

Log of Tjeerd Bouma & Johan Das

The first Blokart Raid in the Mongolian Gobi Desert.

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Short description Mongolia trip 2007 –Tjeerd Bouma & Johan “Atomic Hair” Das

Tuesday 2007-05-01 - Labour day

- Departure for Mongolia. In London all Europeans meet. Despite of visa problems we can travel to Mongolia via Beijing.

Wednesday 2007-05-02

- Arrival in Beijing and later in Ulaanbaatar. Demonstration at 15.00 at the main square of Ulaanbaatar.

Thursday 2007-05-03

- Part of the group departs to MandalGovi, leaving Kevin and Santi behind at Ulaanbaatar. Great BK along the road – the first run! Meet kiwis and Christophe at MandalGovi.

Friday 2007-05-04

- Depart from MandalGovi for great exciting BK ride on rocky terrain. We learn the importance of riding either as a group or all using proper waypoints with the GPS. Car gets stuck in dry lake when moving towards a ger.

Saturday 2007-05-05

- Breakfast party at a ger. We have a nice BK-ride though a variable landscape. Unfortunately, we get now and then stuck in the softer parts, but can BK nicely on the harder undergrounds. Sleep in Tsogt-Ovoo in a hotel without electricity, but with hostess that give great personal and very special care. ☺.

Sunday 2007-05-06

- Finally Kevin and Sati arrive after a whole night driving through the dessert; GREAT. We celebrate their arrival with a long, fast and exciting drive towards Tsogt-Ovoo. At the border of the city, our Mongolian crew gets a chance to BK themselves. We spent the night in another hotel; nice, but without the personal service.

Monday 2007-05-07

- Departure from Tsogt-Ovoo. Slow BK ride with little wind. We sleep again in a ger with nomads.

Tuesday 2007-05-08

- Go to Tsogtsetsiy (near Dalanzadgad) for petrol, and start BK ride at the edge of the city. Slow drive with relative little wind. Sleep in a ger like hotel along a busy road

Wednesday 2007-05-09

- Nice BK ride, starting with strong wind, which later on drops off. Things turn bad as Santi gets stuck by the sun. We stay for the night in a hotel in Manlay. Great party with special dinner

Thursday 2007-05-10

- We aimed for Choir, but didn't make it. Sleep at gas station in Shiveegovi in the car. It was, as the French would say it, une jour du bordèle.

Friday 2007-05-11

- Return in Ulaanbaatar. Farwell dinner in nice Mongolian restaurant. Say goodbye to our 5 NZ friends and the Mongolian friends. Packing stuff till late into the night

Saturday 2007-05-12

- Departure at 4.00 from the hotel to the Ulaanbaatar airport. We just make it in time onto the flight to Beijing. Say goodbye to all our European friends in London. Arrival in Amsterdam, with GREAT welcome by the Das and Bouma family. We all sleep at the family Das home.

Sunday 2007-05-13

- Departure by Bouma from family Das home to their home in Goes.

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Detailed logbook Mongolia trip 2007 –Tjeerd Bouma & Johan “Atomic Hair” Das

NOTE TO THE READER: The text is written in the I form by Tjeerd, but reflects our mutual adventures, as the text is extended by corrections, additions, comments, jokes of Johan. And: *we expect you to know that BK stands for.. ?*

Early preparations

- Sent around letters to several potential sponsors. Johan and I were lucky to get sponsoring from
 - o HetBedrijf.com (employer of Johan)
 - o BBIZZ (European importer of Blokart)
 - o MensWatersport.nl (Dutch Blokart retailer)
 - o DeStrandzeiler.nl (Dutch Blokart retailer)
 - o our lovely wives and children ☺In addition we can via Christophe, borrow a GPS from MAGELLAN.
- Prepare BKts by ordering special knobby tires & front tire (www.DeStrandzeiler.nl; **pictures 1, 2**), making special bottom protection plates (**picture 3**) with mounting materials (THANKS Bert !), modify down-haul (THANKS Lowie !), etc.
- Prepare for trip by getting the required outdoor gear like sleeping bag for low temperatures (**picture 4**), medication, vaccinations, etc.
- Johan puts “fun pictures” of the preparations on the BKforumweb site (**pictures 1 to 4**)

Weekend of 2007-03-24

- Joined meeting in France at Christophe and Celine their place, to discuss who brings what items (**pictures 5, 6**). Test knobby tires on the beach. Most people don't like them as they lower the speed of the BK and make the rear end less stable. However, they are extremely strong, and a slightly lower top speed is preferable over being slowed down by having to repair punctures. So in the end, we decide to bring the knobby tires to the Gobi, where we really learn to appreciate the quality of this tire. On the beach, Kevin learns that you should always avoid deep pit holes with a BK (**picture 7**) and that you have to keep your BK away from Philippe L.. Have meeting with French press (**picture 8**). Enjoy a great French meal of fruits du mer; jummie. Get special demonstration of Philippe L. on the excellent working of the green liquid band-repair kit ☺. Christophe and Celine are still removing the green stuff from their ceiling.

Monday 2007-04-23

- Johan: a very nice day when my employer surprises me totally with their offer to support the Blokartraid! Therefore Tjeerd and I will provide www.HetBedrijf.com with exposure during the Raid and the European Competition.
- Johan: with Jense Reclame (sticker provider of www.DeStrandzeiler.nl) we can arrange the stickers to be ready in time

Wednesday 2007-04-25

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- Johan: today I get together with Richard Chardet of www.Menswatersport.nl for the BK disc brake for safer travel (we will find out) in Mongolia.

Thursday 2007-04-26

- Johan: today I visited our sponsor BBIZZ in Hillegom to pick-up the brand new sponsored 4m sails. They were very nice and ORANGE, with a nice ORANGE stickers “BBIZZ – adventure in sports” on it; love the color. Now we have almost everything ready before departure.

Friday 2007-04-27

- Tjeerd: I was lucky to be able to return home in time from the 1-week MarBEF meeting in Lithuania, as the strike of SAS just ended at the last day of our meeting!

Saturday 2007-04-28

- Nice lazy day. First help my daughter Rosemarijne (9) during the morning to decorate her bicycle for the parade at Queens day (**picture 9**). The afternoon I pack my bags for the trip to Mongolia.
- Today Johan drove from Ede towards Goes for last minute preparations and picked up all sponsor stickers in Zwijndrecht (Jense Reclame). After dinner at the beautiful terrace of the restaurant “De Landbouw” (***) on my daughters ranking list) in down-town Goes, we spent the whole evening (20.00-0.30) with putting them on our sails. The sail stickers turned out very nice, but tricky to apply. The “HetBedrijf” stickers for the pod were not good, as the white under layer is missing. We find a provisional solution, but Johan will e-mail the supplier to see if we can get the proper stickers in time (**picture 10**).

Sunday 2007-04-29

- We continue with putting stickers on our sails, pack & weigh our bags, and put tires on the various wheels (**pictures 11, 12**). Good we do this now, as the new front wheel we received from our sponsor MensWatersport.nl, needed a bigger hole to fit the inner tube of the extra strong front tire. Borrow some drills from my next door neighbor to get this done. Around noon Johan returns home to Ede.

