

Kristina Dwyer

Photographic Model, Endurance Cyclist

Kristina Dwyer, is an Australian cyclist who is making a successful career as a photographic model. Now 23, she has been modelling for 5 years. She appeared in *Penthouse* magazine in 1986, and was asked to appear again last year for the magazine's 10th anniversary. She was then selected as *Penthouse's* Pet of the Year, an accolade which won her \$80,000 in prizes including a computer-

ised bicycle trainer, 4WD vehicle, motor bike, thousands of dollars of designer clothing and a scuba diving course, all contributed by the magazine's advertisers. "I'm feeling a bit spoiled now," she lightheartedly admits. What was the best part of the prize? The bicycle trainer, of course.

Kristina, despite her slight build, is not just a fair weather rider. Last year she was a competitor in the Simpson Desert Cycle Classic, a physically demanding event run in harsh conditions. She harbours ambitions for even more difficult cycling challenges in the future. **Cyclist** recently asked the cheerful, outgoing Kristina about her cycling lifestyle.

Q. No doubt many Australians have heard of you as a *Penthouse* Pet but, to cyclists, you're the *Penthouse* Pet who likes doing gruelling off-road endurance races. How did you happen to take up cycling?

A. My boyfriend, Peter, is a keen cyclist. I hated it when he used to go out cycling

with his friends and left me alone. I've been cycling for four years now. Cycling has replaced the gym. It's a lot more fun.

Q. What inspired you to attempt the Simpson Desert Challenge?

A. When I'd go out cycling with a group everyone would say I should race. I read about the Simpson Desert Classic in *PUSH ON* and thought I would like to do it. Since no-one had ever finished it before, I felt we would all be starting out more or less even. It turned out to be the most traumatic experience of my life but it was also most exhilarating. I can't put it into words... Peter and I were on a high for a month afterwards.

Q. That type of cycling is often physically gruelling. You're exposed to extremes of weather, the risk of falls. There are any number of ways you can damage the body which is such an asset to you. Do you see any conflict between cycling and your modelling career — or are they complementary?

A. Yes, they go together. I worry about breaking bones, yes, but makeup can always cover up bruises. There are some pretty good cover-ups these days.

Q. Endurance cycling events are still more a man's world than a woman's. Did the other competitors accept you?

A. I got some strange looks when we first arrived but after the first day everyone respected everyone else because we'd all been through the same thing.

Q. Does anyone encourage you to do rides like the Simpson Desert race?

A. No. [Laughing.] Everyone tries to discourage me. It was my own idea, everyone else thought I was mad.

Q. Your second to Patricia Thompson in the women's section of the Simpson Desert ride and thirteenth overall must have laid to rest any sceptics' doubts about your being a serious cyclist?

A. One of the Canadians admitted thinking that, yeah, it was nice to have me there but that he didn't think I would make it. He ended up saying he was impressed!

Q. You were the biggest fundraiser for Paraquad in the Simpson ride, giving you the right to wear the Number 1 shirt. How did you achieve that?

A. I raised most money through sponsorship from Philips — they provided prizes to raffle. Netti gave me cycling clothes and Woollys Wheels looked after my bike.

Q. What, for you, was the hardest part of the Simpson ride?

A. The scariest part was going down the dunes, due to the washaways. You really had to plan your descent to avoid crashing. After a while, though, you stopped feeling sorry for yourself, you'd forget about pain and concentrate on getting down the hill. Then there were ponds of really disgusting salty water left over from floods and you had to avoid them.

Q. And what was the highlight?

A. The best part was finishing. [Laughs.] Everyday I wanted to give up and just stop and wait for the sweep vehicle. The desert, though, was just like walking into a picture. The colours were so beautiful. When you see paintings you think the colours are overdone but they're not. It was just like that.

Q. Would you do it again?

A. I'd like to do it again but not this year. I'd like a change, something a bit different.

Q. You now have your sights set on an even tougher event. Tell us about the annual Iditabike race in Alaska.

A. It's a 200 mile race to be held next February. It's entirely in snow and ice on a basically flat route alongside rivers. You have to carry 30 pounds of survival gear and pass several checkpoints on the way. There's a compulsory six hour rest stop included. The record time is, I think, less than 30 hours. I hope to do it in under five days — they stop timing you after three.

Q. Where did you hear about Iditabike and why are you keen to do it?

A. I read about it in a magazine, too. I like to read other people's experiences — I can relate to them. I like excitement and challenges and to have goals in life. I'd like to raise money for the World Wildlife Fund, to save the seals.

Q. You don't find the conditions you'll encounter in Alaska in February anywhere in Australia. How do you plan to train for Iditabike?

