

Toronto-based rally team hopes Dakar entry raises \$250,000 for charities

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SPECIAL TO THE STAR

It's been called the world's most dangerous race and the last great quest left on Earth. Over its 29-year history, it has claimed 50 lives. No Canadian has ever completed it.

In a world of pre-packaged and sanitized adventures, the 15-day Dakar Rally remains a wildly unpredictable and dangerous challenge. (Originally, it was from Paris to Dakar, Senegal; next year's race is being held in South America.)

Torontonians Glenna Chestnutt, 44, and Conor Malone, 45, are keen to conquer it — and to raise money for the Prostate Cancer Research Foundation of Canada while doing so.

"It was a matter of combining our two passions: a love of fundraising and auto racing," Chestnutt says. "We wouldn't have done one without the other."

For Malone, a professional electrician, it's a deeply personal cause: His father died of the disease at 66.

The pair is preparing to race a rear-

drive Chevrolet truck with a 350-hp Corvette LS3 engine being custom-built in Denver by Colorado Sand Cars. The tubular-frame vehicle is specially designed to cross undulating deserts and rocky terrain without completely shaking to pieces.

Its human cargo is another story. "Each day involves 16 hours of bouncing around in a fire suit without air conditioning and battling agoraphobia and exhaustion," Chestnutt says. Competitors have been known to crash into trees due to overwhelming fatigue.

Chestnutt and Malone have a personal trainer to help them with their conditioning, which includes weights and Pilates.

"Core strength is very important, but so is strength of mind," Malone says. "You're shattered by the end of it, both physically and mentally."

Given the odds — one-third of racers don't finish — the tenacious pair has been learning how to be a successful rally team.

The Dakar was conceived in 1977,



Glenna Chestnutt and Conor Malone plan to enter next year's 15-day Dakar Rally to help raise money for the Prostate Cancer Research Foundation and Toronto East General Hospital's Minimally Invasive Surgery program.

when French motorcycle racer Thierry Sabine got lost in the Libyan Desert. Having survived his ordeal, he returned home completely enthralled by the landscape and began planning a gruelling route from Paris to Algiers, crossing Agadez, and finishing in Dakar.

"A challenge for those who go. A dream for those who stay behind," he said of his ultimate off-road chase. Sabine's dream materialized in December 1978 when the inaugural race saw 180 cars, trucks and motorcycles depart from Paris for a 10,000-kilometre journey.

In January, Chestnutt and Malone were in Lisbon to witness the start of the 2008 race, but the murder of four French citizens and three Mauritanian soldiers right before the race prompted the French government to issue a strong warning not to enter Mauritania, so the contest was scrapped.

To avoid further terrorist threats, the organizers are relocating the 2009 race to South America. Racers will leave Buenos Aires on Jan. 3, traverse the Andes Mountains at altitudes of more than 4,500 metres, cross into Chile and dip their tires in the Pacific Ocean before returning to the Argentine capital for the Jan. 18 finish.

The Toronto team hopes to raise \$500,000 in corporate funding, even though seasoned racers insist it can't be done for less than \$1 million. Malone says their smaller bud-



get is in the spirit of the Dakar, where 80 per cent of the contestants are amateur adventurers.

"Volkswagen spent \$80 million and couldn't win it," he says of the factory teams that spare no expense to garner major coverage in front of a television audience of 200 million people.

It's that audience that has foundation spokesperson Sharon Bala excited about seeing their logo displayed for free on the Canadian car. She calls the pairing of the sport and prostate cancer awareness "a fantastic fit" that will prompt men to think about prostate health.

Because next year's Dakar takes

place in the same time zones as North America's, it may enjoy its largest local audience to date — a selling feature the pair often mention as they pitch corporate sponsors.

Chestnutt says they already have 15 companies interested in funding their race car.

In addition to the race costs, they hope to raise an extra \$250,000 to be split equally between two charities: the prostate research foundation and Toronto East General Hospital.

To support the rally team by donating directly to either charity, go to TeamChinook.ca.

WALKING AND GOLFING FOR RESEARCH

In addition to the Father's Day run June 15, the invitation-only Survivors Tournament June 16 and the Golf Town tournament held last Monday, here are key fundraising events planned this month for the Prostate Cancer Research Foundation. For details, go to prostatecancer.ca.

Just what Dad needs: new pants. All this month, Haggar Canada will send a free pair of pants to anyone who donates \$75 or more to the foundation through the prostate cancer website.

June 19: Team Chinook Fundraiser. Join Glenna Chestnutt and Conor Malone at Quigley's Pub, 2232 Queen St. E., for a silent auction, buffet and live entertainment, starting at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$15. Info: 416-699-9998.

June 24: Mr. Lube Tournament for Life. The chain of oil-change shops is hosting its first Ontario

fundraising tournament at Copper Creek Golf Club in Kleinburg. Mark Dailey from CityTV News will be the emcee. \$1,500 per foursome, \$375 per single ticket. Includes lunch, full round with power cart, cocktail reception and dinner. To register or for more details, contact the foundation online or call 416-441-2131.

July 1: Azevedo Memorial Walk for Prostate Cancer Research. On Canada Day, Antonio Azevedo will begin his journey from Toronto to Niagara Falls to raise funds and awareness for prostate cancer. His walk, which will take about six days, is a personal mission in memory of his father and all other fathers who have lost their lives to prostate cancer. To donate, visit prostatecancer.ca and click on special events, followed by community events.