

GEOQUEST 2006

The 5th instalment of Geoquest was held at Stuarts Point, located between Port MacQuarie and Coffs Harbour, over the weekend June 10-12 2006. Kim Willocks and I normally raced as the Mexicans (being from south of the border), but were unable to drag some of our regular team mates up this year, but were lucky to team up with some brothers from Sydney, Rob and Peter Preston, who were looking for a team. Rob and Peter are members of the Sydney Ultimax Stingers orienteering team, so we compromised to call ourselves the Mexican Stingers. We were supported once again by Carboshotz, the makers of the best racing food around, ensuring we had plenty in the fuel tank all through the race. It was hard to pick a clear favourite from the start, with many of the frontrunners of similar abilities and all were keen to grab the title of what is considered the premier adventure race in Australia.



The race was to consist of 3 legs, each with multiple disciplines. We started leg 1 at 8am on Saturday with an ocean kayak, coastal trek, river tube, kayak and tube. The weather took a turn for the worse a few hours into the race and the rain pretty much settled in for the next 12 hours. The top teams put the pace on early and had opened a bit of a lead, we finished this leg in over 6 hours, 50 minutes behind the leaders and were out of the top 10 but knew the harder stuff was to come and hopefully we would make up some ground.



A car shuttle and compulsory 70 minute break (including a shower) brought us to the start of leg 2, the longest for us, and which would be the crux of the race for many teams. A mountain bike and trekking rogaine, collecting 16 of a possible 20 checkpoints, started the leg and 5 ½ hours, we had caught up on the field to be in 4th place. A short mountain bike led to a mammoth bike push on an overgrown trail up Mt ??, where we caught

the 3rd place team Millie. Finally glad back on the bikes, Pete found he had broken some spokes on the climb and his brakes no longer worked so we struggled around to the next transition, now 90 minutes behind the two leading teams. Here the team had to split, where Rob and I went and collected 3 CP's on bikes and Pete and Kim went to collect 2 CP's on foot. After a tough and hilly 2 hours on bikes (race directors note estimated 40-60 minutes for this bit), Rob and I returned to find the two leading teams still out on the course looking for the two foot CP's, our guys with them. When they finally returned, they were unsuccessful. Thinking the CP's were incorrectly positioned, we were all a bit unsure what to do and as it was around 3am we were a little tired and grumpy, until team Mountain Designs, in a huge turnaround, returned with the new they had found them and they were correct positioned. Rob and I quickly tried to fire up and went out to grab them. Another couple of hours later we returned, now to find we had dropped back to 7th place, just under 2 hours behind Mountain Designs. We took 5.5 hours for this split compared to around 2.5 for the quickest! At least we weren't the slowest. A final 7km mtb brought us back to race HQ as the sun was rising, and the blue skies were back.



After a quick bike repair from Hugh at City Bike Depot (thanks Hugh), we had another car shuttle and compulsory 70 minute break (with another shower) brought us to leg 3, which began with a hilly mountainbike. We quickly caught Team Tangerine and joked that we hoped it didn't come down to a beach sprint between us again like the previous year when they smoked us on the final beach run after we nearly caught them. They didn't laugh. We came into transition just as Team Salomon was heading off on their trek and as Mountain Designs was finishing it. Team MD gave some tips on the trek course in thanks for us telling them where they were when they were lost on the rogaine (wish we hadn't done that now). We needed to collect 4 CP's as we trekked around Mt Martha (?) and managed to overtake Salomon and got back on the bikes in 5th place, 3 hours behind the leaders. What was supposed to be a mainly downhill ride still managed to have a bit of bite in it and we arrived at the next TA at sunset happy to be finished with the bikes and ready for our final kayak. We cruised down the river in the dark for a couple of hours, under the Pacific Hwy bridge until we opted to cut approx 12km of paddling off with a 1.5km portage along a road. After about 30 minutes of hauling the boats over to the other side we found ourselves at a cliff, with the water several metres below us, bugger. Rob commented that Craig (race director), was not that much of a bastard to lead us into an obvious portage only to have it end at a cliff and have to go back, but I wasn't so sure (sorry Craig). We found a ramp a few metres around and quickly jumped back in the boats for the final few km's. Our support crew, Fleur and Dave, greeted us with hamburgers for the final transition and we set off for a final beach trek to the finish. This was probably one of the highlights of the course for me, under a full moon, in perfect conditions. There were about 3 beach sections to run, with a few headlands to climb in between to find some checkpoints. We kept an eye out behind for headlights but they were a fair way back, allowing us to enjoy the run. Fleur met us at the end, took our orders and dashed to the nearest roadhouse for some pies and burgers.

We finished in 5th place, in 39 hours, 54 minutes. Team Mountain Design came good in the second half and cruised to their first win in 36 hours. Team Mirage Terra X and Anaconda rounded out the top 3. Thanks again to Carboshotz for supporting us.