Monday 2007-04-30 – Queens day in the Netherlands

- Queens day is the biggest national holiday in the Netherlands; it is a little bit like a 1-day national carnival. I have a great Queens day party with Ingrid and the kids. We first participate in the parade, Rosemarijne with her decorated bicycle, and Annemaria with a decorated beachcar (next year we could perhaps try the BK instead). Annemaria participates in a show with a magician-clown, which is great fun. Rosemarijne wins a huge cake with the painting she makes at café Barends (**picture 14**). We have a piece of the cake as desert.
- Johan gets the proper “HetBedrijf” stickers for the pod delivered at his home.
- In the evening I depart around 19.30 to Johan & Yda. As there is no possibility to get to the airport in time from Goes, I will spend the night with the family Das in

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Ede. During my car trip to Ede, Rosemarijne calls me on my mobile. She is (as always) very upset about my departure. Makes things tough ☹. In Ede we do the last preparations, and go to sleep around midnight.

Tuesday 2007-05-01 - Labour day

- After all the months of preparations, today it is finally going to happen: we depart for Mongolia !!! Get-up at 5.30 to pack the car with Johan. Johan drops me off at the railroad station, where after Yda and the kids take him by car to the airport. Finding each other at the airport seems to be a bit confusing (two moving targets), but works out well thanks to our mobile phones. No problem with check in. Say goodbye to Yda, Arvid and Amber (**picture 15**), and take-off to London. Almost miss the plane due a last cup of coffee from Johan. **Johan: survival between 5.30 and 9.30 without a nice coffee is quite harsh! Forgive me!**
- In London we meet the rest of the Europeans. It starts as big party when we meet our French friends Christophe, Philippe L and Nicolas. A little later Santi arrives from Mallorca and Philippe M arrives from Paris. Then our party suddenly turns bad, when Kevin calls that he cannot check in as he has no visa for China. Our story that we will get a transit visa in Beijing is not accepted, as we do not have the tickets of our flight to Ulaanbaatar with us. Only Santi (has MIAT ticket), Johan and I (we have a China visa) will be able to board. Christophe goes in discussion with the lady from BA (**pictures 16, 17**), and Johan makes several phone calls to our Chinese contact that bought the tickets for us. He asks her to fax the copies of our tickets. She first needs to get into the office, which will take time that we don't have too much. The fax arrives just in time for us to be able to catch the flight. Kevin can also check in just in time Pffff, our adventure was almost wasted by this seemingly small administrative problem ...

Wednesday 2007-05-02

- Upon arrival in Beijing, the problems with the visa continue. Apart from Santi, Johan and me, nobody can cross the border to collect the luggage and check-in with MIAT. This will only be solved when the Chinese lady arrives with the MIAT tickets. All seems well for the luggage (**picture 18**), except that we do not find the BK + luggage from Santi, and see no luggage from Kevin (his BK did arrive). The bag from my BK has a broken zipper. Kevin's luggage may have gone bad due to the last minute check in caused by the visa problems. The luggage of Santi is most likely directly checked through to Ulaanbaatar, as this was indicated on his luggage. At least this is what they tell him at the service desk, Let's hope and see.
- Check in with MIAT, and pay extra for overweight. Not too bad though.
- Almost miss flight because of problems at the security check: I forgot all about my small pocket knife in the toilet bag, which I bought as a souvenir during my last trip to the UK. Shit! (Also strange this was not detected at the security check in the Netherlands and the UK?) The security people make a big fuzz about it, and also find some fluids in my medical kid. Christopher calls us on Johan his mobile

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that we better hurry up ☹. Loose my pocket knife and my DEET, but we just make it in time to the flight by running all the way to the gate. What a relief; everybody is on the flight. We will make it to Ulaanbaatar!!!

- Arrival in Ulaanbaatar (**picture 20**). We find out that Santi misses both his BK and his luggage, and that Kevin misses his luggage (his BK did arrive). What a bad luck ☹. They tell us that the materials are likely to arrive tomorrow morning, with the next flight from Beijing.
- Get picked up by our hosts (**picture 21**), drive to hotel in Ulaanbaatar, followed by an almost immediately departure to a restaurant where we will meet the rest of the group: drivers, guides, cooks and team from New Zealand (kiwi team). Christopher enjoys seeing back so many Mongolian friends (**picture 22**).
- The dinner has to be relatively quick, as there is an appointment with the Mongolian TV at 15.00 at the main square of Ulaanbaatar. We rapidly return to the hotel to build up Johan his BK in a hurry (i.e., for transport we had taken several parts off and put into our other luggage) and go with rest of the Europeans to the main square. We arrive too late for the TV, but have a very nice afternoon with lots of interest from local people (**pictures 23 to 27**). A petty that Christophe could not participate more actively in this media event, being the originator of this special event. Philippe M. directly proves his value to the group by making beautiful pictures and movies of the local people enjoying the BKs.
- Go to the bank to obtain local currency, to be ready for departure tomorrow. Unfortunately, the bazaar is closed, so that we cannot buy present for future hosts.
- Back at the hotel, Johan and I assemble the remaining BKs, repack our luggage (1 bag for BK materials, 1 for the rest) and apply sponsor stickers to the sails of other European BKters.

Thursday 2007-05-03

- Breakfast in hotel with orange juice, tea, coffee, eggs toast; perfect hosts (**picture 28**).
- Kiwi team leaves us early, while the European team pack their cars and head for the airport to check on the missing luggage (**picture 29**).
- While waiting at the airport, Johan makes an excellent deal: 10 postcards with local stamps (some of it already stamped; such great service) for the price of only 20.000. Later on, our English guide Moogi arranges that we get 10 extra cards for this money, as compensation for the lack of exchange. Later it proves that some cards and stamps are over 30 years old!
- When it becomes clear that the missing luggage of Santi and Kevin will not appear shortly, Nicolas, Philip L, Philip M, Johan and me depart for MandalGovi (together with Radja, 2 drivers and the cooks). Christophe remains behind with Kevin and Santi, with Moogi.
- Shortly after leaving Ulaanbaatar, we pass a kind of border control which exists between regions.
- While driving towards MandalGovi, we exchange backgrounds in the back of the car. We tell Nicolas how Johan and I have met. Nicolas and Philippe tell how they have met and MUCH more about their history.

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- Stop at left side of a Shamanism “altar” consisting of a heap of stones at the highest point of the road (**pictures 30, 31, 32**). We walk 3 times around the altar, and leave money behind. The tradition is that those who can spare money and small articles leave it behind at the altar, while those in need of money will take some from it. A perfect social system for travellers to support each other.
- We decide to BK along the road to MandalGovi. The area looks so tempting, that we (**really have to**) decide to ignore the advice of mastermind Christophe, to wait till we reach a better spot more south. Great fun to race along the road!! We reach speeds up to 44 km/h. The road is however rather rough, and Johan and I are thankful for the extra bottom protection plates mounted underneath our seats. We hear us hit several rocks. Unfortunately, not everybody has mounted a bottom protection plate, and Nicolas hurts his back due to bad luck with a suddenly defect seat, which we temporarily can repair by improvisation.
- On this bumpy road, I loose my GPS without noticing that it flew of the BK. Fortunately Johan finds it. Johan looses his GPS twice, and picks it up every time: he’s got a special eye for that. The mounting system provided by Magellan is clearly not up to the bumping ride we take. The coming days we will need to tape our GPS systems.
- After riding the road and a little across terrain (Philippe M. makes a great photo shoot; **pictures 33, 34^{PM}, 35^{PM}**), we decide to pack-up again to be able to reach MandalGovi at a reasonable hour. Along the road trip we see wild horses, camels, cranes, eagles and antelopes. We stop several times for pictures (**picture 36**) and truly enjoy the travel through this beautiful landscape. We also regular stop for cooling the engine.
- When the night falls in, we still haven’t reached MandalGovi. At some point, we get a little worried that we may have lost the road. Fortunately, this is not the case, and we arrive rather late in the evening at MandalGovi. Christophe has even arrived before us (which made him worried, as we had departed much earlier). The kiwi team has also arrived on location. Due to a miss communication (they thought they had to wait for food), they have unfortunately only been able to BK very briefly, despite of their early departure ☺.
- We have a nice dinner. Philippe L. does not join us, as he feels ill after riding the last few kilometers backward in the car. Nicolas is also not feeling very well. However, after taking some medicines he can eat a little rice.
- Unfortunately, still no good news ob the luggage of Kevin and Santi.
- Johan and I share a room with Christophe. Nice room: working toilet and cold water from the shower. Sleep late because of Johan and me talking way too long with Christophe; FUN (**picture 37**).

