

DEBBIE CHAMBERS, ANNE LOWERSON AND ALLY DAVEY AND NEWCOMER ZOE ALBON

GIRLS GOING FOR IT

BY DEBBIE CHAMBERS

The Girls on Top Adventure racing team have just returned from a very successful result in the Geo Quest 48-hour Adventure race in Australia.

Here is how it all came about.

This year the race was held in Coffs Harbour, NSW, Australia. Apart from the infamous 'Big Banana' this location got the thumbs up from the girls because of the warmer temperatures and also the existence of the airport, meaning the NZ-based team members could fly directly from Sydney and save themselves a six-hour drive.

Racing overseas is never an easy undertaking but this is one race where everything seemed to come together for the girls. The first coup for the girls was securing support from www.smartwool.com to cover the entry fee and keep them warm and snug during the event, the second was being able to find Ruahine Adventure Duet kayaks for the event from Steve at Q Kayaks, the third was the arrival of three new hot pink Ellsworth Truth mountain bikes www.ellsworthbikes.com in time for the event and the help from www.bikesmiths.co.nz in Albany to get them made up, the fourth was that they had a very experienced support crew team made up of Craig Gibson (NZ) and Steve Cooper (sleepmonsters.com.au) and the fifth was that they scored themselves a cabin right in the main transition area.

The team for this event was made up of three of the original Girls on Top, Debbie Chambers, Anne Lowerson and Ally Davey and newcomer Zoe Albon. As with every race their goal was to race their own race as efficiently and effectively as possible. After their experience of losing focus and struggling to make sound decisions at around 35 hours in their last 48-hour race, they even put a sleep strategy in place and planned to grab a twenty-minute nap on the first night.

The course was revealed at 3pm on the Friday afternoon and Anne and Debbie then spent the afternoon and early evening plotting the checkpoints and working out route choices, whilst Ally, Zoe and the 'boys on the side' sorted out the food and logistics of transporting gear etc to the various transitions around the course. The race consisted of a total of 259km with 155km of mountain biking, 42km of kayaking, 55km of trekking and 7km of other. For logistical purposes it was broken up into three stages.

Race start was 7.00am on Saturday morning and after a few nervous dashes to the loo and the obligatory photo shoot, they found themselves lined up on the start line ready to tackle the first discipline of stage one which was a 26km kayak from Coffs to Woolgoolga. Helmets were compulsory on this paddle so it was with some trepidation that the girls left the beach wondering what type of surf landing was in store for them. The paddle along the coastline was particularly stunning but it was the thought of seeing hump back whales that really excited the team. Unfortunately, the three to four-metre swells and building Southerly meant that looking around was an absolute no-no and all concentration was needed to keep the boats upright. The Duets were perfect for the conditions though and the girls

made good time on this leg only stopping for a couple of feed the fish sessions due to Anne's sea sickness. Much to their relief the landing was in a sheltered cove and offered no real challenge.

The kayak was followed by a body board which the girls executed with such finesse that Debbie and Ally ended up coming in on the same wave and nearly taking each other out! This was followed by a simple urban run of 3km, a 7km uphill ride to Wedding Bells forest where they did an 8km foot rogain which required them to make decisions about which points to collect and which to leave for later and called for some off-track navigation. Anne's navigation was impeccable and the team worked extremely well together sniffing out tracks and spotting checkpoints to ensure relentless forward motion was a top priority. The next 25km mountain bike leg required them to split up in order to collect all the checkpoints most efficiently. Zoe and Debbie took the most exciting



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