

# SCORE Medical is a Team Effort: Doctors, Cowboys & Horses.

By Paul Fish, SCORE Vice President

The SCORE Baja 500 medical helicopters were on the ground refueling in a dusty wheat field when I heard Weatherman say over the radio, "Okay everyone, the channel is code red. Vehicle 1225 go ahead with your emergency. Copy, you're stuck on top of a big rock at race mile 123 in the pine forest and your co-driver has severe back pain and can't get out of the race vehicle."

As it turned out, the co-driver had a broken back. Medical emergencies are not uncommon at SCORE Baja races, but this emergency was extremely unusual. Race mile 123 was in the middle of the new pine forest section. I knew this area very well. It was packed with dense brush and large boulders.

As we circled above the accident scene looking for a place to land, I noticed several spectators at the accident scene, two of them on horseback. To this day, I have no idea how this group of locals came upon the accident, but without their assistance the rescue would have been much more difficult.

SCORE has highly qualified trauma doctors in the two medical transport helicopters. The SCORE Medical Director is Dr. Jeff Grange. Dr. Grange is the Director of Emergency Medicine at Loma Linda University Medical Center, and he is also the Medical Director at the California Speedway. The other doctor at this race was Dr. Ian Butler-Hall, a resident at Loma Linda.

The closest landing area for the helicopters was well over a mile away from the accident, and the only access was by foot on the race course. Dr. Butler-Hall and myself were in the helicopter that landed first. Dr. Grange was several minutes behind us. We grabbed the necessary medical gear and had every intention of running to the accident scene. This was going to be easier said than done because the medical gear was awkward to run with for any length of time, and because we were competing with race traffic for use of the narrow and winding road which led to the injured racer.

As Class 9 racer Tony Modica approached in vehicle 945, I waved my arms and yelled, "STOP!" To my surprise, he did stop, so we jumped on the front of his vehicle and yelled, "GO!" Tony was perceptive enough to realize what was going on, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank him for his assistance. In the split second before he hit the gas pedal, I remember thinking, "This is great, we'll be there in no time."

After he hit the gas, two things immediately became apparent. First, Tony was going to drive at Class 9 race speed regardless of whether the Vice President of SCORE and a doctor from Loma Linda were standing on his vehicle holding onto the upper roll cage. And second, it was going to be impossible to hang on. After a half mile or so, the doctor was losing his grip and one of my shoulders was beginning to dislocate, so I squatted down, stuck my face in the drivers compartment and yelled "STOP!"

Just as the vehicle stopped, the doctor fell off and landed in the soft berm on the edge of the course. I thanked the Class 9 guys for the ride and they sped off. We still had about a mile to go. Just then, two cowboys on horses appeared. One of them grabbed the doctor's arm and pulled him up onto the back of his horse. The other motioned for me to give him the medical gear that I was carrying. This was like something out of a movie. As most of us know, at a SCORE Baja race truth is always stranger and much more interesting than fiction.

I later found out that the locals were from nearby Rancho Santa Isabel Nuevo. Pedro Quinyones and his ranch hands were the heroes of this rescue operation, and we thank them for their help.



Dr. Jeff Grange (right) surveys the situation prior to attaching an immobilizer harness to the patient.



Dr. Ian Butler-Hall and the locals make the long walk with the patient backwards on the race course to the helicopters.



I'm talking on the radio while riding a horse along the edge of the race course. Nothing strange about that.



Pedro Quinyones (left), Dr. Ian Butler-Hall (right), and the guys from Rancho Santa Isabel Nuevo load the patient.