

Adventuregain 2014 – Mojo Escapees [24 hr race]



Its 2013 and its cold ... we are busily racing around the course at a relaxed speed and the conversation is all about how we are definitely doing Adventuregain 2014! That's right - we were sold on the idea well before we finished the 2013 race. Maybe we should have been more focused on our current task but no, neither of us are that way inclined!

2013 year progresses and we slowly get used to writing 2014 at the end of all the 'date' fields on forms.

My brother soon discovers this year's Adventuregain has been planned for the 2nd of 2 long weekends in a row. This means it has fallen in a way in which taking 3 holiday days gives you 10 days off.

To my disappointment he consequently decided the race was out and I was soon left with no teammate. Goodbye Whoops Witch Way? ☹

With little time to stress, off I went hunting for a new teammate. Lucky for me I had been asked to join a team for Geo-half and one of those guys didn't have another race partner and has a similar race-style as my brother. We quickly agreed to team up and registered ourselves! Team name "Escapees" – yes folks ... we have kids and it was time to "Escape"!

Friday – ANZAC day: Tradition was to be kept and I was up by 6 getting kids in the car to take them for the 1hr drive up to O'Reilly's for breakky. Yum!!! A short walk (only the tree-top-walk) some deliciously unhealthy breakky and home we went. 10 minutes to pack before jumping back in the car for the 2+ hr drive to HQ with my teammate in tow.

We arrived nice and on time; found our room and claimed the bottom bunk each. Note that my brother (yes the one that was unavailable for the race) had decided to tag along and volunteer after returning from a week walking at Carnarvon Gorge.

A bit of time to socialise and meet some new faces before dinner... curry ... are you kidding? I'm still baffled by the meal selection! I mean PASTA would have been so much nicer the next day as rice is hardly filling but it tasted great anyway. Dessert was apparently very nice although cakes are not my thing ... ice cream and I would have been there for sure.

Movie night for some and then an early night before R-Day (race day?).

After waking up bright and early (about 4:30am) I was ready for breakfast. Unfortunately it only started at 6am and then it was disappointing anyway. Mental note: Next year pack my own food supplies! Afterall, lets face it, "1 piece of bacon" is VERY unAustralian. People had a few words to say about it but nothing that could get us more meat from the caterers. Personally, I don't like scrambled eggs; nor home-made baked-beans and I couldn't stomach the cold toast with frozen

butter/margarine so I ended up only eating my 1 piece of bacon and 2 bananas. Not exactly filling before a long race!

Off to bike drop we headed. A quick pump-check of the tyres resulted in a valve issue (which later turned out to be a hole next to the valve). At this stage we had also discovered my teammate had left his bike seat at HQ. Dammit!!! This was shaping up to be a LOOOONNNG race! After trekking back to HQ to grab extra tubes and the bike seat my teammate changed his tube to discover there was a puncture in this one too. 3 attempts later and we had a patched tube in his wheel, the bike seat on his bike and we were heading back to HQ hoping the tube would hold-out ... at least for a few hours!

Map handout – FINALLY we could see the course! We toddled off to our room and setup camp on the deck out the back. Turns out not many people knew where we had got to – I guess not many teams realised there was such a nice deck outside the rooms.

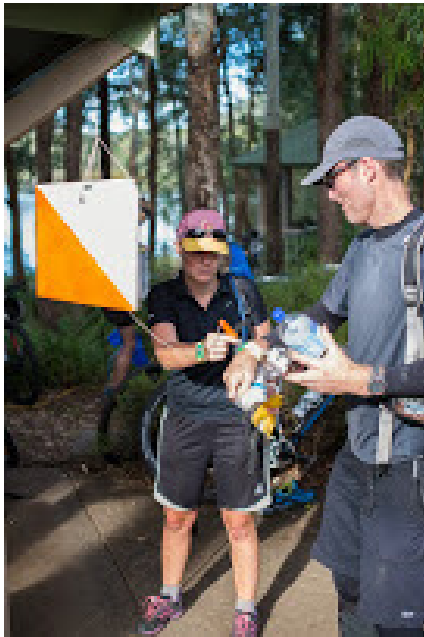
We quickly crossed off some of the checkpoints that were on the extremities or really “out and back” to get to. Keep in mind, our game plan was to have fun and challenge ourselves ... it never crossed our mind to race for the podium as we are not in that class of racer (possibly never will – but that is only by choice).



