

# **Honda Racing**

MEDIA RELEASE

4 September 2007

## **GRABHAM AND CRF450X REWRITE HISTORY BOOKS AT 2007 AUSTRALIAN SAFARI**



Onboard his unbeatable CRF450X, GHR Honda rider Ben Grabham took the outright victory in the 2007 Australian Safari.

The win made it a "hat trick" year for Grabham after the determined rider also cleaned up at both the Finke Desert Race and Hattah Enduro earlier this year.

It was a maiden win for the 26 year old Bathurst rider in his first attempt at the iconic event.

**Amazingly, he rode the final six stages with a broken collarbone.**

### **Race Summary**

Grabbo led the motorbike section after the first 678 kilometres from Kununurra to Fitzroy Crossing, and after five special stages in the grueling West Australian outback, he had established a one minute 13 second lead over Broken Hill's Adrian Channing.

"It's what I expected and overall the course was a good mix of 450s and 690s," he said on day one. "I believe it was a fair mix for the big and small bikes. One week prior to the start, we didn't have the bike set-up but luckily I have a great crew who made sure everything ran smoothly."

Grabbo produced another dominant display to increase his lead on day two, as competitors travelled between the West Australian towns of Fitzroy Crossing and Broome.

He won two of the three stages in the 257km leg, extending his lead over Channing to seven minutes and 17 seconds.

Unfortunately, a navigation error cost him 18 minutes in time and the lead in the third leg along the Western Australian north coast. After starting with a seven minute 17 second overnight lead, Grabbo diverted around a mob of cattle in the opening stage of the day, missing a gate and straying off course.

By the time the Honda rider found his way to the first stage checkpoint, he had dropped to 26th place for the stage and third overall, 11 minutes and 15 seconds behind Channing.

Although Grabbo hit back to take the remaining two stages of the day, he was only able to regain a few minutes of the lost time.

"I messed it up today," he said at the time. "I made a silly mistake. There were a couple hundred head of cattle at a trough. I gave them a wide berth instead of going among them and overshot a corner. A few other riders got caught on that too. I did an extra 30 kilometres which didn't help."

On day four, Grabham clawed back nearly two and a half minutes of the time he lost on the Broome to Port Hedland leg, riding through long sandy stretches, rocky outcrops, numerous creek crossings and a section of rugged country that was extensively damaged by Cyclone George.

By the midway point of the event, GHR team mate Andrew Coaker had moved to a 1:37 second lead on his CRF450X but the Coogee investment banker took a wrong turn, losing some 19 minutes in the process.



Grabbo racked up four stage victories on day six, and regained the lead over Coaker on the morning's first long 118km stage. He had stretched the margin in front of his fellow Honda rider out to six minutes and eight seconds by the time the field reached the overnight stop in Leonora.

"It's good to be back in the front and we are getting closer to the finish line," Grabbo said.

His fine form continued over the last two days and by the time the chequered flag fell, Grabham had delivered arguably one of the most superb performances ever in his debut Safari in the bikes section.

He set the fastest time in 16 of the 33 stages, and was second in another nine.

He also rode the final six stages with a broken collarbone, sustained in a crash early on day 8 outside Kalgoorlie.

Grabbo was a happy and relieved man after his victory. "It's more of a relief," he said. "The hard work has paid off. It's good to know everything has worked out. To have never competed in the event before and come out with a win shows that anyone can have a go."

"When I came off and broke my collar bone I thought, oh no! But I also thought, I can do it. I just kept on riding and I'm relieved to have made it to the finish line."

## Summary

- Nine day event and over 5,175 km covered by each finishing entrant.
- GHR Honda's led every day of the event and had five days with both riders on the podium.
- 13 CRF 450X's started the event with only one DNF due to the rider breaking his arm.
- GHR Honda is the only team in the world to win an international rally on a XR650
- GHR Honda is the only team in the world to win an international rally on a 450cc bike

- END -

Contact: Lisa Evans, Public Relations Coordinator, Mb: 0413 542 004; email: [levans@hondampe.com.au](mailto:levans@hondampe.com.au)