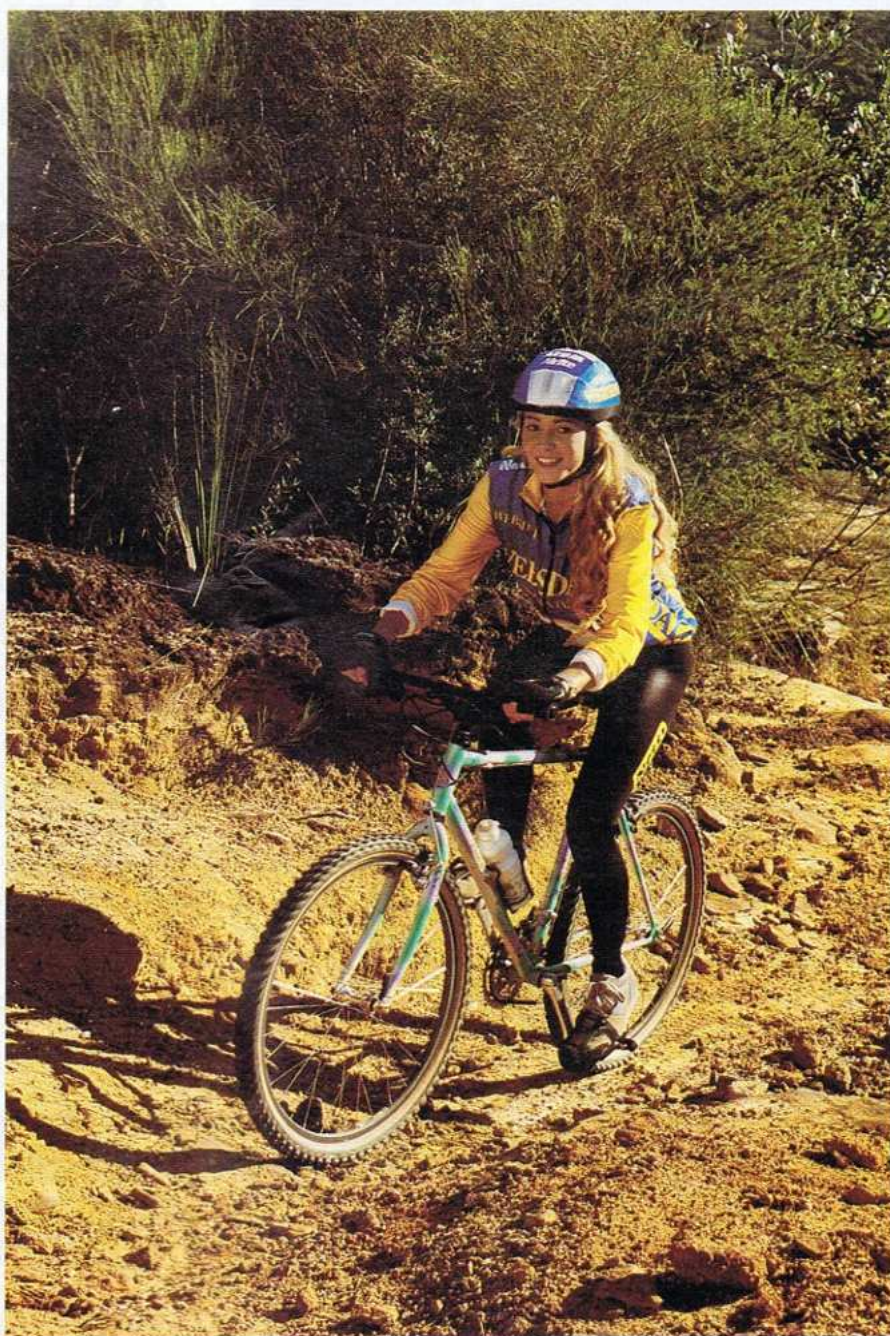
A. The only thing I can do is go to the snow here in August and play around in it on the bike. I think as long as you are fit you can adapt to the conditions.

Q. What special equipment will you use?

A. I want to use a windscreen — what do you call it? A fairing, yes, to cut the wind chill. I'll wear lots of thermal clothing and I'll need some special way to carry water to prevent it freezing. Some of the people who had bags of water under their clothing found that it still froze in the tube which came out to their mouths!

Q. What is your normal cycling program in an average week?

A. I just go out and ride for as long and as far as I can. Mostly I go out by myself because my work schedule is erratic. Sometimes I'll have a shoot from 6 to 10 a.m. and then be free for the rest of the day. I avoid riding at night. I have a computerised exercise bike which I won as Pet of the Year and I train on that at night.





Q. Do you currently race at all — on the road or off the road?

A. No. I've been meaning to join a club but my photo work this year has been ridiculously busy and I always have something else on when rides are happening. I still have a scuba diving course to do (one of my prizes). I'll have to do it before winter sets in.

Q. Do you know many other people in your field of employment who cycle or are you unusual in that respect?

A. Most models don't exercise, they just starve themselves and only eat when they feel faint. I like to eat too much, so I don't starve myself. I wanted to put together a triathlon team — I found a model who swims but couldn't find a runner.

Q. Does your modelling work ever involve any cycling?

A. Not usually. Occasionally I do brochures with bikes as props. Last Thursday, though, I did a shoot for Penthouse which involved riding a bicycle up a sandhill 200 times. It was to illustrate their rising sales figures!

Q. You have a sponsor now. Does that make you a professional cyclist?

A. Not really. After I rode my Prairie Breaker in the desert race, Shogun gave me a Ninja road bike as a promotion. It's my pride and joy now. Lovely paintwork — it has a green metallic fleck in it. My first time out on it a car cut me off — I braked hard but my foot stuck in the clipless pedal so I just fell over. But I love my cycling, especially with work — it gets very stressful; some of the castings are just meat markets. I find it a good release, cycling.

Q. What cycling plans do you have beyond Iditabike?

A. Peter and I have thought about doing the Trans Australia Bike Race, maybe on a tandem. One of us could sleep on the back while the other pedals. We'll have to get one built specially. 🚲