

Mountain Designs GeoQuest 2006

Story by Guy Andrews team Anaconda

You have to love the coastal locations Craig and Louise of Geo centric find every year for the Geo. I remember traveling the east coast many times in my surf Ironman days and seeing all the signs off to small towns like Hat Head, Seal rocks, Scotts Head the east coast has more "head" than Bill Clinton... well anyway... this years Location was fantastic as always but as I was traversing the cliff line last Sunday night with a full moon to light the way a thought that perhaps one year it would be nice to stay on the coastal strip the whole race.

Team Anaconda's race started a little shaky with us scrounging up one support crew at 8pm on Friday night. We were pleasantly surprised to have new recruit Ross on board one hundred percent taking notes like a secretary (not Bills!) and truly getting into it.

Along with Ross was my twelve year old daughter Maddison who came along to every transition and seemed to be awake as long as the team. Heaven help me when I have to support her team in a few years time..

Gloria my beautiful mum was there as last year cooking up a storm "in Styrofoam cup" every transition along with a thousand Cheese and vegemite sambos.

Thanks to those guy's from all of us.

Stage one

Kayak 12km, Trek15km, tube 1.5km, kayak 10km,tube/run 5km

Stage one went quite well for us we set a steady pace and where happy to follow Millie into CP1 where we made sure to change clothes and shoes not wanting to carry sand and drying Salt for the ensuing trek.

I was quite upset with Nav after leaving Gapp beach right on the tail of a fast running Team Mountain designs when I found myself struggling to find the tracks that where indicated on the Topo map. After being joined by Wilderness wear and loosing sight of MD's my frustration grew.

Apon arriving at the tube to kayak transition is was surprised to find that Tronk had found a way by us by MD's where actually still trailing.

It's indicative of all the top teams in Australia now that the Navigators can all find Cap's it's a matter of route choice and surmising where new tracks may be or others may not be in some cases.

We set of encouraged that Tronk and Wilderness wear where in sight and Millie a mere four minute up the road, I mean River.

A great transition from kayak to Tube saw us dropping Tronk and WW and within 2.5km of HQ and end of stage one catching Millie.

Stage Two

20min Compulsory stop and 50min car Drop to Remote CP, Cyclegaine, Rogaine, Cycle with Hike a bike from Hell, Team split, cycle.

Anaconda had a great race for transitions with our change over times being a total of 3hrs 5min against MD's 3hrs 7min, terra X 3hrs 2min and tronk 3hrs 17min. This included 20min compulsory stops and two 50min transits.

The top 4 teams were very quick in transition. Speed in transition was our plan from the onset as it's "free time" it's a lot harder to ride, run and paddle 30min faster in a race that just be a bit more organized in transition.

The Rogaine section on the second stage for us was great. We decided to go for 9 of the possible 10 CP's on the bike completing this in two hours and one Minute and enabling Rosi to rest her Hamstring injury that mainly hurts in the run leg. This left us with 7 CP's to attain on foot. With darkness and rain firmly set in we started a little cautiously with me aiming off into the creek line nice and early to be sure to hit the CP only to cop some really thick watercourse scrub.

The rhythm picked up but was never super smooth with the rain pelting down and the Freaking Flora frustrating the you get my drift.

We arrived back at the Start Finish CP tailing Tronk who had navigated superbly to move into first with us trailing by a few minutes. Millie and MD's were still on the course and unknown to us MD's some one hour and forty five minutes would pass before they reached the end of the Cycle/Rogaine section.

There was a short cycle section to the well talked about and anticipated "Killer hike a bike" This was an over grown trail that seemed non-existent running to some 500m elevation. Team anaconda and Tronk were lucky to have John Jacoby out front bull dozing a track up the mountain. After what seemed all night we reached the ridge right below our intended target, the tower. Quickly off and riding I realized I had a flat back tire but climbed for as long as possible towards the next CP before changing the flat.

It was nice to hear the guy's from Tronk offer words of encouragement as they passed by.

After a nice decent and some solid shorter climbs riding head to head with Tronk we arrived at the Split sport leg.

This saw Rosemary and I doing the Cycle CP's and electing to use the "get out of a CP free card" allowing us to drop one of the three check points before heading back to meet John and Darren who had to find a further two check points at the same time.

When we arrived back at the transition area with our two CP's stamped we found no one had yet returned but within a few minutes John and Darren emerged much to our excitement as our plan was to get away from the field and let everyone play catch up.

