

# Run: helmets 'may have saved pair'

By BOB WATT

The crew of the Ferrari which crashed into a checkpoint during the NT Cannonball Run most likely would have survived had they been wearing helmets, an inquest was told yesterday.

Head injuries suffered by driver Akihiro Kabe, 40, and navigator Takeshi Okano, 35, indicated their heads came together when their car crashed into other vehicles, Kevin Lee said.

Dr Lee, Royal Darwin Hospital's forensic pathologist who conducted the post-mortems, gave the "complementary" blunt head injuries suffered by both men as the cause of their deaths.

He said both were restrained by full safety harnesses and their heads apparently had not hit any object in the car.

The Ferrari hit other cars at a checkpoint 95 km south of Alice Springs on May 24. Two volunteer marshals at the checkpoint also died.

Dr Lee said of Mr Kabe: "He had remarkably few injuries in the general sense for someone involved in a fatal motor vehicle accident."

## Injury

"The most significant injury was one to the head with the area of bruising over the right temple area. There was a complementary area of injury on the co-driver (Mr Okano)."

Dr Lee told Michael Adams QC, assisting the coroner, that helmets certainly would have minimised the head injuries.

The doctor said the accident was "entirely survivable" for the two Japanese competitors.

Dr Lee's report was handed up to Coroner John Lowndes. He did not give oral evidence of the cause of death of the two marshals, Tim Linklater, 22, and Keith Pritchard, 31.

Traffic Superintendent Terry Ey, who was the senior policeman responsible for safety on the Run, is due to give evidence today.

Yesterday, Senior Constable Michael Potts, of the accident investigation section, told the court the lay-by area at the checkpoint had a loose surface.

He said the Ferrari "darted" into the lay-by at a sharp angle, calculations from skid marks indicating a speed of 88 km/h.



Dr Lee... accident 'survivable'

The recommended entry speed was 60 km/h. The speed and sharp braking caused the Ferrari to slip left. The driver over-corrected to the right and skidded into the accident scene sideways.

He calculated the Ferrari collided with the vehicles at 40 km/h to 50 km/h "at the most" but the Ferrari rotated rapidly, boosting its velocity.

Sen Constable Potts



Sen Constable Potts (left) and Superintendent Terry Ey leave the court yesterday

He agreed with John Waters, counsel for the Run organisers, that

the instructions said: "Not all bends are logged. Use as a guide only."

Sen Constable Potts agreed with Mr Farquhar that no evi-

dence had been produced that Mr Kabe and the driver of a Porsche were racing each other.

Haruo Toyozumi, of Tokyo, told the court

through an interpreter he had known Mr Kabe for about 15 years.

He said Mr Kabe had driven on speedways in Japan, reaching speeds up to 300 km/h.



Jon Blake... suing driver

## Court told actor is brain dead

SYDNEY: Film and television star Jon Blake is effectively brain dead and will eventually die from his condition, a court heard yesterday.

Professor James Lance, a neurologist who lectures at the University of New South Wales, said he believed reports that Blake has some consciousness were mistaken and the level of care now given to the actor was a waste of money.

Professor Lance told the NSW court the average life expectancy for someone in a persistent vegetative state, such as the one he believes Blake to be in, is five years.

## Condition

He said Blake had been in such a condition for nearly eight years, since a crash while driving towards Adelaide on Highway One after finishing the last day of filming on the movie *The Light-horsemen* in December 1986.

Blake, through a guardian appointed to look after his interests, is suing South Australian Walter Norris, the driver of the car which is alleged to have caused the accident, for damages relating to medical expenses and loss of income.

# Biting croc caught

BRISBANE: A crocodile that bit a German tourist has been caught, Department of Environment and Heritage regional director Greg Wellard said yesterday.

The freshwater crocodile bit a woman German tourist on a beach near Cairns, in north Queensland.

The animal rushed from the bush onto Palm Cove beach just before 5 pm on Wednesday and bit 55-year-old Waltraud Evers.

Mrs Evers suffered a gashed foot and puncture marks to her arm.

She was in a satisfactory condition in Cairns



Bitten... Mrs Evers in hospital yesterday

Base Hospital yesterday, police said.

Mr Wellard said the crocodile was thought to have been introduced about six years ago to Palm Cove, which was not its natural habitat.

The reptile, which had behaved quietly for some time, may have been nesting in the area and may have been disturbed.

National Parks and Wildlife rangers caught

the croc yesterday.

It will soon be released into the wild in Cape York or Gulf of Carpentaria regions.

Last week, an 82-year-old man walking on the beach at Palm Cove had his metal detector bitten in half by a crocodile.

It was not known if it was the same one involved in Wednesday's attack.

It is rare for freshwater crocs to attack humans.

The NT Government last week warned people in the Top End to beware of saltwater croc attacks during the current breeding season.

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