

Mountain Designs GeoQuest Team Outer Limits 2013



The Race to the Start Line

GeoQuest had been on the radar for Team Outer Limits 2013 race calendar for some time. The hurdles to jump on our way from North Queensland were always going to prove challenging, but we were keen to get a team together for Australia's premier adventure race. After talking it over with a few athletes in China at The Wenzhou Outdoor Challenge, we returned one step closer to the start line. Hugh Stodart, a seasoned adventure racer, ideally located in Sydney had come on board and one of Melbourne's upcoming Peak Adventure athlete's Alex Polizzi had agreed to step up to the 48hour race. Planning and logistics began, with the geographically dispersed team mates the emails mounted, especially from Hugh, the master mind behind all things logistics. Support crew was already recruited, in the way of my forever supportive sister Belinda and Hugh's brother, Duncan, an experienced adventure racer himself. So with 4 team mates, 2 boats and 2 support crew we were on our way to the start line. As with the race itself you are never far from a wrong turn or mishap and this came in the form of an unsuspecting Melbourne car dooring Alex as he rode through the city. However, he didn't leave us stranded and put us in contact with Serge Kurov from Adventure Junkie who willingly stood up with 3 days notice.

Race Preparation - Harrington



Jenni's local knowledge and contacts came in handy as we had accommodation sorted with Dianne and Bob Lamborne, whose double garage turned into the one stop gear shop as we laid out gear for the race and Bob's toys gave way to bikes, spare parts and paddles. After some quick introductions, everyone was on the same page and ready to let the adventure begin. The anticipation of the course release mounted

throughout the day as we completed gear and safety checks. The race briefing is one of the only chances to actually chat with all our adventure racing friends from across the country because as soon as the course maps have been collected it's game on. The course - 10 legs, 3 kayaks, 3 bikes and 4 treks a total of 201kms (if you don't get lost) and a maximum of 56 hours. Due to the vast experience and some stellar teamwork, from both team members and support crew, we had all the maps marked and laminated, all the gear packed in the support truck, fed and to bed by 9pm. The strategy had been discussed and in Hugh's words summed up as "Stay on Macpac for as long as we can". Judging by the look on Jenni's face, I don't think that's what she was expecting.

The Race



Leg 1 - 16km Kayak - The opening leg brought some serious swell and downwind in an unfamiliar ski and with a new team mate on board made for an exciting paddle. A few close calls but no capsizes and some great runners had us coming up the beach a minute behind Macpac.

Leg 2 - 19km Trek/500m Swim - Like a fish in water now, Serge grabbed the map and we were off, making no mistakes, before we knew it we were through Diamond Head and swimming across the channel. A quick jaunt up North Brother Mountain had us passing some of the Half teams, who were all cheering us on and updating us on Macpac's progress. Sweet flowing single track back down to Laurieton and we were back in the kayaks only 6 minutes behind the leaders.

Leg 3 - 16km Kayak - The flat water paddle seemed straight forward until we reached some tricky shallow sections. But all in all a pretty straight forward leg and we picked up the fastest leg time.

Leg 4 - 15km Trek -

What would take us into the night was the 8 out of 9 checkpoint foot rogaine. In certain Bycroft fashion, the check points were not easily accessible by tracks and much bush bashing ensued. We saw both teams Macpac and Mountain Designs at the Bird Tree checkpoint, but aside from that our differing routes through



the forest kept us apart. Trekking up into the transition area, Macpac passed us on their bikes, much to our dismay as we still had a checkpoint to get and knew at this stage we had obviously taken a longer route choice. That last checkpoint was not without difficulty and we finished the leg 10 minutes behind Mountain Designs.

Leg 5 - 50km Bike - Ayup lights on for the 50km slog and we were determined to make up some time. Screaming down the hill from transition, I had a quick lesson on keeping my distance as I collided into Hugh as he was taking the first turn. Shaking it off, with only minutes lost, we were back on our way, a close call. With some spot on nav from Hugh we quickly caught Mountain Designs, searching for a checkpoint in the long grass next to the track. We then played cat and mouse for a few more checkpoints before taking what seemed a clearer yet longer run to the TA as MD rode in the opposite direction. To our delight we had regained second place.

Leg 6 - 14km Trek - Well into the night we set off from the TA to find a track paralleling the creek direct to the first checkpoint. The track was proving difficult to find and before we knew it Mountain Designs were on our heels in the same predicament. It was the next decision we made that changed the race as we knew it. With Mountain Designs diving straight into the bush for a long hard slog into the creek bend we turned tail and decided to take the long way around. We knew we had to move quickly along the main track if we had any hope of getting a lead on MD. So back through the TA and out the other side, up the hill and around to the checkpoint, the question was 'Had MD been here already?' Without any certainty we decided to bush bash directly to the next checkpoint, spot on nav from Hugh and Serge had us not only jag the checkpoint but then bash through some unrelenting lantana scrub to find the head of a track leading us out to the road, for our long shuffle to the next TA. Arriving at the TA to a very excited support crew, we knew we had made the right decision and at this point had managed to hold second place. The quiet town of Comboyne at about 5am and 600 metres of elevation was the coldest spot out on the course, the 2 minute noodles were a god send, but with Hugh cracking the whip there was no rest and we were back on our bikes.

Leg 7 - 38km Bike - 2.5 kms into the leg Hugh noticed I was missing a crucial item. After a last minute wardrobe change at TA I had failed to put my race vest back on. A quick dash back to the TA, thankfully our support crew hadn't left as they were helping another team with a bike technical, and we were back on our way. Oh the hills!! Unrelenting, we made our way across the Brother range and thankfully the sun was up before we reached the look outs, to make it all worthwhile. Serge and I went into autopilot while Hugh towed Jen up some hills we struggled with on our own. A huge effort from him at this later stage in the race.

Leg 8 - 5km Trek - The short split nav leg saw Serge and I team up and Jen and Hugh set off to get the checkpoints. With some intel on Macpac that it took them 90 minutes we were hoping to do the same. Hugh and Jen got back a little earlier and those 5 minutes was the rest Jen had been craving for quite some time.

Leg 9 - 20km Bike - The final bike leg was another rogaine where route choice had been scrutinised. We navigated to the first 2 checkpoints no hassles but took a wrong turn on the way to the 3rd. Over the 24 hour mark by now we were all tired and fatigued. Thanks to a sign post we located our position and quickly rectified our path. Happy to ride into the last TA and even happier to see our support crew as the last few TAs had been unsupported.

Leg 10 - 13km Kayak - A scenic paddle down the Manning River was all that remained between us and the finish line, double checking we had all mandatory gear we set off down the river with the sun shining and our spirits high. Within no time, Harrington was in sight as we clipped the last check point, determined to race to the very end we paddled hard up the channel, took no time in beaching the boats and ran up the main street to the finish. Crossing in a final time of 30 hours and 5 minutes, second place to Team Macpac. We had surpassed our expectations and were delighted with how the team had pulled together and completed the race.



Thankyous

Firstly Jenni and I would like to thank Serge and Hugh for making up Team Outer Limits Adventure Fitness.

The team would like to thank our support crew, Belinda, Duncan, Ricky (a mate of ours who was just passing by and thought it would be fun) and Jamie (7 years old and I think he already has the bug) as well as the Lamborne's for inviting us in to their home and sharing the experience with us.

I would also like to thank the sponsors and suppliers of Team Outer Limits for your valued and ongoing support: BNG Sports, Thule Australia, Nathan Sports and Compress Sport.

For another perspective read Serge's report on the [Adventure Junkie website](#)





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