Friday 2007-05-04

- Breakfast in hotel with orange juice, tea, coffee, eggs toast; perfect again!
- 30 minute drive into the desert, where after we start BK. There is a strong wind. Philippe L. helps Johan and me to prepare the knobby tires by putting the special green anti-puncture fluid inside. (For those who don’t know the product [**picture 38**], Philippe can give excellent demonstrations on how it works. You may however first want to talk to Christophe and Celine, who are still cleaning the

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ceiling of their living room). All people who brought a 3 m2 sail put it on. Philippe L, Nico, Johan and me start with a 4 m2, as we didn't bring another sail. So it will be a fast run for us. ☺.

- Philip L. earns the name "La General" because of his military outfit with Red Barron style safety goggles (**picture 39**).
- Fun drive: the ground is very solid and covered with large rocks. The wind makes us drive extremely fast. The hills make the ride sometimes slightly unpredictable. What a ride!!! This was the kind of terrain for which we made the bottom protection plate and bought the knobby tires. You can hear regular hits of large stones onto the plate. (For those who told us that a bottom protection plate is unnecessary, a parallel between BKing and sex may be convincing. The bottom protection plate (**picture 3**) is like a condom: a great safety feature when exploring unfamiliar areas. As long as this feature is not available from BK, you can order them by www.MensWatersport.nl. Talking about condoms: the terrain was a killer for POD's, causing many cuts in the bottom part). The knobby tires (**pictures 1, 38**) also behave perfectly on this rough rocky underground: they give a stable course and are now also very fast (to be ordered by www.DeStrandzeiler.nl). After several km's, one of the large stones breaks Johan his axes. After a change, we move on. The 3 m2 sails stay somewhat behind. Philip M. tells me he has gotten some GREAT shots. From how the drive felt, I'm very much looking forward to seeing those.
- During a pass over a large hill, the seat of Nico his BK breaks again. Johan, Gordon (⇔ possum hat) Christophe and me stop to help repair his seat. The others don't see the problem as they cross the hill along the downwind side. The safety belt is cut out of one of the support trucks, and Gordon provides us with a spare rope for the sail. With these materials a seat is being improvised. Nico is a tough guy with a strong mind. The improvised seat cannot be too comfortable, but he goes on riding, and never complains about it. The wind has dropped of a bit. So we continue driving slightly more slowly now. Beautiful landscape, which gradually becomes more flat and sandy. As a group we stick together and regularly wait for those falling behind.
- The drivers of one of the support trucks tells us to continue straight ahead along the road (i.e., a track in the dirt). This appears some later, however not to be the right direction. Philippe M. is getting Gordon and me (we were approx. 2 km ahead of Nico, Christophe and Johan, who also received instructions how to BK to the camp) as we should have made a left turn some km's before to reach the waypoint we agreed on. However, not everybody (e.g. Johan and me) has put the waypoint in their GPS systems, as we thought we would stick together. At the camp, we wait for Nico, Christophe and Johan, who will approach the camp by BK. All others had arrived earlier as they didn't see the problem with the seat of Nico, and hence didn't spent time to repair it. After a while we see from a top of a hill that Nico, Christophe and Johan get again into the wrong direction after they received (faulty) directions to go 'east'. Hence they are also get picked up by car. Overall GREAT ride and GREAT landscape; FUN!
- Today was a really important lesson for all of us: we have to make certain that either everybody works with the proper way points on their GPS (Ted had a

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deviating one and had to be found; we didn't have one at all), or that we stick closely together and wait for each other. This is especially so, because the small hills make it extremely difficult for the support trucks to see who is where. Thanks to Philippe M. and the drivers for getting all of us save back to the camp!

- Kiwi team moves out again on BK. European team d'amis wait for Nico, Johan and Christophe to get lunch. After that we break-up, and go for the Kiwi team as we need to move on to arrange a sleeping place with the nomads.
- Driving down towards a nomad family we cross a dry lake. Although it looks like solid terrain, it turns out to be only a thin solid layer on top of a much softer under layer. Trucks have to get in 4x4 low gearing to pull through. One of the trucks gets stuck till its axels into the clay. It can only get going again by pulling with another truck and having people pushing behind (**pictures 40, 41**). Fortunately this works, bringing us great pictures!
- We get to a nomad family (**pictures 42, 43**), where we have dinner in a ger. A ger is a circular shaped tent (22 m² surface area) made out of a wooden frame with a thick woven cover over it. In the middle of the ger is a large stove. From the stove to the wall of the ger, is about 2m distance. There is basically no furniture inside the ger. On the stove you can place a wok for preparing food. We all sit around while our cook prepares dinner in the ger. Nice talk with Bruce. He tells me this is one of the greatest experiences in his whole live. The soups the cook prepares is superb; you can really taste the large effort it took to prepare it; GREAT.
- After dinner, the kiwi team decides to sleep outside under the stars, Nico will sleep in the car and the rest of the EU team d'amis sleeps in the ger (i.e., Philippe M., Philippe L., Christophe, Johan and me). As we are not used to the local customs, Johan decides not to undress in face of the audience present in the ger (grandma, the lady of the 'house' and the kids) and gets with his pants on into his sleeping bag. The audience did indeed watch us with great interest, and this behavior causes some serious laughter's. I decide to undress and get in my underpants into the sleeping bag. The next morning Johan told me he had to do the same somewhat later that night (I was already asleep), as he started to melt in his sleeping bag.
- Unfortunately, still no good news from Kevin and Santi. Christophe suggests them that if their luggage does not show up, they should just come and join us. We can take turns on the BKs that are available.

Saturday 2007-05-05

- Early wakening due to crying child in the ger. Later on we learn from Philippe M. that the children were put to sleep closely next to him. This caused him to have a restless sleep. The crying child was most likely 'awakened' by a movement of his legs.
- We have a slow start this morning. A relaxed breakfast (**picture 44**) is followed by a hair wash party (**picture 45**). Johan his hair has a strange shape as he didn't shower. Upon his complaints about this, Radja (one of our nice guides) offers to assist him in washing his hair. Several other gentlemen can't resist this tempting offer. Perhaps the ladies at home have to follow this example?

