

Bicycles Without Bruce – 2014 Rogue 24

We had a shocker in the 2013 event. I had come into the event injured and we had an appalling plan, particularly in under-estimating how much we could do on the bike leg. 2014 just had to be better! And we had some added incentive. Rob Garden had contacted me a couple of months before the event asking if it would be a good one, which I assured him it would and so he and Marquita, plus Nick Collins with Cath Heppelthwaite had journeyed across the ditch to play. We didn't want to get beaten by Kiwis at home, particularly after the touch-up they had given us in the MTBO over there in January! The easy option of course would have been to spike their food (I had to buy them their food for the event due to the Anzac Day holiday) with laxatives, but that would have been too simple.

When we got the maps and instructions we did a quick calc on how long it would take us to do the lot. We reckoned at least 27 hours (forgot to add transition times???) so clearly that wasn't going to happen. We then worked out how long we needed to do all the legs from HQ in the morning and figured that to be five hours and reckoned we wanted to try to get those done so set about trying to apportion the remaining 19 hours.



We decided on 4½ hours for the first trek with 8 & 9 not in the plan unless we were ridiculously fast (no chance) and 11 an option. We weren't convinced that 5 was good value from a race perspective but knew it would be such a pretty place that we couldn't possibly leave it out. We then decided on 3 hours for the first paddle, heading south initially and leaving 14 as an option if we were ahead of time and a further 3 hours for the second trek with 26 not contemplated and 28 an option. This gave us 8½ hours for the (we reckoned) 10-hour bike leg.

We knew all the roads south of the Hampton-Esk road pretty well, Tamsin lives only 20km south of the map and we ride up to Hampton for coffee from time to time, so we knew the hills. However, after our gross under-planning on the bike in 2013 we felt compelled to do them anyway, just in case. Thus 44 and 45 were immediately abandoned, with 39 an optional out and back from 42 and 47 and 48 an option if we were up on time. All very simple really!

I got confused with the dam walls and lost a couple of minutes on the way to 1 and then we joined the procession. Unfortunately lines like that move slower than any of the individuals in them would move on their own and I thought it would have been better to start the event with a ~4km "any 4 out of 6" scatter leg to break up the field before entering the gorge. At 2 we exited due east whilst the mob went straight back down which put us on our own for a while, and very much happier. We passed Shaun and Russ coming the other way just as we entered Crows Nest Creek which was

sobering. We were also being careful to keep our feet dry as we felt that wet feet on the rough rock this early would be very untidy by the next morning.

The Crows Next Creek gorge was at least as pretty as we had expected but took some time and energy. Got to the centre of the circle at 4 to find a tape but no marker, but we were back with the mob by then and someone spotted it 50 or so metres further on so no harm done. The trek started to get a bit tedious after that but we pushed on, getting out of the mob by going up the wrong side of the creek and getting stuck for a while! Soon Cath



& Nick were up our date, we had dropped them out of 2 but they were moving quicker than us. Damn! An unmapped track just before the weir cost a minute or so but no big drama except I was over-heating and thus feeling sick and slowing down.

Ground our way along and up to 12 then quickly down (I like the down) to 11 and into the TA four minutes ahead of schedule. Then realised our schedule hadn't allowed any time for transitions. Ah well! Had a feed, picked up water, and coconut water which was excellent, and into the bathtub at the same time as Cath & Nick. Hit 21 with them and the two old men promptly cramped such that Cath suggested she and Tamsin go for a nice paddle and leave the useless old men to suffer together. They quickly paddled away from us but turned for the TA at 17 whilst we went on to 16 and 15 before returning in the dark. The leg at taken almost exactly 3 hours!

Another unbudgeted transition and then up the hill to 23. Lost ~5 minutes getting on the wrong spur briefly at 25 but hit 27 and 29 without fuss. Took forever to get to 30 and saw Marquita and Rob coming out as we left the track on the way in, which surprised us, and had already abandoned any thoughts of 28 so took in 24 on the way back to the TA after passing Rob lying down with Marquita strapping his ankle. Asked if he was okay and he assured us he was getting the best of veterinary care. By this time the trekking in the wet knicks had led to some significant chaffing, not good, but finished the leg within a couple of minutes of the scheduled 3 hour duration.

Were surprised to see Cath & Nick still at the TA when we arrived but they headed out just as we reached our box. We changed into dry endurance MTB knicks and headed out on the bikes. Tamsin was struggling with the change to riding so was on the tow all the way up the bitumen hill. Turned off into 31 just behind Shaun & Russ and had no problems with it (got there just ahead of S&R) which apparently a lot of people did. Not sure why as the map was fine coming from our direction. A bit slow coming into 32 as the track kept vanishing but just held a bearing and kept the fence on the right and the power lines eventually appeared.

After 33 Tamsin was back on the tow until the bitumen ran out. This had my legs screaming, which perfectly matched my chaffed rear that screamed back at least as loudly and had me standing on the pedals a lot! Marquita & Rob along with Paul Melloy and his mate steamed past us just after 34. I

almost got off to check if my wheels were still going round. A little search & destroy in the NP and then up to the lookout but didn't dally long to admire the view before heading to 38 on an out and back then 41 and onto the orchard at 40 (not visible in the dark I'm afraid).