Race start: Following like sheep we found CP 1 and 2 with ease. The next few CP's were easy to find but less people were around us as the group split up very quickly. There are some real mountain goats out there in the AR scene (i.e. fast rock-hoppers). We had decided to drop CP 5 (up the creek) – no point doing the extra distance as we had made our race plan and were trying to stick to timing rather than distance or CP collection.

CP 7 proved a little difficult as we found a track that was not on the map (or if it were – it was different looking than the map suggested). After each track intersection we convinced ourselves “this is now the right one” until we walked ourselves into CP 7. On the way down the hill from here, I noticed someone running reasonably comfortably in the wrong direction. Turns out it was the race director – when he said “oh finally someone we can get that is NOT on the track”. No wonder he looked so energetic (this far back in the field)!





TA was a nice sight after just over 4hrs walking over rocks and then up and down hills. The jury is still out on which was worse (other than the 2 blue toes and hot-spot-blister I got under my foot from the rocks).

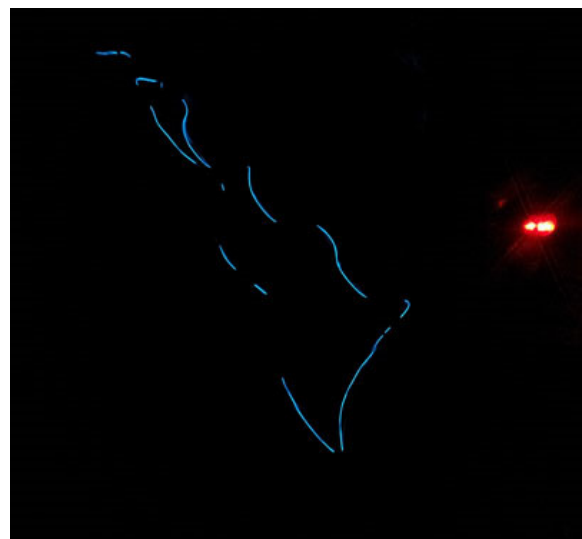
TA for me was renamed to 'Inhalation station' as I was starving by this stage. As you may have realised by now, I totally forgot about eating lunch before we started and I didn't bring any with me because it was only going to be 4 hours. Oh shit ... that means I was running on 1 piece of bacon, a few bananas and some race-type food from my bag.

Our TA appeared to be quick here as we had a check in-out of the TA before picking a canoe to slug to the water. Let's just say I bludged for the next 2 hours of the race! I am sure my teammate was cursing me from the back of the canoe but hey, he's the one that has done years of outrigger canoeing so he should be right to 'paddle me around' the dam. Haha. We decided to drop the 3 CPs on the extremities and get back to the TA. Part of this decision was based on the fact my teammate had forgotten to grab his lights so we decided that was excuse enough to have to get off the water before dark. [I did have mine so I could've added SOMETHING to this stage.]

More food (chicken wraps are wonderful!) and off on our trek leg we went. Initially we were only going to go for 3 CPs. During the first trek leg we had already decided to drop the 60 pointer and only go for the 90 + 30 point ones. On the way to the 90 pointer we rechecked the map and realised it was a 75m incline to which we both agreed "screw that ... let's just drop it and go get started on the bikes". I talked him into going for the 30 pointer (which was easy to do). Glad we did because this was by far the easiest most relaxing trek CP of the day. A nice little grassy knoll to get over and we were back at HQ.

Once back, another quick toilet stop, and time to test that tyre. Helmets on, blue bike light on and off we went. I was glad I had bought a tow rope as my poor teammate was tasked with getting me up that first hill. I mean ... I hate hills at the best of time let alone when they are vertical.