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- Johan: During breakfast (after the hair wash = with a fresh mind) I notice the color difference in the (light grey) surface surrounding the whole ger, and the darker surface within the nomad farm. The spot where the Kiwi-team slept is on this dark side, and at some point, the stones become light grey.
- Johan: After closer study of the shape of the dark stones, we have to conclude the gentlemen were sleeping on... decades of dried sheep- and goat dung! Hilarious!
- The man of the nomad family shows us the skin of a wolf he shot recently (**picture 46**). Philippe makes great movie shots and pictures of the nomad family (**picture 47**). They clearly enjoy his activities and seeing the pictures he takes. Too bad we can't send any results by mail after we return.
- We depart from the family living in the ger (**picture 48**) after presenting some small gifts to our hosts (and the guides of course paid for the night). Unfortunately, there is poor communication about the road to follow. The driver of the kiwi truck takes the wrong turn at the T-split. We have to turn around and loose about an hour. It is agreed that from now on, Christophe his truck will take the lead.
- After a bumpy ride (is this indeed the best route?) we get on a kind of 'main' road (i.e., several parallel tracks through the dirt) towards Tsogt-Ovoo. Along this road we see camels and stop to take some pictures (**picture 49**). A little further down the road, we come across a beautiful landscape that appears extremely suitable for BK. The wind also seems to be very good, so we decide to go for a run. We cannot make it in the perfect direction, so we aim for a rock that is approximately in the right direction. At least this landmark is easily recognized so that nobody will get lost.
- The BK turns into a fun drive with all pilots driving together. Overall it's a great. Some parts are nice and fast; some other parts slow and difficult due to sand dunes and dropping wind. Unfortunately, Philip M. just stops by with his camera when I get stuck in some sand dunes ☹. Hope he cuts this section out, especially when Radja jumps out of the truck to give me a push ;-)
- After a second BK-drive, we take lunch at the car. The kiwi team has left the rest of the group to go to the next town. After lunch we drive to the town called Biluutiyn ovoo, where we do some small shopping. Drinks, chocolate, gifts for when we stay with other nomad families and cigarettes for the various drivers. We also get some gas (**picture 50**).
- Early in the evening we reach Tsogt-Ovoo (**picture 50**). The Kiwi team has arrived some earlier than us, as they left us behind somewhere before. The town is out of electricity, which makes our stay in the grant hotel (**picture 50**) to an interesting experience.
- We start the evening with dinner at "The Mineral Nightclub" (**picture 51**). The kiwi-team has a head start with the beers. The different paste of the kiwi team and the EU team d'amis is a petty, as it sometimes seems to hamper the overall integration. Dinner is fun. Nice chats with Nico, Philippe L. and Philippe M. and after dinner with Gordon. Gordon turns out to be a quite adventurous guy that likes to fly when there is insufficient wind for the BK. Has broken a lot of his bones, but is still going strong.

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- At the Hotel, general Philippe L. takes a shower. The shower is so cold that he makes the weirdest noises, making you wonder whom he is sharing the shower with and doing what. According to Nico this is Philippe L. his first cold shower ever! Well, being in the Gobi it will not be his last.
- In the hotel we have to live by candle light. The lady that runs the hotel likes to check closely if nothing dangerous happens with those candles. It seems she also likes to check other things. The 1st time that Johan really gets upset during this trip is when the lady disturbs him when he tries to produce his first kaka of the whole trip. Shouting “go away” has relative little effect. This doesn’t help him in producing the desired kaka. When he decides to take a shower instead, the lady comes again. What do you want which such a good looking guy ☺. When Johan refuses to let her into the shower, she brings a guy along. After the shower, when we undress for going to bed (share room with Christophe and Johan), she comes 2 times to check what is ongoing in our bedroom. This level of service is really rare in Europe! The kiwi team later also tells me that none of them was able to shower without a service visit.
- Good news from Kevin and Santi; they will drive with a fast car through the desert at night (tough) to join us early the next morning at our BK site.
- Talk till 00.30 with Christophe, about how we like the raid, even if BK conditions can be though like today. Johan and I express a strong preference for driving routes, and not do racing in circles. After all, that kind of racing can be done on any beach, everywhere.

Sunday 2007-05-06

- Wake up at 5.30; shit, serious diarrhea. Same at 5.45, 6.00, 6.15, etc. Fortunately, Loperamide is at hand, and the lady of the hotel appears not yet to be awake yet ☺.
- After breakfast (I skip) we want to depart (**picture 52**) at 8.30 to BK at a site near to the town, that the Kiwi’s discovered the day we drove to the town. Unfortunately, Johan also feels the diarrhea threat also, so he also goes on a Loperamide treatment. Because the shops are still closed, the car with the cooks stays behind to shop for coca cola (i.e., the great disinfectant medicine for the stomach) and water.
- As the kiwi team has departed ahead of us, we will meet them based on GPS coordinates. These coordinates are also phoned to Kevin and Santi, which will today at last join the group; GREAT !
- At the meeting point, we have a beautiful flat area with only small stones and here and there some huge camels; great site to BK. The kiwi team helps us to mount our BKs, so that we can all drive together as soon as possible. Really great drive going back and forth along the road. Made one tip over, when the rope of my sail gets caught in the clamp on my steering wheel. Have to change the layout a bit to prevent that in the future. After riding back and forth a bit, we go to look at the camels. This brings up the hunting instinct from General Philippe L., who tries to catch them. Poor animals. At some point Nico loses his talkie-walkie, but manages to find it back again; incredible. After some riding the wind turns, and increases in strength, creating a small sand storm. This makes it impossible to get

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to the truck with the cooks, so that they bring the food to us. Great food and great service; this really is vacation!

- After lunch, we decide to BK towards Tsogt-Ovoo. All rides start with some discussion and preparations (**pictures 53 to 58**). The kiwi team goes first; the EU team d'amis a little later. We have a great drive towards Tsogt-Ovoo. The only thing that goes wrong is that Kevin hits with high speed a big hole in the road. I can imagine that after having been so many days in Ulaanbaatar, he really wants to go fast on his BK. In contrast to the rest of us, he has however not experienced how unpredictable the desert roads can be (only one long drive, but at night). So when he runs ahead of the group, he is surprised by the band of big holes. Fortunately, no damage done other than one broken axle and a torn POD. The axle is quickly changed, where after we move on again. But we are all a little more careful now. The drive is great: we have parts with stones, but also with sand, giving a lot of dust. We meet camels, but also local people on Russian bikes and trucks. At regular intervals we stop to regroup again. At one point Philippe L. notices he has lost his GPS. Fortunately, Johan finds it again, so that we can continue. Our trip stops at the edge of the city. The last few km's have been more difficult to ride, due to the drop in the wind. The relative low wind and smooth solid surface, makes this a perfect opportunity to offer the support crew and some local people that are interested, a chance to ride our BKs (**pictures 59 to 62**). This turns out into a big PARTY. All people love it. Some gets turned off e.g., after flipping over twice; others really get the hang of it, and turn out to be better drivers than we are. Lots of pleasure. A pity my sail gets damaged, despite of the application of 3 MSP sections. But the damage is high up, at the top batten, and is not likely to cause serious problems in sailing the rest of the trip.
- The kiwi-team also comes from town to join us. As they left a little before us, they did not experience the drop in wind that we had the last few miles. They drove their BKs right into town. They tell us this was also a great party, with kids coming from the gers everywhere.
- After a while we pack-up and go looking for a hotel. I'm a little disappointed that the group chooses to stay in another hotel (one with a power generator). The kiwi team will sleep in a hotel-ger, Nico will sleep with the Mongolian crew in a second ger, Santi and Kevin in a small room upstairs, Christophe, Philippe L., Philippe M, Johan and me will sleep in a large room upstairs. To accommodate the large group in a single bedroom, the hotel owners brings up an extra (2 person) mattress with the plastic still on. Because the 4 available beds are extremely hard, and Johan is a very sensitive guy, he decides to sleep with Christophe on the 2 person mattress. Nice bedroom party time (**picture 63**).
- There is a long line-up for the cold shower, with chairs lined-up as in a waiting room for the doctor. The shower is incredibly cold. If you put your head under for a too long period, you get a serious headache (just like after drinking a slurry too fast, but than much worse). After dinner, Philippe L. and Santi also manage to lift Nico to the 2nd floor for a shower. Regarding the narrow twisty chairs, this is very nice indeed. It also means that the generator will stay on a little longer ;-)

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Monday 2007-05-07

- Slept well. Woken up by the sound of somebody throwing up. See that one bed is empty. Shit, one of us has fallen ill I think. Only then I remember that Johan and Christophe share the mattress on the floor. Pffff, what a relief. It is not one of us.
- After a nice breakfast we depart from Tsogt-Ovoo. We drive to one of the spots that Christophe has marked a good BK area, during his exploration. During our drive, we pass first a large waste disposal area. It seems they just make the waste disposal areas along the road out of town; the luxury of having endless space for a very small population. For us Dutch people, it remains a strange experience to have a road cross in the middle through the waste disposal.
- Along our drive down to the site Christophe marked, we cross several spots that also look tempting for BKing. After a while, we arrive at Christophe his spot. The kiwi team prefers to drive back for another spot. We can't do all, as the cooks will then not be able to find us. Hence the EU team d'amis stays at this location (**picture 64**). I think this is perfect, as it will allow us to do some cross steppe BKing; very exciting. First we have to get along a part with sandy dunes. After that we go straight over. Philippe M. gets a local motorcyclist to drive him along our BKtes. FUN. He later on also tells he gets to try a sniff of the local tobacco. We outrun the motorcycle with Philippe M. We hid for the mountains.
- After lunch, we drive back to the road where the kiwi team was also present. Nice that both teams kind of merge again. It is a petty that the system of waiting for each other starts to fail. I wait several times for Christophe, who is the only person BKing with a 3 m2 sail. After a while, Johan also waits for us. After a nice ride, the wind drops off, and we all stop together.
- At the time we are about to pack up our BKts, the wind starts to blow again. Christophe decides we can go for another run, and that we will see later how and where we will spend the night. This becomes a GREAT drive, with both the kiwi team and the EU team d'amis truly driving together. You can either drive along the road, or on the solid spots in between the bushes on sandy dunes. Kevin, Johan and me (based on sail colors, **team orange**) get into the lead of the group. At some time Kevin drops just on the road in front of me, forcing me to make a sudden turn to the right over a sand dune. As a result, I tip over. A little further ahead, Kevin does the same. We wait for the rest of the group, and continue the ride.
- When we see camels on the left of the road, we decide to do some more cross country BKing. Nice to get to the camels. Unfortunately, the camels like places with grass, and grass causes sand dunes. After a quick ride towards the camels, we get stuck in difficult vegetated terrain with lots of dunes. The group has fallen apart now, and we regroup with Nico, Philippe L, Christophe, Santi, Johan and me. We have no idea where the others are, but the trucks keep an eye on the various people. Great job of our guides and Philip M. Our group decides to aim for the mountains, as this appears to be the best way out of the sandy part. Johan and I do well, and get a long way towards the mountain. When we see nobody behind us, we wait on top of a hill. Some later Santi joins us. We later hear that Nico had somewhere taken a wrong turn, and gets completely stuck in the sand (**picture 65**).

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- Conclusion of the day: BKting all together is big big fun; much better than dividing in sub-groups. This is the way to go for the days to come!
- After the truck gets us, we all pack up and follow a nomad on a motor cycle to his ger (**picture 66**). It is really late when we arrive at his place. The nomad family consists of a father, an approx. 20 year old son, and a grandmother. They own two gers, and appear to be better organized than the previous nomad family. Looking at the carpets inside the ger, this family also appears to be more prosperous.
- The cooks once again prepare a delicious soup for us; jummie!
- Sleeping is interesting. Most people decide to sleep in a tent. Nico sleeps with Philip L. in one of the cars (**picture 67**). Christophe Johan and I sleep in the ger. After we crawl into our sleeping bags, more and more members of the Mongolian crew join us in the ger to sleep there (all tents are full). We end up sleeping packed like teaspoons. We won't get cold ☺.

Tuesday 2007-05-08

- We wake up after a cold night. Those sleeping in the ger slept well. I heard that the tents were rather cold. Sleeping in the truck is not recommended by Philippe L., as it breaks your back.
- 'POSSUM', the driver of the KIW team improves the seat of Nico. I still never have heard Nico complain about his uncomfortable seating; I only hear him tell how happy he is to be on this trip. GREAT!
- In the morning we look around at the ger. They have nice camels, also some with young babies (**pictures 68, 69**). We shoot many pictures, very nice and relaxing morning. Ed and Bruce take a ride on one of the camels. Bruce is a natural. It is that you can't pack camels in a small bag as is the case for a BK...
- Unfortunately for Johan, there is no possibility to wash his hair. The mushroom cloud shaped hair style deserves him the nick name "Atomic Hair".
- It is essential to get gas, if we want to make it home to Ulaanbaatar again. So we aim for at Dalanzadgad. How convenient that we have gas stations everywhere around at the places where we live. Because this is definite not the case in the Gobi, careful planning of refueling is needed.
- We find a gas station in Tsogtsetsiy, near Dalanzadgad. This also appears the perfect place to start our BK ride for the day. Lots of fun to build up our BKts, when more and more children with parents are taking a look at what's going on. By the time we are ready to depart, there is an enthusiastic crowd surrounding us. We are grateful for this, as the wind has slowed down. So the enthusiastic pushing of the kids at least guarantees a speedy departure from town. After the kids are gone, BKting becomes slightly difficult, because low and fluctuating wind.
- Johan and I have changed from the knobby tires (they did great) to normal tires, to see how they hold up with the special green fluids inside.
- The group stays together till lunch break (**pictures 70, 71**). After lunch break BKting becomes even more difficult, as the wind drops off further, and the group falls apart. During the last European open in the UK, I got a serious beating. Whereas I did well on the day with the strong wind, I had to step out of my BK on the 1st race with soft wind. I saw others BKting, but couldn't get my similarly equipped BK to ride. Merde! This beating told me I had lots to learn about sailing

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at soft winds. The 1st thing I learned directly after the race from my sponsor Richard (menswatersport.nl) is that you have to loosen the sail when the wind slows down. I was able to practice this some during the slalom races in the UK, and saw it helped. For this trip, I had prepared a special down-haul set, inspired on the one of Nico Boel, but mounted in another position. This day would be a perfect opportunity to practice BKting with slow winds; GREAT! (pictures 72, 73, 74)

