

## The Cowgirls Ride Out Geoquest '06

The Cowgirls bravely took on the Geo full course this year after Jan and Kim won the half last year and Janie came third in the mixed. We also had our gun navigator Wendy who was new to geoquest, but who had titles such as national rogaine champ under her belt, so we were feeling keen and committed to the big adventure ahead of us.



49 teams had entered the full course- 11 all-male, 4 all-female (a record) and the rest mixed. The female category was competitive as the NZ 'Girls on Top' team of experienced AR chicks was there as well as the last minute Thor-pedo team who had some classy AR talent, then there were the Pink Ladies who were styling throughout the course!

We were hoping we could win the female category as well as finish amongst the top end of the 49 teams. Well..... we may not have won the girls, but it was close (-ish), and we certainly finished in the top third of the course as the other two thirds didn't finish at all!!!

Yep! It was definitely a race of attrition. Here are some stats to prove it:

No. of full teams to finish the full course:

- Mixed teams...11
- Male teams... 1
- Female teams...2

No. of teams finishing shortened course (did not make time cut-off):

- Mixed... 2
- Male... 2
- Female... 1

No. of teams finishing unranked (lost a team member):

- Mixed... 5
- Male... 0
- Female... 1

No. of teams to DNF

- Mixed... 9

- Male..           8
- Female...       0

Makes the girls look pretty tough heh?!!!!!!

So, it was a TOUGH course this year. But the cowgirls were tougher! We never said die (although Janie did say the other 'd' word- doonah- on night 2. Sorry about that Wendy).

LEG 1:

- 12.5k sea kayak
- 15k trek
- 1.5k tube swim
- 10k river kayak
- 5k tube swim

Now, as you can imagine, cowgirls like it hot and dry. This leg was wet and cold. But we came off the paddle 1 minute behind the Girls on Top (GOT) and transitioned like pro's to take the lead on the trek. And a lovely trek it was- nice trail running. We grabbed our tubes and jumped into the freezing mangrove swamp with gay abandon. We were frozen by the time we hit the river crossing and were nearly all swept out to sea by the tide, but managed to scramble up the oysters to be met by our support crew who were offering hot milo, coffee and assorted goodies to warm us up.

Back into the boats with extra layers of clothing on and we were soon met by a dolphin... ooooooh! We all said. There was a near portage, but cowgirl Janie was luckily talked out of this by the other cowgirls and we quickly caught the 2 teams ahead of us who had portaged through a mud bog which slowed them down.

Into another TA with Jude's milo and a quick change into wetsuits for the 5k tube. This was more a sandbank run with short tubes across channels to get CP's. We had some good tube songs going, with "I like the way you tu-uube" being Janie's fav. She sang this to Kimmy as Kimmy control ferreted through the bog. Well done Kimmy.

We were very lucky to be travelling with some other teams here as just when we thought we had all the CP's, we found the other teams heading off to another control. So, we followed and picked it up! Did I say lucky?!

LEG 2:

- Car shuffle
- 30k bike rogaine
- 15k trek rogaine
- 24k bike
- Team split
- 7k bike
- 10.5k trek

Our support crew showed great nav abilities to get us to the start of this leg in the cars. We headed out as night was falling on our bikes. The bike rogaine was a cinch and we collected 9 CP's in good time. Cowgirl Wendy took over the nav controls for the trek rogaine and again, we flew through, managing to keep our lead.

Now the next bit was hard. Where they say '24k bike', they really mean 22k bike and 2k bike haul from hell. I don't mind the occasional bike carry if it's getting you somewhere, but this was just plain silly! How the hell the first few teams cut a trail through the

jungle I hate to think, but by the time we got there, there was a manky trail straight up the side of this hill through the rainforest. And while cowgirls are tough, they are not known for their brute upper body strength– so this was a particular challenge. We dragged, carried, threw and generally man handled our bikes on this climb. Kimmy nearly swore, so that just shows you how bad it was! The rest of us swore heaps, but that doesn't tell you much really. We lost an hour to GOT here, but were still in front at the start of the team split.