My stomach had that sinking feeling when John quietly said, " we didn't get any check points"

Plan 'A' out the window time for plan 'B' I threw on some runners and John and I headed back out. I was happier when down at the first creek line I ran into the guy's from Tronk and Stingers (I think) having the same problem as us and felt like we still had a chance to maintain the race lead.

After some searching I re calculated that we had simply dropped down onto an unmarked road too early and started heading back up the ridge to re establish ourselves. After two ours we emerged back at the T/A having reached the two CP's

We were elated to find no other teams had found the foot section check points and in fact Tronk were still in the T/A insisting that the CP's may have been miss placed. Their disappointment was matched by our own when just as we mentioned we found them team MD's Brett Stevens bolted in with his Control card punched.

This put a new contender at the front of the race team Md's and Anaconda now in a tie for first place and heading for the end of stage 2.

It was ground Hog day when we arrived back at HQ at 4.30am for the compulsory 20min stop, Gloria's cooking and Ross and Maddison's eager support.

This time around we were helped out by Rosi's brother Andrew who joined the convoy of cars out to the drop off point deep in the forest west of the Pacific highway.

Stage Three

42km ride, Mystery trek, Ride, 20km Kayak, 11km trek. Finish!

The start of the stage saw us one minute down out of transition but we soon passed MD's just after sun rise and moved on snaking our way down the long descents with us guy's barely staying with Rosi who always gets stronger as the race gets longer as many of the ladies do.

The climbs in this 42km were some of the nastiest I've had in the Geo quest but seemed to agree with Team Anaconda as we found ourselves with a 26min lead at the start of the mystery trek.

I quickly plotted the 4 checkpoint locations and headed off up the ridge making short work of the first two CP's on the high points along the ridge.

This is where we lost the race for the second time. If we hadn't already done so in the split section we made sure of it now. We needed to drop off the high point very carefully to miss the steep overgrown ground or risk taking too long to reach the trails below and losing the race.

I had lost my compass from my bike earlier in the ride and stupidly tried to navigate from the top of the Knoll by asking John what the bearing was. The result was that we headed south off the top and into some Very thick vegetation eventually making the track below a little further around the Mountain. The track we found was so over grown with lantana we invented the sport of "Lantana Caving" finding the easiest way through was on our hands and knees.

Finally on the climb back to the bikes we were joined by Mirage Terra X they looked strong and we felt a bit dejected realizing the race must have slipped through our fingers. To add salt to the wounds we had lost the use of Darren's rear hub at the end of the last climb and knew with the 20 odd km remaining on the ride that we would lose more time.

At the TA from Bike to kayak we found we were 20mins down on Terra X so we mounted our skis and set sail.

At the Phone in I had to break into the Compulsory gear to get some warm dry clothes after getting a steady drenching sitting in the front seat and the fall of darkness making temps drop quickly along with the wind chill factor it was a bit chilly.

We quickly dispatched with the portage although I do believe the Double surf ski was never intended for this kind of use.

Back on the river all went well along with some singing and fantasizing of food and the finish.

Out of the last T/A and 15min down on terra x we where happy to be dry and following the trails along the moon lit headlands and enjoying what we all thought the most scenic part of the race.

About one km from the second last CP and with 8km of beach trek to run we saw the bright lights of Tronk streaming down the headland behind us. "They could not be more that 6 or 8minute behind" I yelled.

This saw us jump into high gear and functioning in stealth mode running by moonlight.

We rock hopped around a small headland and found the high tide had cut us off from crossing to the other side. With the impending pressure of Tronk behind I took a leap of faith into the blowhole quickly swimming/wading to the other side escaping the 3 to 4 foot surging waves.

Darren, John and Rosi quickly followed and we soon found ourselves running harder to keep warm.

The novelty of sprinting wore off after about 5km of beach and two headlands later and finally we made the trail head to the HQ.

For the record we put 25 min into Tronk in that run finishing 3rd at 9.35pm 14min down on Terra X and 1hr 32min from race winners Mountain Designs to a well-deserved feed and shower.

Well done to all teams and to MD's whom I do some training with on the Gold Coast. They worked hard during the season lead up the geo and have the benefit of training together on the coast. It's also indicative of adventure racing that you can "never give up" the race is not over till you cross the line.

Yours in Adventure racing

Guy Andrews