

## GeoQuest Half June 11<sup>th</sup> 2011 – Nambucca Heads

### TriAdventure Apprentices



Race Team	Support Team
Justin	Ronnie (support)
Audrey	Linda (support supporter)
Paddy	Tracey (the support supporters support!)
Howie	

After what seemed like months of training runs up Timbeerwah, rides around Wooroi & the odd raft paddle in the river, GeoQuest 2011 was finally here.. off to Nambucca Heads

Our crack team consisted of 4 newbies to 24hour Adventure Racing but with a range of experiences from other events & disciplines, we thought we'd give it a go. Of course Jan and Kim's inspiration was always present and it's amazing what a smiling Jan can convince you of!!

Our support crew was a little un-orthodox as well, Paddy had roped in his Brother Ronnie (without many details) and we had Tracey & Linda who would do as much as the 3 ankle biters would allow.

### Friday – Faff day

A beautiful sunny day greeted us to the GeoQuest event and HQ. The sleepy river front was alive with bikes, boats & and as Audrey said.. “highly fit & competent looking people” quite exciting. The day turned into one big Faff attack, not my favorite activity, with briefings, kayak inflating, kit packing, kit unpacking, kayak deflating, kit packing, swimming, kit unpacking..... We always had one eye on the watch, waiting for 3pm when the Course Maps would be handed out and the RACE really got underway.

Paddy & I whisked the maps back to team HQ and quickly totted up the overview of the race... “this is a gonna be a piece of piss” ... “home for brekkie”.... “12hours tops” well, yes our egos were writing cheques our bodies couldn't cash, but it did give us a wave of confidence that it was all manageable. Of course, we'd massively underestimated the sheer sneakiness of the Course planner and how awful the tracks were, but hey at the time we'd already won the race.

After briefing the support team, having dinner, talking it all through with Howie & Audrey and finalizing our race kit.. it was off to bed by about 10pm... Now, would the kids be crying all night and spoil the beauty sleep.

## Saturday: RACE DAY:

Brekkie at 6am, leave at 6.45 in the cars to start the race 20km or so further North. All feeling the excited nerves now, have we forgotten anything? Check the tires, load the cars, off we go... fantastic

Fortunately, the organisers had put the pack rafting into the first leg so we only had to carry the 2x rubber rafts, pfd's, oars & double lilo for an hour or so... It was good to check out the competition and see what solutions they had at the start line.

### **8:00: MTB Rogaine with Pack Rafting to finish**

"Don't rush... don't rush" Paddy shouted as we blasted up the first hill. It was a bit of a mad dash to the first CP and the first 2 CP's showed us how we'd underestimated the course nav. Extra tracks not marked on the map and a waist deep walk through a wet culvert saw us waste 10mins in the first 45mins. Not a good start, but it's a long race..

After completing the MTB rogaine separately, we met up as a team on the river bank to start the pack raft.. bugger, there're 3 teams ahead of us inflating their boats. Oh well. Pump away, no faff, on the river in 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Very happy with our set up, 2 boats & 1 lilo for the bikes, some teams were practically swimming and it's a long 2km... We overtake 1 team (Rule 5) in the water and get to the TA in 2<sup>nd</sup> place.

It was great to see the support team who had our kayaks inflated and ready to go. My son Finn, couldn't understand why he couldn't jump in the kayak too so we paddled off hearing him cry out... next time maybe

### **10:39: Kayak**

#### ***2 Min ahead of team Rule5***

With one team in front we put our heads down and got into a nice routine.. well Audrey & I did. Paddy & Howie hadn't done much paddling and they adopted the blind snake strategy, weaving their way down the river. 10minutes later they had it sorted, we'd had our laughs and now we were overtaking the male team in front.

The river separated half way down, we chose the Southern route, the male team went North. The next 40mins or so were very relaxed. No-one in sight, a beautiful river full of kingfishers and herons.

Just before the TA the river rejoined and we could see that the male team had 5minutes advantage on us... AND they'd portaged... at a point where the river looped back on itself they'd jumped out and portaged across saving them about 2km... Just then the safety boat zoomed over to us and asked if we'd seen them do an illegal portage.. "sure did" so had they. Anyway we'll worry about that later, into the TA in 2<sup>nd</sup> place

## **12:22: Lilo swim & beach run**

*8 Min ahead of team Rule5*

*14 Min ahead of team PACIFIC SURVEY*

It's always the things that you don't give a second thought to, that catch you out!! Now in my defense, growing up in the UK doesn't lend itself to summers on lilos or surfboards, but bloody hell, could I stay on the damn lilo and paddle it.. NO..