Unfortunately, the team split was not our thing. Obviously, cowgirls like to travel in herds, and splitting us was not good for our performance. Kim and Janie went off on the MTB's and got 3 controls while Jan and Wendy trekked for the other two CP's. Janie took the good map which didn't help Wendy. Janie got her first broken chain but fixed it like a pro (thanks for the lessons Cookers– see photo) and, to cut a long story short, we lost 2 hours here. OUCH!. At least Kimmy got a good sleep by the fire.

Now GOT were in the lead☹



And now I can't even remember the 7k bike and 10k trek. So I'll skip these and go to...

### LEG 3:

- 42k Bike
- 9k trek
- 22k MTB
- 20k kayak
- 11k trek to finish

The bike was a push as we were heading for CP18 and the cut off at 6pm. After breaking my chain again, we managed to get there at 5.30pm– phew! Two more teams came in behind us, just making the long course cut-off. Now for a long uphill ride to the start of the rogaine. We all rode strongly on this section... hang on, no we didn't. I made the girls take a 20 min roadside sleep as my back was killing me. Then we all rode strongly. Thanks cowgirls!

The rogaine looked deadly on the map. Soooo steep! We had 4 controls to get and Wendy nailed them all. At one point we seemed to be slipping backwards down the side of this incredibly steep slope, but Kimmy's altimeter was slowly showing signs of upward progress and eventually we gained the ridgetop. YEEEEHAH!

Back to the bikes now and we felt like we were on our way home- for a while. Soon we were slowing with fatigue. Janie had to start singing Abba at the top of her voice to avoid falling asleep while doing 60k/hr down dirt roads (nasty). Aunty Jan's legs were beginning to feel like lead. Wendy was turning into an icicle. But we kept on going!

Eventually we got to our support crew and our kayaks. Thank heavens. Wendy sat in a heated car for a bit while we gathered food and water and pondered the upcoming 2k portage. We ate risotto, soup, creamed rice and more soup while our support crew ran around following our requests for this and that. Cookers was helping with support at this time which was extra nice- thanks Cookers.

Then into the boats and off we paddled. Jan and Kim appeared to be falling asleep for a while there, so Janie started singing again. Although cowgirls like to holler a lot, they are a bit shy about singing in public. But after a slow start, these cowgirls were soon singing non-stop and Kim and Jan were paddling away from the others. Janie was starting to regret her stay-awake tactic.

We stopped at a jetty in town and Janie jumped out to make a phone call cack to HQ. we had nearly run out of coins, so we SMSed HQ to say we were still in the race. Soon we were at the portage point. We got out and lifted the boats to the roadside. Just this little bit of carrying had us totally whacked. We couldn't imagine making it the 2k with the titanic pittarak, so we about-faced and paddled the whole thing. This proved a costly decision time-wise, but we were just too fagged to carry the boats. And we all agree that the paddle was one of the most enjoyable parts of the course.



Now we were on the last trek. We had 1hour to get 2 CP's over 12k of beach and headland running. Yes, in hindsight it looks impossible, but at the time we were fired up. We took off at a gallop and soon had the first CP in the bag. A loose rocky scramble up the next headland slowed us down a bit, and then we were stopped in our tracks when we couldn't locate the last CP. We looked everywhere, then decided perhaps it had been cleared by officials since it was past the finish time already. Just as we were about to head for home, never-say-die-Wendy decided to keep looking on the other knoll. And guess what..... there it was! It seems cowgirl Janie had circled the wrong knoll!!!! Geez cowgirls, all I can say is SORRY! What a stuff-up.

We rolled along the last stretch of beach and into the finish at 1.10pm. They were dismantling HQ, but had kept the finish chute up (thanks Craig!). Our loyal band of supporters were there to cheer us in and had a bottle of bubbly to share.

## YEEEEHAH!!!!

We had made it. We found out that GOT had missed the final CP, so the result was up in the air. We had come close, but their time penalty was not enough to put us in the lead. We felt great to have done the whole course.

But we didn't do it alone! No, no, no! as tough as we cowgirls are, we really needed the TLC of our tireless support crew. So, a HUGE thank you to Jude, Ian, Karen and Adrian. YOU GUYS ROCK!

