

SPORT

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BART HAS OAKS LAUGH

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# THE BOYS LIKE TO RUN ON THE WILDER SIDE

Plenty of rough terrain dust and mud are bound to fly

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**OFF ROAD:** The serenity of Seone Park will be put to the test this weekend when Yepoon's Mark Thomas and the boys get into racing mode.

These guys don't just take their vehicles over rough terrain, they are out there in any conditions and whether the competition is of a day or night.

Thomas is a member of a team which takes competition to another level.

This Saturday is the Central Queensland Off Road Challenge, an event that not only tests vehicles to the limit but also the daring and energy levels of the competitors.

Thomas, who drives a GQ Nissan Patrol, 4.2 turbo diesel and is sponsored by Opposite Lock of Rockhampton, is one of the drivers in the event where teamwork is the key.

Not that Thomas has to work well with just his navigator Luke Ingram but also the

driver and navigator in two other vehicles.

Other drivers in the team are Jason St John in his petrol-driven Toyota Landcruiser tray back and Brisbane-based Christian Trusz who also competes in a similar vehicle to that

**“Test the daring of drivers of Thomas.**

St John, who is from Gracemere, will have Greg Ward as a navigator while Trusz's off-sider is Terry Kane.

While Seone Park has some challenging stretches, it is not an unknown area to these competitors.

Recently they took part in the Xtreme Winch Challenge series with one of the three events on the program at Seone Park, the other two being at Mountain Park and Manilla (NSW).

To say they performed well would be an understatement as all three vehicles were placed in the top three overall, in a field that included vehicles from



**GOING UP:** Mark Thomas takes to the hills in his GQ Nissan Patrol during a recent event and he is now gearing up for this weekend's Central Queensland Off Road Challenge.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

throughout the east coast, with Trusz the winner, Thomas runner-up and St John taking third position. For this kind of ex-

treme form of sport, where transportation up a vertical face is the norm rather than the exception, modifications are a necessity.

While much of the improvements made concern performance and the suspension on each vehicle, an important component for fulfilling each task is the vehicle winch.

This is an area where St John excels as he produces modifications which make the winch bigger, better and faster than the standard models.

This weekend his work will be tested by the Seone Park circuit.

Under competition rules teams, and there are expected to be 20 of them, need to overcome set tasks and challenges which involve high-speed runs, GPS (global positioning system) stage, and then on Saturday under lights, a combination of winching and speed runs.

Seone Park is off the Yepoon Road, near the go kart track.



**EASY DOES IT:** Gracemere's Jason St John heads down the side of a hill while performing one of his extreme tasks.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED



**MAKING A SPLASH:** Brisbane-based Christian Trusz is not afraid of getting his GQ Nissan Patrol wet when he's racing and will be digging up more dirt in this weekend's off-road challenge.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED