

THE DUNLOP ULTIMATE HILL



A while back, Don asked me what I thought about him taking the Cobra to the top of Sani Pass, and would I help him out with a bit of graphics.

Firstly I wasn't 100% sure of the idea as I had recently cycled to the top with a friend, so I knew how steep and rough the road was. Steep isn't a problem as the Cobra has plenty more horse power than the 1 donkey (Ass) power that I had on my bicycle. But the road surface was an issue. We had battled to stay on our bicycles because of the boulders we had to go over. One particular section named Hemorrhoid Hill had my cycling partner and I a bit doubtful and there are also a number of river/stream crossings. On the other hand, I don't like to be negative. We have so many people telling us that cycling across country is MAD, and that really irritates me.

So, I did some graphics, Don got some sponsorship and did heaps of work on the Cobra. Skid plates were fitted underneath and a radiator protector with mesh and spotlights changed the look of the Cobra from the front. At the back, the spare wheel and a gerri can were mounted. Varying tyre and wheel combinations were tested, and Dunlop came on board as the Major sponsor.

We drove up to Himeville near the base of the pass the day before the attempt and met up with the two Durban chaps and their families, who are also Cobra

owners, and had come up to see this spectacle. The main man from Dunlop was also there.

The morning turned out a bit cold and the mountains were covered in snow. It is an easy gravel road to the SA Border. After that, there was a bit of an obstacle at the first water crossing as water had washed out either side of the concrete spillway leaving a bit of a 'sloot'. Brandon has a lot of rally driving experience and says 'it's all about choosing the right line'. I had got a lift ahead of the party to the top of Hemorrhoid Hill where I could get a birds-eye view. Fortunately, the road was not as rough as it had been on my cycle trip. Slowly the Cobra came through the river and eased its way up this section, without any problems.

After a stop to view the magnificent scenery, they were off again. At this stage, the road surface was really nice and not too steep.

At the base of the final section, where the road does a series of zigzags, it is high enough to be in the Snow Belt. People who operate Sani Tours had warned us about 'Ice bend' which is in the shadow of the cliff face and is always the last area to thaw out. They were sure we would have trouble at this bend. The scenery suddenly changes into a winter wonderland. Snow was thick on the sides of the road with frozen waterfalls on the south-facing surfaces. The road is more

rocky and muddy from all the melting snow. It gets really steep with hardly a straight piece of road between hairpin bends.

I was on foot, taking video footage. Once the Cobra got a sniff of the cold wind coming off the top of the pass, it took off.

The Cobra slithered past me and was gone. I could hear the sound of the V8 churning up the stones as it went up, up and away, but only got the odd glimpse of it as it rounded one or two of the tight bends on the edge of the road. I walked up the rest of the pass (only ± 1,5km) playing in the snow and later caught up with the party. The Cobra and bakkies were parked next to the sign announcing the fact that they had reached the top. The Cobra looked happy sitting there in the snow, but not as happy as the driver Donald and co-driver Brandon. The bakkies were almost sulking because they had not been called upon for a towing job. I was impressed with the ease in which the Cobra had handled the pass; a brilliant achievement. We stopped at the Highest Pub in Africa 9400ft, for a quick celebration, but not too long as it was still a long drive across the mountains to Katse Dam, where we were to sleep over.

I thoroughly enjoyed myself and the company of the others in the 'DUNLOP' Ultimate Team.
ALASTAIR

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A weekend away at
Arendsnes

2nd Prize
5 lt CASTROL
GTX oil

3rd Prize
A bottle of
the finest rum

Tickets cost R10 and the money goes to the Children's Home. Prizes will be drawn at a function at the Children's Home. Tickets will be on sale by members of the ULTIMATE HILL CLIMB TEAM at the various club activities.