- At some moments there was no wind at all, so nothing to practice. At these moments we could enjoy the landscape, I remember standing still with no wind for 30 minutes, just after having crossed a hill. The view of the prairie with animals and mountains in the back was so beautiful, that it was almost a petty that the wind started blowing again. The nice thing about slow winds is that you also have time to look at the small animals. With strong winds you don't notice these, as you have to concentrate too much on choosing a safe road by avoiding rocks and ditches. Overall, I learned a lot this day. In the end, Christophe, Johan, Santi and I were the ones who had managed to sail the longest distance (approx. 14,5 km in total). Another great day.
- Regarding the weak wind, we decide to pack-up early to save on traveling time the next day. Finding a place to sleep is difficult. The first ger were we arrived, people were in mourning, as one family member had just passed away. (At this ger we saw a lady with perfect white shoes. Looking at our dirty appearance, I still wonder: hoe does one keep such beautiful perfectly white shoes in a dusty area like the Gobi?) At the second ger, nobody was home. After riding along for some time, we finally reach a ger along a busy road. Every 5 minutes, a truck loaded with coal was passing by on its way to China. The family that lives there had a 'spare' ger that they rented out like a kind of hotel room. We can sleep in this ger. We have however to find our own fuel for making a fire for heating and cooking a meal. Luckily, the kiwi team finds a small pile of coal. With this, we manage to get the ger kind of warm, and the cook can make a nice meal. Except for Nico and Johan (who sleep in a car), all kiwi's and EU team d'amis members sleep in the ger. The Mongolian crew sleeps in the cars. Have a nice chat with Steve, about his background and company. Very interesting stuff, especially for an ecologist.
- Tonight is one of my earliest nights during the whole trip. The kiwi team zip up their sleeping bags as early as around 22.00. Nice to make a long night for the first time in a while. Unfortunately, it is also the 1st and only night that I wake up at night feeling cold. Must be because of the poor carpeting of the floor of the ger. (Ha-ha – I wasn't there; Johan)! The next morning, some people complained about people snoring. I don't remember hearing anything; only woke up for feeling cold. In contrast to Philippe L., Johan enjoyed sleeping in the car; according to him very comfortable. However, I don't plan to find out.

Wednesday 2007-05-09

- After a cold start (it is hard to get warm again when you wake-up being cold) with breakfast in a warm ger, we take a short ride in the trucks to our next BK-site.

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- It is a very nice site with a rather flat rocky surface. Christopher proposes to BK to the point where he went last time. The wind feels good, so everybody is very enthusiastic about his plan.
- We have a quick start and the BK-ride is great. After a while, the wind drops somewhat off and the terrain becomes more difficult. Don is going very strong ahead of the group. Kevin, Johan and me are closing in on him. It is nice to catch up with Johan, as I have run out of water, and he has some extra in his pod. Also fun to ride together again. To get going with a slow wind is starting to go better and better now. After a while, I wait for Johan and Kevin. We share our water, as the truck has no water supply for us.
- Just when the wind picks up a bit, and I'm finally making a nice speed, I get a big puncture. Philippe his green fluid does not help me because the puncture is above the fluid level, and after a few meters I'm standing still with a total flat one. We then find out that the pump of Kevin and Johan both do not work well ☹️ (**pictures 75, 76**). We are losing a lot of time. I'm glad to be with friends 😊.
- Luckily, shortly after, a truck arrives to ask us to return to the blue truck for lunch. On top of the truck is Christophe his BK with a perfect knobby tire! We say we would like to continue our trip, borrow a knobby, and share a candy bar for lunch that Kevin still had in his bag. We also say that if people want to pack up to move to another place, they should return and let us know. The truck drives off, and we BK onwards. A little later Johan gets the same puncture. The green solution does not help against the plant with the nice yellow flower but nasty woody thorns. Long live the knobby tires when going through though terrain in the Gobi! (*In the end, the knobby tires have given only 1 puncture for all EU participants, the normal Deli tires give Johan and me 3 punctures in 2 days BKing, even though the green stuff can help with quite large needles [pictures 77]; the kiwi team also had several punctures, despite their use of the stronger King tires and extra protection layer inside*).
- While we are thinking about how to fix this puncture, a truck returns and tells us that we have to join the group ASAP. Kevin turns around on his BK, while Johan and I break our BK down and put it in the truck.
- After return at the trucks we learn that Santi has gone unwell by having a sunstroke. As he thought it would be a short run and had understood the wrong landmarks as target, he had left without water and GPS and run a wrong route. While Santi is feeling very bad, we are lucky that nothing worse has happened. Christophe takes the wise decision to spend the night in a hotel in the city of Manlay. He promises us a public bathing house with hot showers!
- On the way to Manlay (**picture 78**) the cook stops at a ger to buy "ingredients" for the special dinner tonight (**picture 79**). A sheep is Beijing selected and loaded into the back of the blue truck after its legs are bound together.
- The hotel is situated in a nice small city (**picture 80**), with a shop (Nico buys vodka to thank the drivers that they have repaired the seat of his BK so well; we buy batteries for talkie-walkies, and a general supply of chocolate, coke and orange juice) and a bar (explored by the kiwi team). Unfortunately, we learn that the public bathing house is out of order, so that showering is not possible.

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- At the hotel, Santi fortunately starts to recover again. Having some salt mixtures (ORS) and high energy content (orange juice, peanuts and chocolate) helps him regain his strength. He has gone through a very tough time having his brains cooked without having water at hand ...
- While a special dinner is being prepared (the cooking team has left to ask someone to use their kitchen), all participants have a great garden party (**picture 81**). All kind of cocktails are being produced, and everybody is having fun. On request of Nico to Steve, who both used to be rugby players, the kiwi perform their national rugby challenge called “Hariri”. Neat. Christophe starts to prepare for returning home to Celine, by doing his laundry ☺ (**picture 82**).
- Than we have dinner with a great prepared sheep. Nice (**picture 83**). There are many toasts between the Mongolian support team and the BKters.
- Johan uses the primitive toilet for kaka (i.e., wooden construction over big hole in the ground), and says it works fine as long as you rub it clean and cover it all over with a lot of paper.. **Well yes I will take over at this point: after the very good cocktail party I dare say that a man does notice his surroundings quite differently. I seem to have used these circumstances very well for my own very privilege, thank you!**
- Share bedroom with Philippe L, Nico and Johan. We sleep very well and are not bothered by the power generator next to our bedroom window.

Thursday 2007-05-10 - une jour du bordèle!

- The next morning at breakfast, everything is really slow and rather quiet.
- Johan returns from the toilet without finishing his business. This morning he is convinced that there is no way to use this toilet, and it is much better to wait till a next stop. Unfortunately, not all of us can postpone that long, and I have to go for his rubbing clean method. It is only shortly before departure, we learn that it is a stand-up toilet rather than a sit down ... (**picture 84**).
- When we depart (**picture 85**), we witness the first rain of the year. Unfortunately for the local people, it is a very thin and short rain shower. The wind is however very good and strong, and we are looking forward to BK.
- Our (Philippe L, Nico, Christophe, Johan and me) truck and the kiwi truck follow the blue cooking team truck. We ask our driver several times about the location of the truck of Christophe, Santi, Kevin, Philippe M and Moogi. According to the driver they should be in front. However, when we go over the last mountain before the steppe, we see what we were afraid of: the truck of Christophe et al. is not in front of us. We have taken the wrong road!
- A chaotic search system for the missing truck is started, with 'Le General' in charge of our truck. Despite the structured theory, we end up doing something like a random search. Although an apparent chaotic approach, the drivers are successful in finding the missing truck. However, one hour of our time has gone lost ... Unfortunately, the truck of Christophe's team now has gotten engine problems. We need to pause for a while to give the drivers time to fix the car. The problem appears to be solved by replacing the carburetor with a spare.
- It is decided there is no time to go for the road we originally planned for, and that we better stick to this less clear road to reach Choir. We will stop for BKting

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wherever the landscape offers opportunity. Shortly after, we get in a beautiful steppe like landscape that looks excellent for BKting.

