



## Team Bicycles Without Bruce

### 2015 Rogue Adventuregain Report

We had really enjoyed the 2014 Rogue 24 where we had gotten the tactics just right for us and managed to finish ahead of Kiwi visitors, Rob & Marquita and Nick & Cath, whom we have no right to beat because they are all much stronger than us. They were back and seeking redress and had brought another team across the ditch with them plus rounded up an expat Kiwi from Sydney. And there were two WA teams as well. The popularity of the event continues to grow as was emphasised by the 24-Hr selling out within 15 hours!

The data provided suggested a huge proportion of paddling and a lot of riding in comparison to the foot. Characteristics that play to the strengths of our Kiwi rivals and against our own. Not looking good we thought. Upon arrival we found that Cath had an ankle problem which limited trekking (and hike-a-biking!!) but Rob & Marquita were looking strong as always.

Getting the maps did not ease our comfort. It was paddler's paradise. To us the first paddle looked like a lot of work for very few points so we decided to minimise our time on it. Tamsin pointed out that for us the obvious way to attack that leg was to leave the boat at HQ and grab 1 and 2 on foot. Nothing in the instructions precluded this but foolishly I asked Liam who said we needed to deliver the boat to TA8. Pity! However, the final paddle looked very productive and we figured we needed to get all of that except the 10-pointer (CP45) and needed to be on the water by 7am to do so.

The section of the first trek south of the TA also looked like lots of work for very few points so we plotted a course that took in the northern portion only. We had (sort of) predetermined that we wanted to do the abseil and then saw that it was on the Mt Mee plateau and decided that section was an absolute must. Plus the out and back MTBs to the south looked flat and fast so we needed to do them too.

In fact we decide we needed to do all the MTB unless it was much slower than expected. We decided on doing the 25, 26, 27 out and back before the plateau. We figured it would be faster with fresher legs and quicker points gathering than the plateau so if we were short of time it was not a piece to miss.



The course notes said the MTB was 82km. I measured it at 107km! I asked Liam and he was certainly not confident of his 82! For the second trek we figured 38 was not worth the effort and 40 was a “sucker” CP. I’d been stuck in lantana in the 1994 rogaine in the watercourse just north of 40 and didn’t reckon it would have improved much, plus it had a lot of climb. We allowed an hour for the ride from TA37 to TA44.

We added up our estimated time for each leg and it came to 25 hours without any allowance for transitions. “That should work” we said!

We jogged up to CP1 with the mob and were rather surprised to see Brett Stevens and his mate arrive by kayak (explicitly prohibited in the instructions) and then complain about having to get in the queue. We timed ourselves in the kayak from HQ to the bridge and decided our 5 hour allowance for the second paddle was reasonable, grabbed CP3 and then headed straight to the landing point. Our trolley and the boat weren’t too compatible and the wheels wore through the straps resulting in a minor catastrophe which included Tamsin temporally dislocating a finger at the second joint. We finished up having to carry the boat, trolley etc for a last 100 metres. It was hard work. We then jogged down to CP2 waded chest deep across the fetid swamp and were back at the TA right on schedule at 90 minutes.



Crossing the Reedy Creek bridge at the start of the trek we came across an 8-Hr team who said “best of luck, no-one we have spoken to has found that one” (CP9). There was an unmapped gully there and it was hard to tell if the marker was in the mapped or unmapped gully but it was fine in the daylight. We then headed to: 12, 15 (where we were surprised to see a lot of people on bikes), 16, 17, 13 and back to the TA. All through this period I was really struggling with overheating. Tamsin was carrying my pack and dragging me up the hills. I was really looking forward to the chill night air!

We transitioned and were off on the bikes at 16:48, 12 minutes ahead of our (25-hour) schedule. I went to change into the big chain ring. It wouldn’t change so a quick stop to change the clamp location at the derailleur end fixed it but made the change extremely stiff. We grabbed 21 and 22 in the fading light and then 23 with our lights on. I momentarily had an (un-enunciated) thought of leaving 25, 26 and 27 until the way home but dismissed it. My mind at the time said “oh we may then get to the abseil before 8pm if we do that!” One of the more stupid thoughts I’ve had in my life.