I was in the river more than on the lilo, we had to keep within 10m of each other, which was tricky when Howie looked like a swan & I was a drowning cat. Still, Paddy came to the rescue and pulled me across. Bugger, we still had another river to cross. With a few rolled eyes & tips from Howie, I got the hang of it and next minute we're on the beach surrounded by other teams.

Shit, shit, shit, we've lost heaps of time, we've been caught by everyone, run...run.... "Calm down boys, these are the leading Full course teams coming through, let's stick to plan" were the wise words from Audrey.. pheww

A quick trot up the beach and the first bit of rain saw us getting ready for the MTB rogaine. Running along going into a TA we always grouped up and discussed the TA process and what we needed to wear etc. very very useful

## **13:34: MTB Rogaine**

*6 Min ahead of team Rule5*

*17 Min ahead of team PACIFIC SURVEY*

It felt great to get back onto the bikes and the first hour or so was easy nav and terrain to get into a good rhythm. Paddy tried out the tow line on the long climbs to keep Audrey fresh and it worked a treat.

CP-U saw us needing to get off the bikes and go bush on a bearing until we found a creek, easy enough... Do'h. We ended up following Team Blackhearts (the eventual winners of the full course) footprints down into the gully and turned right. Missing the creek junction on the left we carried on up the creek as it got steadily steeper and more covered in lantana. After 15mins or so, loosing confidence, Paddy bashed his way over to the creek gully saying "This looks okkkkkkkkkkk" he was there one minute, gone the next.. as the dust settled I could see him 5metres down in the gully shaking his head. Time to turn back. Found the right creek and then the CP. Back to the bikes.

A puncture put a halt on our get away, and we had time to count up the teams around us.. I could see a couple of Full teams and also our competitors Rule5 & Pacific Survey.

Dark fell, lights on, rain stopped, getting cold. Push on, keep the other teams lights in sight. Check our route, yep, all heading to the next CP. Audrey reciting some poetry to keep spirits up... I forget the poem.. but "into the night, into the night.. fight with rage..." stayed in my mind as we pushed on not stopping for food or warm clothes

All the CP's done, it's a fast roll down bitumen into the TA at Bellingen. We'd scheduled some hot food here and a longer stop to change into warm clothes for the night stage. Ronnie & Linda had the TA sorted with hot baked beans, a shelter to huddle under and lot of encouragement. As we left our estimate for the next TA for them was 12pm – 4am.. we couldn't be more accurate than that!

### **18:21: Night Trek (run in our case)**

*1 Min behind team Rule5*

*3 Min ahead of team PACIFIC SURVEY*

Leaving in 2nd place I'd assumed, and told Audrey, that we'd walk this leg. I forgot to mention this to Paddy.! Quite rightly, he got us running and pushing on into the bush. We had 2 options of attacking the first bush CP, we went East along a good jeep track. Over 2 bridges and on to the third. Bugger, the bridge's gone.. the creek was small, but a long way down. It all turned a bit Bear Grylls as we clambered down and then up the steep sided rock. Carry on, turn into bush track, climb & climb & climb onto the ridge, getting cold & wet but feeling strong. CP at the top then down the other side. Team coming up the other way, can't see who but they are all wearing waterproof pants, envious!

Paddy pulls out a wonderful bit of Nav to find the spur track down off the ridge. Hit the bottom and now we're all mixed in with team Rule5. Arrive at the strike point for CP14 at the same time and roughly enter the bush together. The terrain is very steep and slippery but free of lantana. The other team pull behind us and head off to our left. We head straight down the contours in to the gully. Now this is a b###tard of a gully. Rock sided, fallen trees everywhere, wait-a-while vines to complete the horror and NOT THE RIGHT GULLY.. bugger, a few bearings tell us we've veered too far North and landed in the wrong gully. Up and over to the right spot and find the CP.. wasted 20mins or so

Next CP, similar nightmare but this time the map is just plain wrong.. team Rule5 seen in the distance leaving the area, Audrey says "lets look over there, where they are" we ignored her (Do'h) and searched in vain along with team Pacific Survey for 20minustes or so... damn this is frustrating, there it is .>!!!