The plunge down to White Mountain was cold and seemed to take forever despite our supposed familiarity with the road. We had been moving a lot slower than hoped albeit Tamsin had improved markedly by this time so 39 was abandoned and so from 42 (where Paul & mate shot past us coming back out of 39) we faced the long grind back up to the dairy (also not visible in the dark) and onto 46 which seemed surrounded by impenetrable lantana and thence to



Hampton where we refilled the water and took stock. We were yelled at by someone in a tent for making noise. The concept of camping illegally and then getting snaky for being disturbed seemed a trifle odd! We decided that we didn't want to abandon too much on the bike and would be prepared to be back at HQ a little later than preferred if necessary.

We abandoned 47 and 48 and also 52 as I thought I remembered that track from an MTBO as being very slow and difficult but got all the others and were back at HQ about 6:30am. Basically we had met our planned duration again but were 30 minutes behind due to failure to factor the transition times into our planning. Marquita, Rob, Cath and Nick arrived just behind us having obviously done a lot more on the bike than we had.

We had decided to leave the paddle to last, it was the only remaining leg with any optionality and besides, our rear ends really didn't want to sit on anything just then. Thus we set out on the paddleboards along with both the Kiwi teams. Cath and Nick took the opportunity to have a preview look at CP 57 whilst they were at it! Then we headed off orienteering. The rock was grossly under mapped but the navigation was easy so it didn't matter and I even summoned up a little jog at times to get it all done in about an hour.



Four scores from six arrows and the archery was done in less than 5 minutes and so we only had the paddle left. By the time we got to 62 (via 57, 59 & 60) we knew that we hadn't the time for 61 and headed for home but along the way suddenly realised that somehow 58 had never made it into the plan. Then I lost the plot because even though we were exactly abeam of 58 at the time of this discovery we turned around and headed south again only to have to turn back 10 minutes later totally lost and confused before a light-bulb moment back where it all began and 58 safely secured.

Hit the wharf with about 15 minutes left and cried all the way up the hill with the bathtub on the trolley. And then a shower! Absolute luxury!

We were very pleased with our plan and our execution. With hindsight we could have avoided the down and up on the bike and gotten a few more points, but we would have lost a lot of optionality so that would not have been a sensible choice at the time. When the results came out we were even more pleased, 14th overall and 2nd XV. Even more pleasing we had just edged out Marquita and Rob by the 30 points they lost for being back late and left Cath and Nick well behind which we can't quite understand as they were travelling quicker than us in all three key disciplines. I am suspecting that the Kiwi contingent may have learnt quite a lot from their experience and could be back for more much better armed!

Many thanks to Liam and the team for organising a fantastic and fun event. Of course it is not like a "real" rogaine in that it is naturally processional and the navigation is generally not particularly challenging. Thus our key strength, being navigation, is largely negated. But we got the plan right for us which, after last year's debacle, was extremely pleasing.

All in all, a great day out.

Richard

Nicks Response (From Team "The Visitors")

Great report and really quite fair for an Okka. Sorry about the hold on your kayak launch, Your frustration level was just too funny to stop.

If you feel like adding to your report:

Nick Responds: I thought this was perhaps the most strategically challenging event I have attempted. As Richard points out it was neck and neck throughout the event with our team perhaps having a slight speed advantage. Unfortunately we missed one control altogether (80 points and 30 minutes lost), and then made a major tactical blunder by doing the last activities in the order paddle board, kayak, orienteer, archery. This was illogical as the fact that the O was an all or nothing for 140 points created the risk that we would have poor time management in the last hour.

And so it panned out, for having completed the paddleboard and kayak and with only 55 minutes left, we started the 3.5 km O course, realised after 3 controls that it was very rough and estimated it would need 60 minutes. The risk of a late return was too high so we abandoned

the O only to find a 50 minute queue on the archery. (Pity about the extra 10 minutes on the paddleboard visiting an extra control). While Richard's strategy netted 640 points in stages 5-8, ours was only worth 490, and 0 in the last hour.

It's a bitter pill to swallow, but we were out strategized. I clearly need to train at making better and more detailed calculations at 7 in the morning after 17 hours of racing. I'll be working on it. See you next year.

Nick Collins

Rob's Correspondance (from Team "Dated Loaf and Pikelet")

Hi Liam,

I'd like to say this was the best race we have ever done, and thank you and your great team for all the efforts you put in.

As experienced navigators, we just loved the accurate maps and control locations, along with a stunning location, accomodation, meals etc.

Also loved the relatively short stages, and the 2 kayaks were unexpected highlights, along with a superb mtb. Thought the archery would be better with a 2 minute time limit or one person to score or something quicker, to save the queues

There is no race in NZ that compares, because we usually only have 1:50,000 and 20 metre contour maps, and setters that don't know to set route choice, and get all the controls correct.

Everyone was really friendly, and the 4 of us that came over are really going to put the word out. I've sent the details to Chris Forne and Stu Lynch, so you never know!! Maybe be put up the fee by \$10 and put up a \$1000 prize, and they would be confident of getting their airfare back. As I said you could charge a lot more, but you know your market, and you don't do it as a commercial exercise.

You must get some great training done doing these!!

I thought the standard was very high amongst the top few teams, and am surprised you Aussies can't get nearer the top in the godzone

We are still buzzing about it, and will come back better prepared next year.

Rob Garden