- The wind has grown strong, but almost all of us start with a 4 m² sail. The direction of the wind makes that we can BK in the right direction for our journey parallel to or on the road.
- The BK offers a very exciting wild ride, and Johan falls back due to a broken whip but returns to the group due to the waiting system. Strong wind, high speeds and a bumpy road with hidden levees as surprise. Requires intense concentration to stay on the safe parts of the road. I decide to restrict the speed for safety. Then Nico gets a puncture (the 1st and only one on a knobby tire for the whole Raid!). Santi, Christophe, Johan, Kevin and I (the rest of the group was ahead of Nico) wait with him for a truck to pass. From the truck that passes we take the last wheel with a normal tire that was not punctured, and we move on. A little further we meet with the rest of the group.
- The rest of the group had been waiting at a dried up lake. This lake offers an extremely smooth and solid surface; ideal for BKting. While we wait for the truck with the kiwi parts in it (I can't help Gordon with a spare inner tube, as they run a different size), we race up and down the lake. Philippe M is very active with his cameras, shooting both film and pictures (**picture 86**).
- The wind continues to grow stronger, causing more dust in the air which restricts our vision. Hence we decide not to continue our trip down the road. Although this is a petty, I think it is a wise decision. To underline the risk of continuing the trip via the road: even 'Le General' was in favor of staying at the lake!
- We then go for trying to get nice fast runs with the BKs. Those who have a 3 m² sail, have switched over. Philippe L., Nico, Johan and I stick to the 4 m² sail. Wind speeds are now up to 50+ km/h. 'Le General' Philippe L. sets the first speed record at 84 km/h, using the extra wide proto-axels of the kiwi team. After a few runs with the same BK set-up, Nico knows to over rule him with 86 km/h, which deserves him the name Speedy Gonzalezzz. Johan and I don't get much further than around 75 km/h. Enough to never again say that knobby tires are slow.
- **Johan: A special experience is that due to the POD, the strong side winds are able to throw against your BK in such a way that making a turn into the wind is very hard: it almost is causing you to drive right through the lake-border into the difficult terrain with bushes stopping you..**
- After a long period of fun, we have to pack up to continue our trip (**picture 87**). During the packing the wind strongly blows away Johan his pod (recovered by Santi and Johan), and later on my sail rolled in the bag (recovered by Christophe; thanks again!!!). Recovering these items is difficult as sight is now down to 25 m, and items move fast by this wind conditions.
- After lunch, the car of Christophe his team returns to Manlay for getting its engine fixed. After repacking, the remaining 3 cars hid the road for Choir. I'm sharing the car with Christophe, Philippe M., Philippe L, Nico, and Johan (**picture 88**). Because of the sand storm, we have to make frequent stops to cool the engine. Another difficulty is that the road we follow is not a main road. For that reason, it is very difficult to see where the road is. We get lost, refind the "road", get lost again, refind it again, etc. Progress is very slow, but the landscape

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is beautiful. I even see a place with some trees – the only trees in the trip over the Gobi.

In the evening the 1st truck gets out of gas. Fortunately there is some spare, but this is not enough for all trucks to refill. Around 3.30 at night we pass a gas station in Shiveegovi. One driver wakes up the person working on the gas station, to fill up his truck. When we continue the trip, we notice that the other car didn't get the gas it needed. So we return to the gas station to get 15 minutes later a 2nd portion of petrol. After tanking we depart again. But now it is evident that the drivers are way too tired to continue driving (if I'm correct, one of the kiwi's has already taken over from their driver). Hence we look for a place to park and sleep, e.g. near an hotel. If we can't find any, we return 15 minutes later again to the same gas station, and sleep there. Some inside, but the six of us stay in the car (**picture 90**). We grab the sleeping bags we can find and throw these over us, and than kind of put our head down on the feet of the person sitting opposite from us.

Friday 2007-05-11

- We have a quick breakfast around 7.00 at the gas station in Shiveegovi (**picture 91**). Around 7.30 we are ready to depart for Ulaanbaatar. This should be an easy trip as we are close to Choir, and there is an asphalt road between Choir and Ulaanbaatar, which we reach at 8.20.
- Both in Shiveegovi and along the main road we see big apartment complexes Beijing built. This is probably aimed for mine workers, to provide China with enough coal (**pictures 92, 93**).
- Along the road we have dinner in a nice small restaurant (**picture 94**). We eat, buy some gifts (vodka for the males, bonbons for the ladies; yes Johan and I are really old fashioned and have to work on that) for the farewell of the Mongolian crew.
- When we get close to Ulaanbaatar, Philippe M. takes over driving, as our driver Orzo is clearly exhausted. From now on we have to stop before and after every police control, to change drivers, until we reach the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar.
- When we enter the hotel, the personnel of the hotel starts cleaning all our bags in order to try to keep the dust we have accumulated out of the hotel as much as possible. This makes a major difference. For us, it is a run for a nice toilet (sorry Santi, that we had not enough paper left ...) and a nice hot shower. After 4 washings, my hair started feeling as hair again in stead of a solid brush.
- After showering, we dismantle our BKts for repacking all parts in the proper bags to meet the weight allowances.
- At 16.30 we go shopping for souvenirs and nice fabrics for our families. Johan gets a hat to mimic his atomic hair (which he has lost now due to washing). We have to borrow some money from Christophe, because Johan could not find his wallet.
- Directly after shopping we have a farewell lunch with all team members and our crews. The dinner is in a very nice and classy restaurant with Mongolian singers (**picture 95**) and an acrobat that gives you the shivers by the impossible moves she makes. We give the vodka and bonbons we bought together with some personal things.

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Log of Tjeerd Bouma & Johan Das

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- After returning to the hotel, Johan and I finish packing at 1.00 at night

Saturday 2007-05-12

- Wake-up call at 4.00. At 4.15 we have our luggage down. Time for breakfast: orange juice, toast and eggs.
- At 5.00 we depart to the airport. Check in at airport is extremely slow. But the nice thing is that all luggage is checked through to the final destination. So no picking up of luggage in Beijing ☺. Sounds good, let's see if it really works.
- Have to pay for overweight. MasterCard and American Express are not accepted, neither is my 100\$ bill. Fortunately the 5 x 20\$ bills are found to be OK. Johan can pay with Visa.
- Problems at security check: they ask me to put some of the spare parts of the BK from my carry-on luggage into the normal bags. After explaining we have about 5 minutes left for take-off, Johan and I can pass and have to run for the plane. Everybody makes it in time on board.
- Sleep a little on the plane
- At Beijing airport, there is a stairway to exit the plane. For Nico they are going to arrange some kind of lift, which takes some time. In the meantime we find the desk where we can get boarding cards for BA. Nico, Philippe M. and Philippe L. join us there. This time fortunately no problems at all with the security check.
- Johan makes the Chinese laugh with his Atomic hat. Especially if he attacks a group of girl on a conveyer belt, by taking a bull-inspired move towards them. Santi get himself immortalized by a wax statue. Amazing how rapid they can make such a good resembling statue! As Nico went for a smoke with the boarding cards of Philippe L., I have to assist him with his tax-free shopping for nice gifts.
- Very nice flight from Beijing to London. There is plenty of opportunity to walk around and speak to the other team d'amis members. Philippe M. shows most of his pictures. He also tells me that both his professional film camera's are in need of repair due to dust; merde! Fortunately, the photo camera from his wife is still in good shape. Let's hope the repairs are not too bad ... He furthermore tells about his training; very interesting. Also nice chat with Nico, Christophe, Philippe L. Sleep a little and watch a little TV.
- Johan buys a new watch. This is a very good thing, as during the whole trip he never managed to get his set watch at the right time zone. According to Johan, the Ulaanbaatar time zone is even completely missing from his watch. The simpler type of watch he gets now (normal watch with one extra dial pointing Greenwich time in an inner ring) will solve this problem! Hopefully ... ???
- In London we have to first say goodbye to Kevin (end of flight, but with long car trip ahead) and Santi (Iberia departs from other terminal). Than we say goodbye to our French friends. Goodbye to Nico = 6x at 6 different places, the others = 2x at 2 different places.
- Flight to Amsterdam is smooth, with funny and enthusiastic stewardess.
- In Amsterdam we have a warm welcome by the Das and Bouma family. Kids have to laugh a lot about both our hats. Could not report the damage to BKbag that BA caused on the way down to Beijing; should have been done there, as if we had the time.

