

TWO OF A KIND

Beaconsfield has more going for it than just a goldmine

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Have any of you ever wondered what happens behind the scenes on a custom 4WD shoot? It's always a stack of fun and filled with awesome tracks driven by awesome 4WDs. Sometimes, you can forget that this is work. I suppose with all these decked-out rigs, the last thing you might expect is for them to get seriously stuck. Yeah, well same here.

Darren and Tony, two of Tasmania's finest larrikins, like doing things properly. You just have to take a quick look over their superb pair of GU utes to come to that conclusion. Hell, they even have air-operated pop-up lights mounted just behind the cab and slide-out, rotating laptops complete with GPS located just above the glovebox.

As we said, these guys like doing things properly.

Experienced 4WDers, both have competed in Navruns on the mainland, nearly all of the Tasmanian navigational events and are even gearing up for this year's Cliffhanger.

So, with all of that experience and such damn-fine trucks, how did Tony manage to get stuck for over three hours while he was supposed to be getting his GU shot for our magazine?

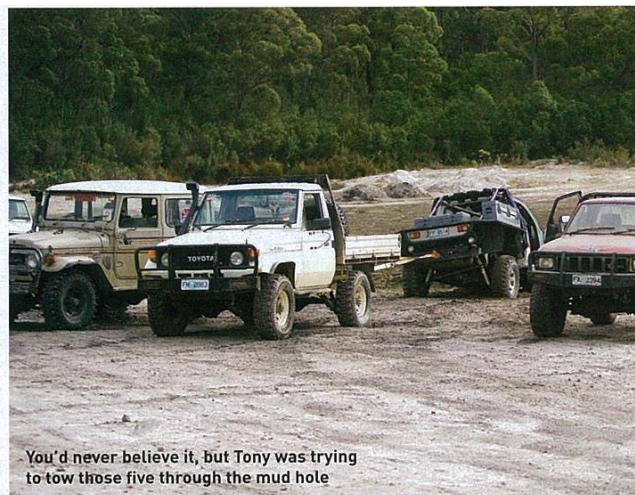
Well, apparently, a dam that has been dry for a little while now is the local challenge. You know, the one that everybody knows about, and everybody knows that no-one can make it through. With a dry crust on top and oozing thick, truck-sucking mud on the bottom, who could pass up that challenge? Not Tony, that's for sure.

He performed admirably. Sure, he didn't get through, but he made it further than anyone else normally does. That was part of

the problem. Where he sunk, the mud was thicker and goopier than ever before and he was almost 30m away from safety.

They tried snatching him out to no avail. They actually needed four straps to reach him, and when that failed, out came the winches. One proved not enough – it just dragged the recovery car closer to Tony. Even with a couple of 4WDs as anchors, there was still not enough pull.

In the end, after burning out the wiring on one of the 'Cruiser recovery vehicle's winch, they resorted to two vehicles winching and three as anchor. All this just to bring you guys two of the best custom GUs Tassie has to offer. You had better appreciate it! ■



You'd never believe it, but Tony was trying to tow those five through the mud hole



CHRIS RECKONS THIS WAS ALL DONE JUST TO SCARE THE PANTS OFF HIM IN THE BUSH

DARREN'S UTE

VEHICLE: 2004 Nissan Patrol GU Ute

ENGINE: Twin intercooled, turbo diesel TD42

GEARBOX: Five-speed manual

4WD ACTIVATION: Part time, shift on the fly, manual-locking hubs

SUSPENSION: Front - Rigid axle, fully adjustable airbags

TYRES: 35x11.5x16in Simex Centipedes

WHEELS: 16x8in Nissan steel

OTHER GOOD GEAR: ARB front bar, Warn high-mount winch, custom tray, front and rear ARB Air Lockers, stainless steel snorkel, air-operated flip-up lights



Darren picked up his ute with only 10,000km on it, Polyair airbags all round and what he describes as a small dent on the roof. On the other hand, Chris - his mate and navigator who owns a Beaconsfield panel beating shop - describes the small dent as a rolled ute with a tray more twisted than Michael Jackson. Eight weeks out from a Cape York trip, they had a lot of work ahead of them.

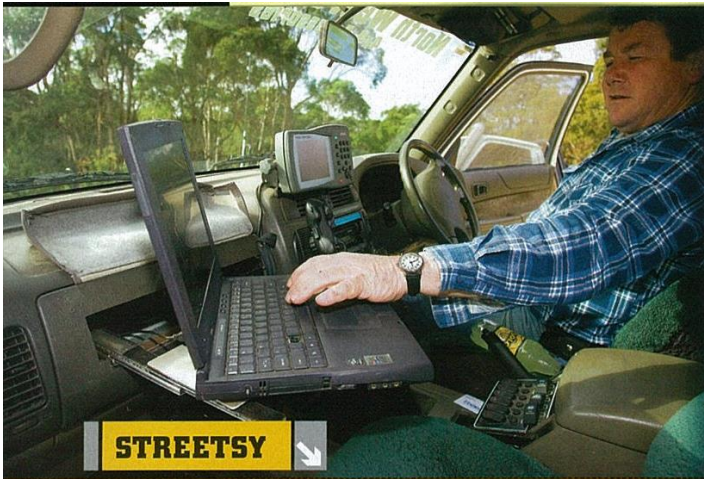
After that successful trip, things started to get pretty serious as Darren decided he wanted a full-blown competition rig to compete in the nav runs. What resulted was one of the white beasts gracing these pages.

