

We run multiple communications systems in the car. We have the GPS and RFID trackers which are required by the race organizers and we have a radio we use to communicate between the race car and the chase trucks. But our new secret weapon is the Iridium Go! wifi hotspot that allows us to communicate with the chase vehicles and our race operations, pretty much anywhere in the world. These are brand new and we're one of the first off road race teams to incorporate them. They're awesome and a game changer!

Big things that we can't carry like spare transmissions, tyres, things like that, are on the chase trucks. With the Iridium, if we break something now we don't have an issue contacting one of the chase trucks to meet the race car and do the repair on the course. We've changed transmissions at the side of the race track before. It takes about two hours to change one and we've gone through three in one race.

One of the best things about racing an old VW is that race fans absolutely love them. Don't get me wrong, million dollar, horse-power Trophy Trucks are forces of nature when they're racing, but the fans love us, too. They say we're either heroes or insane for doing what we do. Personally I lean toward insane, especially seeing as the very first race we did was the Baja 1000 itself! That's like thinking 'hey, I should take up jogging' and then the very first thing you do is an Olympic decathlon. We were total noobs and a noob mistake took us out. When we attached the skid plate under the engine, we used bolts that had the heads protruding below the skid plate. Naturally they got sheared off in the course of racing, the skid plate eventually fell off (we never found it) and then, with the bottom of the engine exposed, we hit a rock that sheared off the round oil filter plate. Game over.

We've started the Baja 5 times now, but have never managed to finish - yet. There are a few reasons for that. They work out the maximum time to complete the course by dividing the full length by 26km/h so you get 45 hours. This sounds fine, but we have the least modified car, start the race almost last and have to drive on a completely chewed up course! 45 hours is nearly impossible. The plan is not to just finish, though. We will win it! We are not going for less than that!

The last race we did was the legendary Mint 400 in Las Vegas in mid-March, which is another crazy tough event we've never finished, although we came really close this time. We were about 30 miles from the end of the 250 mile course when we got rear-ended by a Desert Lite truck. On a Bug of course, everything important is hanging out the back so the impact took out the deck lid, damaged the fan and ripped out an oil cooler. The other the guy was very apologetic and offered to give us money to help with repairs, but I said an apology was sufficient as if you can't afford to repair your car, you probably shouldn't be racing.

For the future everything is aimed towards the Baja 1000 in November. The bodyshell is three years old now and is due for a swap, but we think we know what we need to do and have everything in place. I keep telling my mentor Eric Solorzano, who's won the Baja 1000 nine times in Class 11, that I will beat him. He laughs. "We'll see!"

And before you ask about the 928bhp 4wd drive version of the Desert Dingo, well, it exists... virtually, at least. Amazingly Forza the gaming company contacted us about including our VW in their new game. At first I couldn't understand why, seeing as it's full of Ferraris and anything out of the Pagani shop, but they assured me people would love it. A photographer spent a couple of hours shooting it from every conceivable angle and I heard that when the images were sent to the art department, the first question that came back was, "Do we have to put all the dents in it?" For months we were under non-disclosure agreement and not being able to tell anyone about it. It was agony, but now it looks amazing and having your car in a world famous computer game is just as cool as it sounds! And I get an amazing amount of street cred in the local video game store!"



BAJA 1000 DESERT DINGO