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Log of Tjeerd Bouma & Johan Das

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- My luggage goes with Johan, Yda and Amber Das by car to Ede. Ingrid, Rosemarijke en Annemaria Bouma, Arvid Das and I go by train to Ede, to stay one night at the Das residence. Nice trip. In the train I meet my nephew Tjeerd Soolsma, who is the head conductor on the train. Although I travel quite frequently by train, this is the 1st time I meet him on the train in many years.
- Sleep very well after shower, and assume Johan does the same now he is back on his normal soft mantras and lying next to Yda.

Sunday 2007-05-13

- After a loose breakfast, we start mounting our BKts to enable Johan to bring them to work on Monday. We have an early departure from the Das residence, as my children have tickets for a clown performance. Very nice show. Arrive at our home in Goes around 18.00. Relax and go to bed early.

Monday 2007-05-14

- Home, celebrating my 43rd birthday. Very nice, as the kids made a lot of gifts during my absence. What more can you ask for than such home coming after such a great trip!

Writing the log was for us a nice way to relive the trip. It is too bad that by writing up some stories, we by definition leave out other aspects that were equally enjoyable. But so many things have happened in such a short period, that it is just impossible to be complete. Most importantly, we want you to know that we had a great time thanks to the excellent organization by Christophe and the Mongolian team, and the excellent company of all participants from all over the world. THANKS TO YOU ALL!!! And of course especially thanks to our sponsors and our families!!!

Tjeerd & Johan

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Log of Tjeerd Bouma & Johan Das

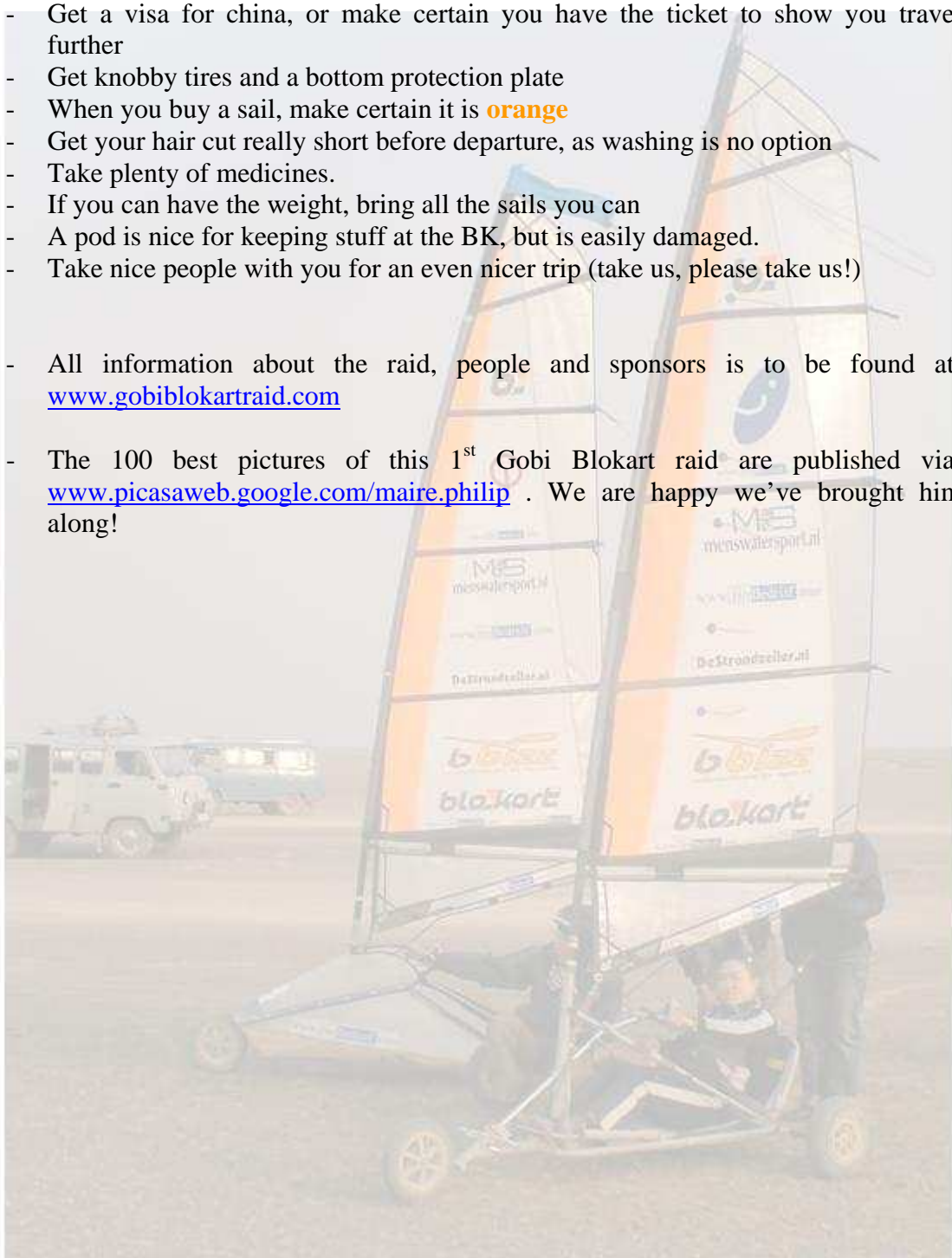
The first Blokart Raid in the Mongolian Gobi Desert.

List of does and don'ts when making this trip

DO

- Get a visa for china, or make certain you have the ticket to show you travel further
- Get knobby tires and a bottom protection plate
- When you buy a sail, make certain it is **orange**
- Get your hair cut really short before departure, as washing is no option
- Take plenty of medicines.
- If you can have the weight, bring all the sails you can
- A pod is nice for keeping stuff at the BK, but is easily damaged.
- Take nice people with you for an even nicer trip (take us, please take us!)

- All information about the raid, people and sponsors is to be found at: www.gobiblokarraid.com
- The 100 best pictures of this 1st Gobi Blokart raid are published via: www.picasaweb.google.com/maire.philip . We are happy we've brought him along!



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