Just a quick / walk run out of the bush to the TA now... Pacific Survey just 20metres behind.. following a track on a SE bearing.... I check the compass, North, I check my other compass North, "Howie what bearing do you have" .."North". Paddy we're heading North.. bugger. Stop, check map. Other team do the same behind. It's ok, the track bends to the N at the end.. cool.. keep going, other team turn around and head back down.. oh well... that ends up costing them an hour!!

Walking into the TA we see Rule5 heading out in the bikes so we guess they've got 25mins on us now. No support crew just a gear drop. Into the bike gear, runners into backpack. Cup of tea from the angel. Mark up maps for the next leg and swap lights onto helmet... lets go... 20minutes in the TA

## **23:58: MTB**

*35 Min behind team Rule5*

*1hr 14Min ahead of team PACIFIC SURVEY*

This was a straight forward MTB leg with just 1 CP. Easy nav and I'd kept us on the main fire trails. Force ourselves to eat and drink. All feeling good. Bikes going well, we may even catch Rule5

Last turn into the TA to pick up the kayaks. "Shit.. Audrey, my freehubs gone, come here..." I grab hold of her backpack and she pulls me over the final pinch so I can coast into the TA.. Wow, that was timing, without a Freehub, I can't pedal, period. Buts that Ok we're onto the kayaks now....

"Kayaks... shit, support's not here!!!!!" ##### ### 3##### 3##

OK, now what...?! "can we use a stewards phone to call our support?" OK, anybody remember a mobile number for Linda or Ronnie? No, shit.. ok I know Traceys number, no answer, I know my number, no answer... Paddy shouts.."I'll call my Mum in Melbourne"

P: "Hi Mum, no I'm fine.. can you call Ronnie and tell him we're waiting at the Transition... he'll know where... sorry for waking you up... love you"

20 minutes later, Ronnie screams into transition having gone through Nambucca at 85kmh, sorry everyone...

Ok, so we can't catch Rule5 now, let's not loose 2<sup>nd</sup>.. Considering, what just happened, we're happy and still motivated and pleased to be onto the kayaks. Ronnie is mortified, and swearing like a fishermen's wife. Turns out He & Linda had been following us on the live tracking website which confused the crap out of things.. oh'well

## **2:02: KAYAK**

*25 Min behind team Rule5*

*1hour 44 Min ahead of team PACIFIC SURVEY*

Tricky paddle, just because it was misty and raining hard. No lights on the banks and leaving our Ay-ups on our heads, meant we couldn't see a thing. We later realized that no lights would have been the go..

We had an hour or so in the kayaks and we all started reacting a little differently knowing we were nearly home... I was cocky and too relaxed "Oh, it's bound to be down here...".. Audrey was like a nervous Nelly "wait, wait, there's something floating ahead, don't hit it" .... And Paddy & Howie, were sticking to a bearing of N.E even though Audrey could clearly see the bridge in the other direction... I think we had the 'almost home wobbles'

Still, made it to the TA and it was cold, very cold, with a southerly blowing on the beach we decided to leave our PFD's on for the run.. through onto the beach, just an easy 6km run to the finish.

### **3:48: RUN**

*56 Min behind team Rule5*

*1hour 3 Min ahead of team PACIFIC SURVEY*

15minues into the run.. taking it easy, chatting with Howie. I turn around to check on Paddy & Audrey.. "Shit, lights on the beach guys.. 10minutes behind... bugger"

Howie: "The lights have gone out.. they're in stealth mode!!"

We practically sprinted the last 3 km into Nambucca thinking that Pacific Survey was right on our tails. Up over the hidden track onto the boardwalk and the finish line in sight.. "I'm not loosing 2<sup>nd</sup>... I'm not loosing 2<sup>nd</sup>" was my mantra as we all pushed on counting down the final 1000metres.

The Finish line.... Re-group... grab Ronnie... all 5 over the line together.. huge hugs.. no-one else in sight.. not even the Phantom Team.!!!

### **4:38: FINISH**

*46 Min behind team Rule5*

*1hour 22 Min ahead of team PACIFIC SURVEY*

Phew... we did it.. awesome... cold, wet, and elated we headed back to the unit to shower and smile.

20hours 38minutes... 2<sup>nd</sup> place

Pretty pleased with that.. would I do it again?

NO...

I want to do the Full Course.!!

Justin Wyatt