Underneath, Darren has made the most of the airbags by rigging up controls for each one. This enables any corner to be adjusted individually for finely tuned suspension, no matter the event or terrain. They have also given him heaps of room to fit the 35in Simex Centipedes.

Under the bonnet, there has been a whole lot of work done. Retaining the inline six-cylinder TD42T, the boys set about getting a little more go from the aging block. A bigger turbo was plumbed to twin glycol-cooled, barrel-style intercoolers.

The fuel pump has been upgraded and Secret Squirrel injectors replace the standard Nissan ones. Air is taken in via the 4in mandrel-bent stainless steel snorkel and expelled via the 3in mandrel-bent exhaust. Navigator Chris reckons this was all done just to scare the pants off him in the bush.

Inside the truck is all business. WRX seats and harnesses keep driver and navigator super safe and comfy. The CAMS-approved six-point rollcage probably would have saved a lot of work had it been installed before they bought it, but it is welcome now nonetheless.



STREETSY

Both Tony and Darren were Toyota men. Tony's previous rides are basically all numerical variants of the LandCruiser. There have been 40s, 60s and a lone 80 that started their Navrun career. However, when things started getting a little more serious, the full-bodied wagon had to go in favour of the coil-cab ute. Tony picked it up standard with only 80,000km on the clock and in excellent condition. Quite a bit has changed since then.

Motor-vation has been improved by ditching the standard turbo and replacing it with an MTQ system. Exhaust gases are fed into a 3in mandrel exhaust while air is taken in via the Nissan snorkel. Tony has also been running a diesel gas system for the past 12 months. With a 40L gas tank and 180L of diesel, he hasn't noticed any incredible economy gains, but the extra torque was a huge incentive. Tony managed to get as far into the bog hole as he did due to a combination of good power, great clearance and awesome tyres. The 35x11.5in Simex Centipedes really dig into the mud and muck typical to Tassie. Tony's suspension has evolved since he first picked it up. The standard coils were replaced for 5in-lifted coils that were then removed in favour of 6in Ultimate Suspension Company springs. The front has been matched to some shocks from Ultimate Suspension, and Snake Racing dropped radius arms fixed the shuddering that developed after a trip to the Cape. In the back, Tough Dog adjustable absorbers take care of shock.

Tony's electrical system is pretty complex. An auto-electrician mate wired up a triple-battery system with separate fuse box for all the accessories. They feed power to the Warn high-mount winch, eight spotlights, a couple of compressors, his navigational equipment, UHF and the standard Nissan CD player.



COMMON INTERESTS

With similar cars and very similar interests, Tony and Darren have been able to develop a modification for one of the utes and then copy it across to the other. As such, a lot of the accessories and modifications are almost identical.

The most-obvious feature is the custom-built trays. Both utilise a very similar design with slight modifications to suit each other's preferences. Tony's tray has incorporated an Ironman winch into the back, which he mainly uses for pulling stuff up onto his trailer (it did get used in anger though after he got stuck in the dam). Darren has incorporated more storage into his ute.

Inside the cabs, they have both set up a fairly extensive navigational system. Laptops slide out from an alcove above the glove boxes (Tony's can even rotate on a turntable), and they are wired to a GPS aerial on the bullbar.

A Magellan FX 324 colour-screen GPS is also mounted in the middle of the dash, so the driver can see where he is going. Both GPS and laptops are linked to each other.

Both of the guys claim this next one as their favourite modification – air-operated, flip-up lights on the trays. Bought as a kit from the States, the guys can raise or lower their lights whenever they want. Sure, it might be a bit bling, but can you honestly say that wouldn't be cool on your truck?

Darren has four Lightforces bolted to his and another two on the front bar. Tony only has the two Lightforces on the top bar and two on the front. Some no-name lights shine out to the side of the track to avoid any unexpected surprises.





TONY'S UTE

VEHICLE: 2001 Nissan GU Ute
ENGINE: 4.2L TD42 turbo diesel
GEARBOX: Five-speed manual
4WD ACTIVATION: Part time, shift on the fly, manual-locking hubs
SUSPENSION: Front - Rigid axle, 6in lifted coils, Ultimate shocks, Snake Racing arms. Rear - Rigid axle, 6in lifted coils, Tough Dog shocks
TYRES: 35x11.5in Simex Centipedes
WHEELS: 16x8in Nissan steel
OTHER GOOD GEAR: ARB front bar, Warn high-mount electric winch, triple batteries, diesel gas system, ARB Air Lockers front and rear, air-operated flip-up lights, Nissan factory snorkel

THESE GUYS LIKE DOING THINGS PROPERLY

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