

WINNING THE CHALLENGE

INTRO

The road to victory in the Land Rover G4 Challenge is a long one. From completing the entry form, potential competitors are scrutinised on paper, put through their paces in National and International Selections and, if they get through, face a gruelling multi-week remote competition, fighting it out against 17 other nations to win the Challenge Finals...

Martin Dreyer recalls: "When I signed up for the Challenge I thought I was going to be tested to the limit but it was also going to be exciting – but until I was really on it I didn't actually realise what the full impact was going to be. I mean, racing for the full month that we did, it was extremely taxing mentally and physically and it was on a different scale. It was a show that was second to none.

"The variety and the different disciplines we did was exceptional - paddling an hour and a half in a cave through a mountain range, cycling 2,500m down a mountain in 45 minutes of downhill from hell, and jumping off a bridge backwards, swinging then climbing up the rope for a paddle, run, cycle. It was extremely exciting - and it really pushed me through my limit."

Read on, and find out how Dreyer made it through the stages to become the reigning Land Rover G4 Challenge champion...



SIGNING UP

The first step to entering the Challenge is signing up – which you can do right here on the website. And the first challenge is to get the application just right....

Dreyer explains: "With the written application, you are not actually there to show how good you are so you have to write the application to try and get the people reading it to believe you are the one who will go through right to the end. Before you enter, talk to friends, to different experts, talk about the vehicles and be as much of a people person as you can be.

"You have to tell the truth on the application, say in black and white what you have done in the past. They want someone who is going to be a teamwork sort of person because you are going to be travelling together for a month and to survive they want someone who can interact with people, who loves different cultures and can fit into any kind of society."

WINNING THE CHALLENGE



SELECTIONS

The selection process for the Land Rover G4 Challenge involves two steps – National Selections and International Selections. In 2006, just one person could go through to the Challenge Finals to represent their country. This time there will be a place for one man and one woman in each National team. But competition will be just as fierce...

Dreyer advises: “To get through the selections process it is important to read up as much about the event and look at the different disciplines and then apply yourself to your weakest. For me, it was easy to train at kayaking, but it was harder to mountain bike a technical course where I was falling off and hurting myself – but you have to do that to get better!”

“The National Selections were actually the hardest part. They were very competitive –40 of us being worked for three days doing different activities, teamwork stuff and problem solving. They were throwing things at us day and night, night drives, emergency situations. You had to keep a clear head all the time and it was a good test to see how you behave in all kinds of circumstances.

“At International Selections, remember who you are competing against. Having lots of people there from different countries is intimidating – but you are not competing against them, you are only competing against the people from your country. Once you focus on that it becomes quite a bit easier then you just have to interact well and remember that you are being watched the whole time!”



THE CHALLENGE

The Challenge Finals event is the culmination of 18 months of hard training and selections. It is a multi-week test of endurance played out in remote global locations where, each day, competitors plot an off-road route to the next overnight camp and collect points by completing intense physical activities and tough mental tasks. It is a case of mind over matter...

Dreyer says: “The hardest thing for me was the teamwork. It if is an individual competition it is easy because I know what I am capable of - but when you have someone else to work with you have to be really honest and find out what your strengths and weaknesses are as a combination and try to get the best results from what you have.

“You also have to realise that when you are pushing to the limit in such an adventure you are going to get some sort of injury. There is nothing you can do, but just keep refusing to give up. There are going to be times when you feel absolutely rock bottom, weak, no energy levels, but everyone is probably in the same boat. You have just got to keep pushing through it.

“The Challenge Finals was the best experience of my life and the training we were given for it was fantastic - but the one thing they failed to cover was preparing us competitors for the post-race blues. Nobody told us how hard it would be once we got home...”

CLIMBING AND ROPE ACTIVITIES

INTRO

The activities facing competitors in the Land Rover G4 Challenge incorporate all forms of rope work. They will be climbing, abseiling and ascending using Jumars, mechanical ascending devices. To have the best chance at winning these events, contestants will need to focus on technique, equipment and training.

Former competitor Brian Reynolds says: "You need to have great technique and it's all about motor engrams – a pre-programmed thing in your head that enables you to do something without thinking. You have to mentally plan the climb, but you will need strength and you will need to know your equipment..."

Play the video and follow the links below to find out how past competitors handled the rope work elements of the event.



TECHNIQUE

Climbing technique is crucial and it is something that has to be learned by climbing, simple as that. There is no other way of building your ability than to get out on the rocks or onto a climbing wall and pick out route after route after route.

Brian Reynolds explains: "When you are a toddler you have to learn how to do everything, and once you can walk you don't have to think about how you do it any more. It is exactly the same as climbing. When you look at a climb you can see a pattern of moves, so you know where you are going. The more you do it, the more you know."

Technique can often overcome pure strength in climbing, and 2006 Challenge winner Martin Dreyer admits: "If your technique is right, you should not need so much stamina. In fact, girls often make better climbers than guys."

"Guys have a lot more strength and they do moves where they use their arms and brute strength - but if the climb is longer than they are used to, their arms will give in and their body will start shaking. Girls tend to have less power and better technique, putting most of the weight on the legs and using the hands to stay against the face of the wall they are climbing. Doing it that way, you can go on forever".

CLIMBING AND ROPE ACTIVITIES



EQUIPMENT

Contestants will be provided with the safest, most robust equipment available – because if you are going to be pushed to the limit, you need gear that can take you there.

Brian Reynolds, the UK's 2006 Challenge's finalist, says: "When there's the possibility of falling you've just got to have 100 percent confidence in your equipment. There are many different types of climbing, so there are implications depending on what equipment you use".

"For all the rope activities, safety kit is the absolute paramount. A helmet for a start, your harness to make sure you can tie into any rope systems that are there, but there is also all of the other specific equipment – carabineers, webbing straps, jumaring equipment. There is a whole host of equipment that you have to make sure you check every time you go and do any rope activity".



FITNESS

Contestants on the Challenge should be ready to face any combination of the three climbing disciplines and while technique is key, increasing the overall strength in the upper body and the hands is also important to help you succeed.

Reynolds explains: "For climbing, you need upper body strength, finger strength and strength in the tendons in your arms." Upper body strength can be built in the gym but most former competitors suggest practicing by doing the activity itself. Reynolds adds: "I have climbed for many years, but before the Challenge I had to make sure that I got back out there, got my upper body strength going, finger strength going again, and – importantly - refreshed myself with some of the new equipment that was available."

Alina McMaster, the Australian competitor in 2006, adds: "Doing strength work in the gym can help, but then you need to make it specific. Just because you can bench press a certain amount, doesn't mean you can climb. You have to make your muscles learn how to do the climbing movement".