Our 'steady' speed meant we were spot on with our navigation to the CPs we had marked out to get. The only one that proved to slow us down a bit was the one in the NP. This was only because we did not really pay attention and then ended up in the wrong gully. Both of us felt it was wrong so went back to try again. By this stage another group of racers had caught us and we found the CP (behind them).



Pic of my bike at night

Up the next massive hill ... yes I walked it! We had 10hrs to do about 75kms – there was no way I was going to kill myself uphill. When we arrived at the lookout CP we were disappointed to realise the water stop was not really a rogaine water stop. Maybe we just missed where the water was but if there were lollies there – I didn't see it!

A nice bumpy downhill followed. We were not alone on this road though. We shared the road with pig shooters and their very obedient but very scary looking dogs. Ye, when pig dogs come racing up to you while they are hunting it does make you a little on edge. Lucky for us their owners were on top of them the whole time and one semi-whistle and they were back on the back at the truck each time.

This small incline was followed by the longest most awesomest (word of the week) downhill of the entire course (that I completed). It was just what we needed or at least wanted! A really really long downhill. I mean starting this leg we thought it was going to take AGES to get to CP 44 but within no time we were taking the gravel road up to the left to get the CP.

Little did we know life was about to get a whole lot worse. I had been promised 'The Hamptons' are flat – everyone failed to tell me we would have to embark on one hell of a long slow uphill! I did manage to ride the whole way up and join 4 other teams at the visitor information centre for about 10 minutes to recover.

I believe those teams more-or-less headed home from here.

My teammate and I headed out to collect the CPs in the Hamptons. We only dropped one CP here (I think it was 52) because we quite frankly couldn't be bothered getting it and then headed for home. The downhill to home was the 2nd best of the night ... only beaten out by the sheer length of the previously mentioned one.

On the way to HQ we had grand plans of a shower and a sleep but once we got there Liam was looking super tired and somehow convinced me we should do some of the next legs. He suggested the SUPs "because no one had gone out yet". I was keen for SUPs because I know when the air is cold the water is warm but my teammate was not so easily swayed so instead to decided to do the orienteering. And he calls himself a surfie!

Being 2:30am we decided to take it easy. I think it took us 2.5hrs to do this stage but hey ... the alterative was getting in the water in the dark while we had agreed to get to the SUPs just before daylight so we could do it in the light without having to wait for them.

The orienteering was fun. It is not often we mid-packers get the opportunity to really test our navigation because the track is often a little worn out by the leaders trampling through there before us.

Other than navigating 1 CP slightly too high and going about 20m too far we were spot on with all of them... and this one was picked up on our way back on track anyway.



Back at HQ I pushed my teammate back out on course to go SUPing. This was relaxing. It was his first time doing it while it was my 3rd or 4th but I still loved it. Having all the time in the world after deciding we were definitely NOT going to portage our kayak UP that hill we just took it slow and enjoyed the early morning misty water.

These legs were all done by 6:30 and all we had left was the archery – which didn't open for another hour and a half. So instead we decided to tackle the 9th leg ... the most important one – SHOWER! So we hit the showers, packed our stuff up and had a drink (and lollies) while waiting for archery. Archery opened about 8am and within 1 attempt we were done.

I headed for some zzzz as my brother was still up volunteering. This stage was the fastest to start as I think I may have been asleep before I actually was horizontal.

By 11am we were both back up and had packed the car ready to head home after presentation. I helped my brother pick up some bike CPs (these were easy for me to do as they happened to be 5 of the CPs we actually did on our little route).

The long drive home was begging and by 3:30 I was home and fast asleep again in my own bed.

Thanks to the team (organisers) for another awesome outing.

I know we didn't 'win' and our race report probably shows the more relaxed side of racing but we really enjoyed it.

Changes for next year however would be that I need another set of lights for my bike (1 blue string was not quite 'cheery' enough)! Oh, and in regards to the race --- maybe some pasta for dinner and something more filling for breakky (like the option of having more than 1 piece of bacon) ← not something that was in the control of the RD though.

Suwati

Mojo Escapees