Just after 26 Tamsin’s front derailleur jammed. Fortunately we knew from a prior incident that it was likely a small stone jammed in the mechanism. We couldn’t see it in our lights but general poking and dragging with a tyre level elicited a pebble falling noise and everything worked again. Then on the way back north my rear tyre went soft. There was tubeless slime oozing from a large slit so I

pumped it up and hoped. It went soft again so I pumped again and hoped forlornly. The third time I bit the bullet and put a tube in.

Whilst fixing the puncture the Pretty Flash lads came past and we later tailed after them to 24 then up the big hill after some minor hesitation with the tracks in the Diana's Bath region. We caught them again at the bottom of A-Break, I assume they had taken a scenic tour down the hill a bit, but they soon vanished again as we struggled up the hike-a-bike. And CP29 was definitely **NOT** the top!

All through this time we were both very concerned about water, but neither of us was game to mention the concern to the other. We had both used our full 3-litres on the first paddle and trek and started the bike a bit dehydrated. We were both taking frequent small sips and I was desperately hoping we would be able to beg some water from the abseil people. CP32 changed all that with a lovely tap within 2 metres of the marker. We both troughed in huge gollops of the stuff and filled our bladders to the brim. The overall mood lightened considerably! This was further enhanced by Tamsin swallowing some pain killers which materially reduced the discomfort from the previously damaged finger.



It was then onto CP33 which I thought was a good site and then to 34, which was an excellent site. We came back out of 34 up the overgrown but direct minor track to the main trail. We had intended to go down that way also but changed when we saw its condition but figured we would be walking on the way up anyway so short was good. Just north of CP35 we met Pretty Flash going the other way. Mmmm we thought. They are travelling much quicker than us and have only done a third of this circuit in the time we have done two-thirds. Suggests that the rest will be very slow. It wasn't,



they had just had a wait at the abseil and took the opportunity to rest. Tamsin did the abseil at 35 whilst I had a feed and a rest. CP36 did not seem valuable to us so was missed. Then, as also happens to me often when I stop at All Night Cafes I completely lost the plot. I took a wrong turn down a hill. Tamsin waited at the junction screaming after me (unheard of course) and I returned a couple of minutes later with my head knocked back into shape.

We did the hike-a-bike up Mt Byron and were pleased to be able to ride back down and on to CP30. On the way down the hill towards CP30 I looked at the map at an inappropriate time and got my front wheel on the wrong side of a loose road centre strip on a curve. I was on the floor in a flash, at speed, still clipped in and covered in dust and blood. Rob & Marquita arrived just at that moment. Rather an inauspicious moment to meet one's key rivals. CP30 was spectacular and worth the haul up onto the plateau on its own. We will return in daylight sometime.

We were also very pleased to be able to ride all the way down A-Break and beyond. Just before the big creek crossing near Diana's Bath two fit young boys stormed past us and rode up a hill on the wrong track. Very odd! We grabbed CP28 and wended our sore-bottomed way onto TA37. The fire looked tempting so we stayed well clear of it, ate, reinstalled pants, gaiters and trekking shoes and were out just after 2:30am and nearly 30 minutes up on our (25-Hr) plan.

Straight up the creek to CP41 and then onto CP43 where I think I also had a CP in that 1994 event and there was one close to there in 2007 as well. The fit young boys came past us again between 43 and 42 and remarked that they were sick of overtaking us then proceeded with a rather odd route choice. Missed 42 on the first attempt as the ground didn't match the map. Toyed with the idea of getting 40 instead of 39 but I was too leg weary to seriously contemplate it albeit Tamsin was bounding along at that point after dragging in the middle part of that trek.

Our plan had been to leave TA37 by 6:00am and we were three minutes early so looking good. We really had to push to get to TA44 in an hour so it was pretty tough. As we crossed the Reedy Creek bridge we noticed the wind was howling. "That wasn't part of the plan" we said!

