards as the remaining 40 passed through to day two, where a series of written and 4x4 driving tests pushed them to the limit before a five kilometre run and surprise night navigation exercise were thrown in to seek out the toughest competitors.

The night navigation exercise proved the toughest test, with the first competitors returning from the 18 kilometre task in two hours and the last returning at first light. And when the competitors were reunited on Sunday evening, the winners were told who will be packing their bags for the International Selections at Eastnor Castle.



Land Rover promises the most remote Challenge yet 16/06/2008

The Land Rover G4 Challenge recce team has returned from another Asia exploration confident that the remote areas they have discovered so far will allow them to generate a tough and exhilarating Challenge Finals event in 2009.

The 2008/09 Challenge programme – which is now well underway in all 18 participating Nations – will head to Mongolia in mid-2009, and while the Finals may still be a year away, the team are now focusing in on specific routes.

Reporting back to the UK-based Challenge team straight off the plane, recce team member John Limb said: “We’ve explored some truly remote terrain, camping next to 4,000-metre mountains, sand dunes and unnamed rivers – we really have found some incredible locations

“There are some amazing canyons where we can develop rope activities for the competitors, some areas that will be perfect for downhill mountain biking, and a giant cave, which we’ll need to go back to and investigate properly. Even the main roads are pretty rough, so the off-road driving will be perfect!”

Over the next few months, the team will make follow-up trips to explore and identify a route that will take competitors on a tough three-week adventure through a range of spectacular scenery and Limb promises: “The Challenge has never been this remote. This is going to be a real adventure.”



USA competitors sweat it out in the Nevada desert 18/06/2008

Property Investor and six-time world XTERRA Off-Road Triathlon Champion Tom Lyons is one of four competitors on the shortlist to represent the United States in the 2008/09 Challenge Finals – after he and his team mate Lisa Lieb won a thrilling USA National Selections event in the searing heat of the Nevada desert near Las Vegas.

Tom, from Reno, will be joined at the Challenge International Selections event next February by Lisa, a property manager from Durango, as well as Sports Medicine Physician Peter Hanson from Minneapolis and Sales Executive Sarah McMahan from Incline Village near Lake Tahoe, Nevada.

“This was just an unbelievable experience,” said Lisa after battling through 1,000 miles of adventure competition in the gruelling event. “It was a weeks worth of constant over-stimulation and I’m totally exhausted but in a good way. The landscapes here in Nevada are really breathtaking.”

The event saw a diverse selection of 20 amateur athletes - including a glass blower and a director of oriental medicine – battle across Nevada’s spectacular open plains, and everyday people were pushing to the their limits and discovering hidden talents as they kayaked, ran, drove and navigated around the course.

The United States have yet to win a Land Rover G4 Challenge but Tom, Lisa, Peter and Sarah will have eight months in which to further push themselves and train harder than ever, before competing against each other at International Selections in Eastnor Castle, in February 2009.