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 Jun
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2013

GeoQuest

Betsy, Betsy. Mountain Man.

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As many of you may already know, i compete in adventure racing and I love it!

It's tough and brutal, you become sleep deprived, receive cuts, leaches, toenails falling off, feel sick, and are going constantly for hours, days, even weeks. You feel uncomfortable and wish you were home. You eat food constantly and nothing ends up being all that appetising. You walk for hours and even days. You get lost down creeks, valleys, and mountaintops in thick impenetrable scrub. Vines, stinging leaves, and wait-a-while vines tear at your skin. Your equipment fails, mountain bike chains break, kayaks sink. After the race you get infections, and are hungry and tired for days.



My legs were bleeding from leach bites and vine cuts. For the full gallery of pics click the picture

Yet I still love it!

What is an adventure race (AR)?

I always explain it as being similar to an off road triathlon (multi sport). The normal disciplines are mountain biking, kayaking, and trekking. Some AR's include "mystery" disciplines and most include something extra like a swim or coasteering. The idea is to navigate your way around an unmarked course



and collect checkpoints or CP's.

On the long weekend I joined my BMX Bandits team to compete in



At the race briefing

[Geoquest 48hr](#). This race is roughly 200km and you have 48hrs to complete it in. We received the race brief and maps the night before and set to planning our route, food, gear, and contacting maps. As we prepared for the race our support crew feed us. Friday 10pm and it was off to bed.



Team JPP BMX Bandits

The course consisted of 10 legs. Click [HERE](#) full race description and gradient profiles.

1. Ocean kayak 16 km
2. Trek/swim 19 km
3. Kayak 16 km
4. Trek 15 km
5. Mountain bike 50 km
6. Trek 15 km
7. Mountain bike 38 km
8. Trek split 7 km
9. Mountain bike 20km
10. Kayak 13 km

8am at the Harrington lighthouse 25 teams of 4 people were ready to go. The hooter sounded and off we ran down to the beach and into our kayaks.



Capsizing with no rudder

We were off to a flying start and then the kayak Dale and I were in started taking on water. We had lost our rear hatch in the rough sea. The kayak became unstable and capsized. We battled to get it empty,

upright and back in to paddle. We capsized about 3-4 times and I was getting very cold and beginning to shiver uncontrollably. We got the kayak under control and then the steering cable snapped. The last few km into the beach was a tough slog as we tried to keep it straight.



I was thankful to get my feet on land.

Out of the kayak and into the transition for leg 2, the 19km trek/swim. Our support crew threw wraps into our hands along with our packs and fins, before we took off running.

The 16km kayak leg 3 was where we made up a lot of time and places.

I think by the end we had moved up towards 5th place.



Running into run/kayak TA after running down from 480m above sea level.

Now the race was starting to get a bit more serious. The first few legs are designed to warm you into the latter half of the race. Now these distances don't sound like far and there not really. The thing that is deceiving though is the terrain. You can complete 15km on road running in about 1:30hr, but trekking looking for CP's in thick, lantana filled scrub is a different story altogether. It's not unusual to be in terrain where you can only average 1-2km an hour.

We started the leg 4 trek at 4pm and it's hard to remember this part of the race but I'm sure it went well as we had moved into 4th place.

During the 50km mountain bike we had one broken derailleur to take care of after going down the wrong bush track that was over grown. I felt good at this stage but was starting to get a little tired, I knew 3am would be the start of the down hill slide into tiredness. We meet our support crew who feed us meatballs and mash potato.

We could not complete this race without our support crew. To compete in GeoQuest 48hr you must have a support crew to transfer all your equipment from one transition area to the next. When we would arrive to a TA, our support crew would have all our gear laid out for us, cups of tea, food, clothes..anything we wanted. They work hard and tirelessly. They are awesome!!



The 15km trekking leg 6 was our turning point. We started this section at 3am and this is the most dangerous time. Up until

These meatballs were fantastic. I think we all ate sleep monster mash as we remember eating mash but the support crew tell us they didn't give it to us.

here you feel ok. From 3am till the sun comes up it becomes very hard as you battle the sleep monsters. Some people get them bad, some people not so much.

Sleep monsters are the things you see in the dark when you are so tired from racing and are becoming sleep deprived. The 48hr race is not so bad, but something like XPD that is 12 days...well...some of the stories you hear...

Last year Dave saw a seal jumping over the end of his kayak, during XPD I heard someone talking about how they were trekking at night whilst talking to Abraham Lincoln. I have never seen such things, only signs and people that were not there. Seeing water is common at night and the depth of field under your head touch is all messed up.



Clipping a CP at transition area

Falling asleep whilst traveling is common too. It's amazing how you can half sleep whilst walking or paddling. Riding can be dangerous and many people fall asleep while on their bikes. A girl I was racing with one year did this and crashed on a flat, straight road as she feel asleep. She didn't wake till she hit the road, luckily she was unhurt.

We made a huge navigation error on trek leg 7 and ended up looking for a CP in the wrong creek for



Dale having a chat at transition

about 1hr. We were tired and starting to make mistakes. After another small navigation error we emerged to meet our support

crew who feed us some egg and bacon wraps as it was lunchtime on Sunday now.

Back onto the bikes for the second last bike leg, leg 7- 38km MTB. Now it was getting hard for me to shake off the sleep. I had been up and physically active now non stop for 36hr! I had been eating non-stop and was starting to not want to eat anymore. Food starts to lose its appeal after a while. You don't feel like eating but you know you must to keep up the energy. This ride was like a roller coaster, up and down, and up and down. The downs were great, fast and no peddling, but too quick. The ups were a slow, long grind. The up hills must take 5 times as long as the down hills and this all takes lots of energy, all to collect a few CP's. As I get more tiered I ask myself, why do I do this?

After the trek split it was throttle down and hammer it home, as we could feel the warm bed and shower beckon us.





The emotions you feel sometimes are overwhelming.

Enjoying some warm REAL food. Not 1 energy bar in site.

Once you

get past a point you know you are so close to home and you just want to get their so bad. You want to stop moving, stop walking in thick scrub looking for silly little flags, stop riding this dam mountain bike. Being uncomfortable



Rachelle is an absolute gun.

and in pain drives you forward so you can cross that finish line. I guess we are mentally strong and know that we will finish what we set out to achieve it's just a matter of when. So you need to put up with being uncomfortable, being in pain, shedding a little blood. It all makes you stronger in the end.

All photos were taken by our support crew photographer Ben Curulis. For more details or pictures go [HERE](#)

2 Responses to "GeoQuest"

1. joe says:

June 13, 2013 at 6:00 pm



bettsy you are a weapon. that sounds truly horrendous bro - i couldn't imagine a stronger or more determined man for the job!

[Reply](#)

2. atbettsy says:

June 13, 2013 at 6:03 pm



Thanks Joe. I absolutely love it...maybe not at the time. Im looking forward tot he next one. Maybe Godzone 2014 in New zealand. It's meant to be EPIC!

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The North Face 100. Part 2