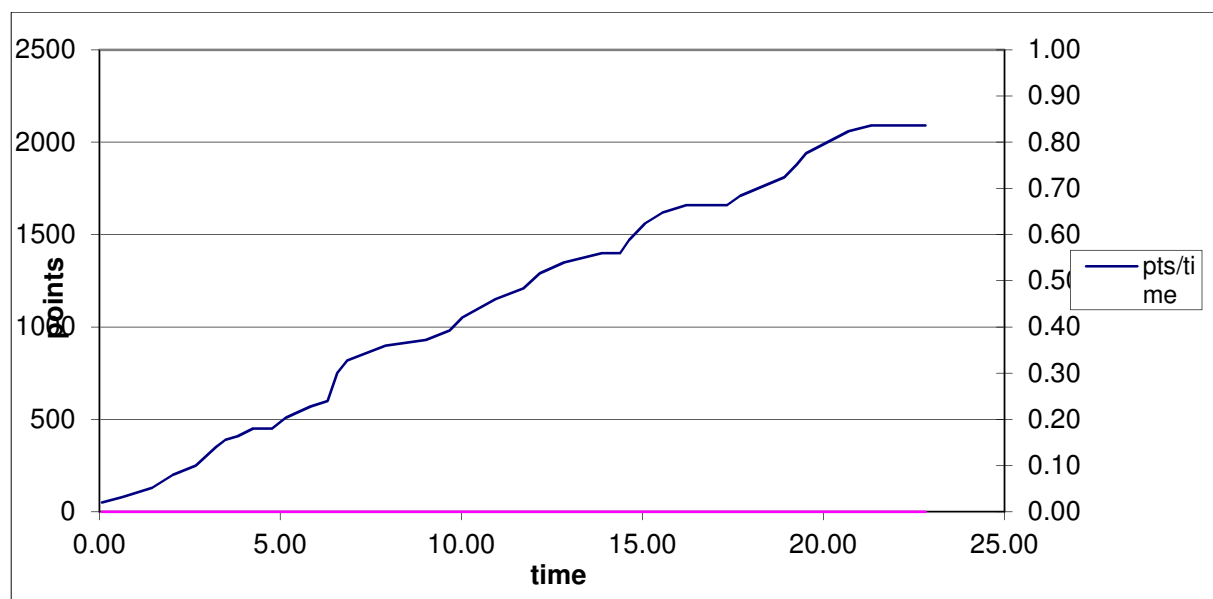
We were on the water at exactly 7:00am, well within 15 seconds anyway. The wind didn't seem too bad heading to CP46 and with those 100 points in the bag after only 17 minutes and Nick and Cath a bit in front of us we were feeling pretty good. Amanda had told us at the TA that the wind was expected to pick up. She wasn't wrong! I toyed with dropping CP48, the 60 pointer, but was still confident we could get them all so went for it. The haul back from 48 into the wind and waves broke our hearts. By the time we reached CP50 Tamsin was frozen to the core, the leg had taken us nearly 45 minutes and there was only just over three hours left. She put on lots of clothes and we reassessed.

Heading out to CP53 would be like CP48 repeated and on steroids and even going to CP52 would have us in the open water for a long time. Tamsin was genuinely concerned that if she fell in the water, not unlikely given the 1+ metre waves, she would die. Maybe if Bruce had been there we would have felt more confident. Still, we weren't racing for sheep stations and you're a long time dead so we adopted the discretion option and went home via 51 and 49. Tamsin never warmed up. I was fine whilst I was paddling and only got really cold on the ride back to HQ when it didn't really matter anymore.

We finished with about 70 minutes to spare. Our plan had been perfect, for us, but the wind had cruelled it. Rob & Marquita topped us by 40 points, reversing the 30 point margin we had on them last year but finished nearly an hour later. Given it was a course that suited them better than us we shouldn't be disappointed. I had hoped that the spear grass would be in full seed which would likely have slowed down the out of towners but alas, the late rains meant that there were only trivial amounts to contend with. We also saw that there were a lot of teams who were much fitter and stronger than us that were behind us so that was also very pleasing.

It was a great event and our sincere thanks to Liam and his team for the thought and effort that went into it. One of the key differences to previous Rogue 24s was that tactics were important at the pointy end of the field as well as for us mugs. Previously the fast teams just needed to pick the quickest way to get the lot. This year was much more like a real rogaine where clearing the course was not an option. Unfortunately, unlike a real rogaine the navigation remained quite rudimentary. Now if we could get an event like this that required excellent tactical nous **AND** navigation skills then we might even become competitive!

As shown below, apart for that first paddle and the "transport/transition" periods our average points/hour remained pretty constant throughout the event which again suggests a plan that was the right one for us.



Richard Robinson

On behalf of **Bicycles Without Bruce**