

We had signed up for our first Geoquest this year, so apart from the 24h Rogue adventure being a great race, the timing was also perfect for a geo training session. The better looking half of team Jones and Jones (Linda Wallis) had graciously given up her spot on the adventure to allow the 3 Cann brothers (Lukas, Mick, and Andy ...team BroCann) and cousin Stephen Wallis (the other half of team Jones and Jones) to use the race as Geo practice.

After picking up Mick from the airport on Friday morning, we enjoyed the scenic drive to HQ. The social get together on Friday night was great, as it allowed us to socialize with fellow races, and finally put some names to faces. The food and venue were awesome! (Great job Liam and Co). Mick went to bed a little earlier than the rest of us, and was snoring heavily by the time we got to the dorm. From this point on, Mick will be referred to as 'Chainsaw'.

After an ok sleep, we woke to a beautiful morning, had breaky (again awesome!), and dropped our gear at the bike drop. As usual, prep time went fast, but we managed to get a good plan in place. We decided to concentrate our efforts on the bike and kayak, so planned to drop checkpoints 8 and 9 on the first trek leg, 14 on the first kayak, 26 and 28 on the second trek, and 44, 45 on the bike. According to our timings, if everything went perfect, this had us finishing the bike at 3am, giving plenty of time for the second kayak, paddleboard, and archery. We also factored in an hour buffer, as you never have a perfect race.

The landscape in the first trek was awesome, but hard to take in during the race. I would love to come up here in a non-race situation. There were limited route choices during the first 3 hours of rock hopping along the creek line, and we found it hard to pass people on this leg. We took a couple of chances and crossed to different sides of the creek. Some of these paid off, but others didn't. We picked up checkpoints 1 to 7, and then went straight to 10. We skipped 11 as well, as we were already behind our planned time. We estimated 3 hours for the first trek, but it took us just under 4.



We just had enough water and sucked our bladders dry on the last hill before the transition point. This leg also saw me christened into the black toe club, and Lukas ended up with a blood blister underneath one of his already 8 black toes from the Shelbyville Rogaine a few weeks earlier.

The first kayak was great. Awesome weather and plenty of wildlife to see. We were the 5th team to arrive here, so had the choice of the red kayaks or canoes. We chose the red kayaks, which turned out to be the wrong choice, as we got passed by at least 3 canoes which looked like they were going about 30% faster. Apart from this, we were still running ahead of our scheduled 3 hours estimate on this leg,

so decided to pick up checkpoint 14, which we had originally planned to skip. We passed team Tiger black (Craig and Shaun) near the portage between 16 and 14, who looked in good spirits. We cleared this leg and finished just on dusk, and were treated to an awesome sunset. This leg saw us pull back 15 minutes, so now we were only 45 minutes behind our plan.

Our feet welcomed the clean dry shoes and socks at transition, and everyone was feeling good. We picked up 23 and headed to 25. We got a little off course, and ended up doing a lot of climbing up to the main road, which was a welcome sight. We picked up 25 and 27, and then went off to 29. We dropped in after the 381m knoll a little early, which threw us a little, as when we ended up going west along the creek, we initially thought it meant we had gone too far. After some map checking, we realized we hadn't gone far enough, as there were some really steep cliffs on the side of the creek. We got 29, and then headed for 30. We went straight from 30 to 24 and then back to transition for the bike. This leg took us 30 minutes longer than expected, which put us 1h 15 behind schedule.



Bike transition meant a refuel, and some warmer gear. The volunteers offered a piece of left over cold pizza, which went down well. We had estimated 6h and 100km on our chosen bike leg. We started up the first hill to get to 31. By the time we got to the turnoff to 31, I had gone from feeling great to feeling terrible in a matter of minutes. I was hoping some dry heaving would empty my stomach, but nothing was coming up. I knew I should have chosen the lamb pizza, not the vegetarian LOL. We had issues finding 31, so decided to skip it and go up the main road to 32, hoping the smooth road would help to settle me. MG ('Mountain Goat'), aka Steve Wallis ripped out the tow, and pretty much towed me up the remaining 3 km up the hill which was a mean feat. Even with his 'Go Fast' facial growth on, he was still my hero! I had a 20 minute rest at the top of the hill, as I was progressively feeling worse. The track down to CP 32 must have been a good one, as when the others came up, 2 of them had gone OTB, and were showing a little claret. I had really wanted to just ride back along to HQ, as I knew once we went down our planned path, it was a 70km ride minimum to get back. I thought to myself, 'cant do this on Geo', so took a couple of salt tablets, as I was out of other options to try. This surprisingly made me feel a little better. I decided I would give it another 30 minutes, and if I wasn't better, then I would ride back to HQ. I also remember that my bladder nozzle was dragging in the water on the kayak when we passed the floating dead kangaroo at CP17 on the kayak. hmmm

MG was nailing the Navigation, which was awesome, as I felt like throwing up every time I looked at the map. We picked up 33 and 34, and I was starting to feel better. At CP 35, I decided to try and eat something, as I was now committed to doing the big loop. I looked at my food options, and though a gel is meant to be easily digestible, I will try a bit of this. Bad move! After this, I was pretty much gone for the rest of the bike, which meant more towing from MG, and the others sharing the carrying of my pack.

I was really happy with how the team pulled together and shared the load. Although MG lived up to his name and then some, we decided that we should definitely set up more than 1 bike tow system.

There were heaps of smooth downhill tracks between 41 and 42, which was great, although a little chilly. CP 42 to 46 saw the reverse of this however, and again saw MG pulling out the tow. He really is a Mountain Goat! About halfway up to 46 (3am) up we decided to split into our teams of two, which would allow Chainsaw and MG (Jones and Jones) to continue the race, and Lukas and I would shortcut back along the roads to HQ. It was a slow ride back, even with Lukas towing me using the run tow line. We knew that once we got to the power lines at CP 46, it should be an easy ride home from there. That was a killer hill between 42 and 46, and we were bitterly disappointed each time we went under some power lines, only to realize they were not Major ones. The Major power lines were a sight for sore eyes, and the bike along the road went much quicker. We arrived back at HQ at 6am and decided to finish here. That last 3km section along the road back to HQ was awesome coming down the hill with the sweeping corners, just as the sun was rising.

MG and Chainsaw continued on the race, picking up all of the remaining bike checkpoints, and finished the bike leg at 8am. They were now 5 hours behind schedule, but we estimated that we had lost about 2 hours on the bike due to me being sick. They cleared the 2nd Kayak leg, and especially enjoyed crawling through the deep mud to find the punch missing. They did get a credit for the CP however.

They then completed the archery with 45 minutes to spare. Not enough time for the orienteering, but enough for at least 1 CP on the paddle board. They smashed the paddle board, and ended up getting both CP's, and arriving home with 10 minutes to spare, thanks to my knocked up kayak trolley, built to 'Fraser Island' standards.

Although it was not the race I had planned, there were still plenty of positives. The team pulled together well when the chips were down. We got plenty of bike tow experience. Our estimates were pretty close, and MG's nav was awesome. Also everyone's nutrition (apart from mine maybe) went really well. MG and Chainsaw also ended up in 11th place overall, 7th in the males which was impressive given the time and energy they lost during the race due to me being sick. I don't think that we can ever say that we are ready for Geo, and I keep thinking about how tough that second night will be, but the challenge will be awesome so bring it on.

Andy