

GOOLWA F1 GOPHER GP

CONCEPT AND DISCUSSION PAPER

By Edward Booth

Introduction.

Goolwa is urgently in need of new foci for tourism, brought about by low river levels.

A possible event could be a carnival of skill and racing by invalid scooters (gophers).

These small vehicles are ubiquitous in Goolwa, and there would be a high level of interest in the possibility of competing with them.

The Event Format.

This would need further discussion with intending participants, but the following are some ideas:

- Open race (main event). This would be a no holds barred race by modified gophers. The only stipulation being that the vehicles were based on a commercially built gopher chassis. The race would comprise a number of laps of a closed circuit, possibly long enough to need a pit stop for battery change etc.
- Formula gopher race for gophers using the original motor and chassis (but modified bodies and power packs).
- Open event for standard gophers (high seats), but with souped-up motors.
- Stock event for standard (off the showroom floor) gophers.
- Endurance event for standard gophers. Who can go farthest on a charge?
- Gymkhana events for skill and handling.
- Drag gophers. 50m of straight acceleration.
- Elimination heats might be necessary, if the field becomes too great.
- There could be accompanying sideshows and activities.

Management.

The event would be managed by Cittaslow Goolwa Inc, with support from Lions Club of Goolwa, The Alexandrina Centre for Positive Ageing and, possibly, others.

Location.

The location should be central, and preferably a street circuit.

An ideal track could be set up in the wharf precinct, using the loop out to Hector's Jetty and back around the brewery. There is plenty of open space within and adjacent to the track for supporting activities.

There would be negligible disruption to local businesses, and the two businesses affected should benefit rather than otherwise.

No significant track preparation would be necessary.

Timing.

The event would ideally run in the finer months.

It could be run in conjunction with another event, such as Goolwa Alive or the Tour Down Under (TDU).

The disadvantage of running with the TDU would be that the media would be preoccupied, but such cover as we did get, might go internationally.

If it were to be run with Goolwa Alive, it could be staged with grouped events to allow people to enjoy both the GP and the main street activities.

Funding.

The cost of running such an event would not be very great.

In the first instance, I would suggest approaching Events SA, and Tourism SA. This event could have State significance if properly promoted.

Sponsorship could be sought from relevant companies as for the larger motoring events. Vehicles could carry advertising.

Entrance to the event could be free (a pleasant change), as it would save the cost of having to enclose and man the perimeter.

The main expenses would probably be insurance and publicity.

Prizes could be sought from sponsors.

Safety.

The event might need to be run in conjunction with the Confederation of Australian Motor Sport (CAMS).

The gophers would have to be sound.

Drivers would be required to wear protective clothing.

Pedestrians/spectators would need to be kept off the track by barriers and marshals (Goolwa Lions have volunteered their accredited marshals).

A full safety audit would need to be developed.

Gophers are not very fast, and even modified ones are unlikely to reach the town speed limit. However, a collision between a gopher at “speed” and a pedestrian could be very painful.

Publicity.

This would need to be organised, but the event should be sufficiently quirky to attract major coverage.

A good compere would be necessary to provide informed (and humorous) commentary.

Participants.

These could be individuals or teams.

Each entrant/team would meet all their own costs of participation and preparation.

Obviously, the major events would entail some expense in preparation, but the minor events would only require the entrant to turn up on the day.

The cost of developing a highly modified gopher is less than \$2000.

Entrants would need to be 16 or over.

It would need 6 month's lead-time for participants to prepare for the major events. The first event could run at the spring of 2009.

Summary.

Goolwa needs public events to replace some of its traditional activities during low water.

An F1 Gopher GP could be such an event.

Such an event could attract National and even International coverage for Goolwa due to the quirky nature of the event.

Costs would be low, as the track needs little or no preparation, and no fencing is necessary.

Insurance would need to be investigated.

The speeds will be low, and not very dangerous.

CAMS involvement might be desirable.

The event could be a low-cost boost for Goolwa.

The event could provide an opportunity for some Goolwa and local businesses to showcase their products.

The event could be used to heighten awareness of safety and proper use of gophers.

The event is limited only by our imaginations.