

News: Bethany Hamilton and Chrissie Beavis to Compete in Rallye Äiche des Gazelles

Written by Kirsten Kuhn

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Take Bethany Hamilton, a competitive pro-surfer who, over the past ten years since losing her arm at age 13 has demonstrated more courage and determination than most of us can muster in a lifetime. Then add Chrissie Beavis—a badass in the rally racing world, who regularly navigates for some of the sports top drivers, and literally has the skill, finesse and drive for racing printed into her DNA. What does the combination give you? Aside from a dynamic duo, you get the latest American team to enter the grueling Rallye Äiche des Gazelles, a womans-only nine-day off-road rally raid through Morocco. With Bethany as driver and Chrissie as navigator, this duo is joining 149 other international teams to tackle the unpredictable life storm of desert action.

To prepare for the event, which takes place March 16th-30th through terrain varying from the treacherous Erg Chebbi Dunes to the camel grass dusted Sahara, Beavis and Hamilton recently completed a training course earlier this month Emily Miller, Baja 1000 class winner and Gazelle Rally podium finisher took them through a series of exercises in the sand dunes of Southern California. The team, training in Jeep Wranglers, covered vehicle dynamics, off-road driving technique and extensive dune driving skills. "Bethany is an absolute natural. I was impressed with her ability to take instruction and apply it so quickly. She was surprisingly smooth, picked up left foot braking immediately and was absolutely at home in the dunes. Combined with Chrissie's skills, I believe they will have a successful first Gazelle," noted Miller.

In the competition, the team will be driving an Isuzu D-Max, which is not sold in the U.S. but has proven to be a sturdy, solid pick-up with a long history in the rally. Chrissie said, "Although I don't have experience with the D-Max, I know that there have been teams in the past that have won with it, so that's really encouraging. The rally cars I usually race in are super modified and designed for shorter courses, so racing in a stock truck should be a much more comfortable

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ride."



Proudly representing the U.S. as one of five American teams, Chrissie is especially excited to use her navigation skills in a rally raid with a nouveau yet contradictory old-school concept – dead reckoning navigation. No GPS, no cell phones, and no support crews. It's new to her. "The type of Rallying I do in the U.S. is very different than what I will be doing in the Gazelle. Normally the rallies I do are speed and time based, with the winner acquiring the lowest time on each "stage" (usually gravel or dirt roads). The Gazelle is a total 180 from that, with the winning team acquiring the shortest distance by navigating entirely on their own using only antiquated maps and no GPS."

Yes, you heard right. Just the few outdated maps, compass and a ruler to guide this team through the Sahara. And no support crews. Given Chrissie's long list of accomplishments – a Pikes Peak win in 2005, a United States Rally Championship win in 2006, and Gold and Silver Medals at the X-Games in 2007 and 2008, she's bringing a heavy plate of knowledge into the competition. "My mother, Paula Gibeault, discovered Rally Racing when she went to college in Scotland. My whole family has raced, and my parents organized the largest California event, The Rim of the World Rally, for almost 20 years. I got in the co-driver's seat as soon as I turned 16 and once I had graduated college I started driving in local events when I could afford it."

Although Bethany does not share Chrissie's experience in the driving world, she most certainly shares her competitive drive, turning pro at age 17 and traveling the world in some of the most well-respected and renowned surf competitions globally. Bethany and Chrissie will surely be in synch as fierce competitors in their perspective fields. Coming from a world of athletics and pushing oneself to the limit, Bethany may feel right at home in the event that leaves many

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exhausted yet utterly exhilarated. She's taking on the challenge with a positive outlook, and after training in the dunes this past weekend, feels more confident in this new field. "Driving in the dunes was a lot of fun and a good challenge. Emily was a fantastic instructor and it was a great experience to practice for what is to come in the rally. Learning about the different areas of huge massive dunes, and what the car is capable of and not capable of is key knowledge over there - where you have dry river beds then smaller, trickier dune traps. "

Bethany is also happy to experience her first Gazelle with navigator Chrissie. "We'll be able to work really well together as our energies mesh well. She has so much experience in navigation and I really think her background in architecture gives her a very detailed approach...a definite plus for our team."

Needless to say, these two young women seem to do it all - and then some.

Stay tuned for more information on the rally, including daily updates and race images from your favorite American teams. Also be sure to check out the live satellite tracking by logging on to www.rallyeaichadesgazelles.com.

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