

GeoQuest 2011 Race Report

For ten years the June long weekend has marked the date of when Australia's premier adventure race takes place. Team No Roads Expeditions from Sydney raced against some of the nation's best teams in this year's event held on the Mid North Coast region of Nambucca Heads. The team comprising of Matt Shields, Jeff Price, Mark Howell, Mel Pelly and team manager Garry Sundin all come from around Sydney.



After several months of preparation the team was keen to test themselves against what was called one of the toughest courses on record. Friday morning team registration was completed and we eagerly awaited putting on our new 2XU racing gear. 2XU and No Roads Expeditions have produced a custom spec racing kit for the team who are racing in the Adventure Racing World Championships this November in Tasmania.

8am Saturday morning was the race starting time and the first leg of the race was a 15km ocean kayak north from Nambucca Heads to Hungry head. Final instructions were given to teams on the beach and before we knew it the race was on! Our two surf skis left the beach into the breakers and into the rough ocean swell. Sitting mid pack we increased our pace and started reeling in the leading teams. Before we knew it we had moved up to 3rd place and we just needed a good runner to move into 2nd position. A large wave at our stern steadily formed just at the right time and we jumped on it and into 2nd place. We kept the hammer down and entered the beach at Hungry Head on the heels of 1st Place.



Next leg was a MTB leg with multiple checkpoints (CPs) to find. Team members could separate to find these CPs, our team stuck with a safer but slower option of doing this in pairs. We reached the next leg which included the mystery discipline of transporting your team and bikes down a 2km stretch of the river. Our good choice of raft, an inflatable air bed, was evident as we caught many teams along the way. From here we got back in the kayaks for an 11km paddle to Uranga where we dodged submerged oyster leases along the winding banks of the river. From here we had a pack raft crossing of the Bellinger River and a 5km run up the beach to the town of Mylestom.



The team was doing well and we jumped back on the bikes for a ride towards the foot hills of the Dorrigo escarpment. Weather conditions had started to change and the southerly front was about to hit teams and make racing a whole lot harder. The next leg was an epic trekking stage that took us from 50mtrs elevation up the Syndicate Track to the Dorrigo plateau which sits at over 900mtrs. For nearly 4 hours we pushed onwards and upwards through the wind and rain towards the summit. Little did we know one of the worst storms the north coast has seen in recent history was about to hit the region and would affect the race. We arrived at the Transition Area (TA) wet and frozen but happy to see our support crew. Our support crew had been pushed to the limit as well over coming horrid driving conditions and a bogged vehicle. We now had a car move to the next leg and enjoyed the shelter and warmth of the vehicle.

The next leg was a testing MTB ride with more pushing the bike than riding back to the Kalang River. We arrived at the end of this epic biking leg which had seen us using our bikes as chainsaws to cut through mountains of lantana and push through thick scrub. The sun was now rising behind the storm clouds and welcomed us to our second day on the course.

We loaded our packs with supplies for the Mega Trek leg and headed for the hills. The navigation choices were plentiful and careful route choice was important not to lose time to other teams.



Conditions were not improving and torrential rain was now causing creeks to flood and slowing progress on difficult terrain. Approaching the end of this leg we caught a couple more teams as we found our legs and talked off the final hours ahead of us as we approached the end of the race and crossing the finish line at Nambucca Heads. With worsening weather forecasts predicted and reports of emergency services vehicles getting bogged on course things weren't looking good. As our team approached the final ride leg we were told by officials that the race would finish early and positions would be recorded as we checked in. When we reached the TA our team handed in its control cards and tracking device ending our race.

The team was happy with our performance and would like to thank our support crew and sponsors for their support and assistance during the race. We now look forward to the XPD later this year and the lead up events we will be competing in.

