

# HardTales in the Wild

Bozones Make Good - June 2005

Our first taste of kayaking through the surf was during the competency checks and whatever spare time we had on the Friday before the event. We had plenty of practice in water entry to the inflatables as the surf took its toll of us, both going out and coming in. I was knackered after Friday's competency checks and that night I had little sleep listening to the pounding surf and thinking of what tomorrow would throw at us.

The 7.00am start, and the vast number of competitors lined up for the start, was a memorable experience. We managed to get through the surf OK but we had difficulty on the trip south with one boat being difficult to steer. We stopped a number of times and changed crew in the boat to ease the strain. We were the last of all the kayaks to line up for the big swell and charge through the break wall at Camden Haven. Last Geo half boat in but our time of around 2hrs was better than expected.

Onto the 8km trek up North Brother, a good steady climb, we had to give way to many teams as they were running down from the checkpoint at the top. There were still a few teams with us which made us feel a bit better, we then jogged down the mountain side.

Just as we were slowing to check our map, Danny slipped on the only stone on the track and rolled his ankle. It did not look good, Danny strapped his ankle and popped a pain killer and then proceeded to slide on his backside down the mountain to the next transition on Queens Lake.

We got to Queens Lake with only one team behind us, still in it, then on to the tube raft for the 3km crossing of the lake. We could see around 7 teams on the water so we were off after a quick change. We made it to half way across the Lake in 45 min then we ran out of steam, the wind came up and everything seemed to slow us. We managed to pass two teams but it had taken over two hours to do the crossing. I could hardly walk when I hopped out to get the checkpoint.

We then carried our raft 7km back to Bonny Hills with Danny limping all the way and in some pain. We took over two hours to do the trek and on the way we saw several of the leading full geo teams heading out on to Leg 3 and we had not finished leg one. We arrived back at the start after eight hours. We were all ready to keep going and the strapping on Danny's ankle was holding up. We set out on the first bike leg with around 30 mins of daylight left.

The bike leg went well except for turning off before a bridge on the way to CP11 and not after the bridge. This track led us onto a loop road and after the 2nd time jumping the same logs we knew we were in trouble, there were two other teams with us at this stage and after 15 min we were all back on the right track. The bike ride then took us to a river crossing.

We arrived at the river crossing around 7.30pm it was getting cold and the rain had just started. We stripped off after leaving our bikes on the bank and joined a number of teams wading then swimming the cold water crossing. I must admit that I hated every minute of this section. We got to the other side, picked up a boat then swam it back to pick up our bikes. Load on all the bikes and gear then back into the water for the last time. It seemed to take forever. Once to the other side our support crew cleaned up gave us our wet suites then we were on the raft paddle back to lake Cathie.

There was one CP that we picked up off a compass bearing which saved wandering around in the dark. We were joined by another team which waded down the river faster than we could paddle. We were on and off the raft a few times as by now we were all done with paddling. We eventually made it to the next TA where we changed again into dry clothes for the trek along the beach back to the start.

The only problem with this leg was that the tide was in and we had to scramble around the rocks/cliffs for half the walk, can't take a trick. It was still an enjoyable walk and by now the rain had stopped and it was a pleasant night. As we were scrambling over the rocks we frightened the life out of some young couples enjoying themselves before our head lamps made them get dressed in a hurry.

We finished the second leg at around 11.30 pm, still in good spirits with one leg to go.

We still had a long way to go, we all had a shower and some hot food, Danny and Gina had 30 min sleep and Tony took it easy till it was time to go. I did up the maps for the next bike leg and took my time as I was having trouble find grid squares on the map as it was way past my bedtime. We plotted a longer route which was hopefully easier at night when we are all a little tired.

We left on the next leg around 1.30am. There were still 5 geo half teams yet to leave so this gave us some motivation to make the next leg a good one. We started working well as a team, calling out distances, roads, features etc and we made sure we did not take any

wrong turns. At one stage we saw two teams moving quickly towards us from the direction of a checkpoint. We plodded along got the checkpoint turned around then back came the two teams. Have you seen CP 16 came the shout, yep keep going next right then walk up the muddy hill. It was good to know we were doing things right. By now we were meeting more teams along the way and we seemed to be making good progress. We picked up CP 18 easily and as we got out to a main track we thought it was time for a bite to eat and a short rest. After 20 min lying on the track another team came by and asked if we had seen CP18. I looked at his map and noticed straight away that they had the CP marked in the wrong grid square. They had been riding around for over an hour, a few short directions and off they went in the right direction. It was a bad move to stop when we did as the cold and tiredness had caught up to us and it took a while to get going again.

On our way down to the adventure gain some teams passed us at a Y intersection they went right and we went left, we never saw them after that. We knew we were right as a few minutes later the two white dogs we were told about at the briefing came into view. Shortly after sunrise we made it back to Queens lake for the start of the adventure gain. We had a good bike ride!

When we arrived at the TA we were surprised to find that we were currently in 7th place but there were a number of teams close behind. We selected our route around the course and went for a few of the more difficult checkpoints in the creeks. We were glad that we were doing it in daylight as some of the creeks were very thick. We found all the cp's quickly and made our way to the top of the mountain for the abseil. We were joined by another Geo half team at the abseil, they had elected to have a good sleep during the night and had enough energy to run the adventure gain course. The abseil was quick and easy and all the team members enjoyed the view and the experience. We had a quick walk back to the TA then onto our bikes for the short ride back to the finish line.

We went through the finish line just after Aroc had completed the full course, the crowd gave us a big cheer and Aroc sprayed us with champagne. What a way to end our first attempt at Geo.

To sum up it was a great experience for all of us to finish our first big event. Our introduction to ocean kayaking was an experience in itself. We learnt a lot about ourselves. We did not break any records but we just kept going without making any disasterous errors on the course. We came in 3rd in the mixed class and eight overall, not bad when for the first leg we were running at the end of the field.

Thanks to the organizers for a great event and choosing a great location. Thanks for all the friendly smiles from Transition helpers, support crews and competitors.

For two first timers at distance events Tony and Danny held on through some tough times to make a strong finish. Gina was as strong as usual and her happy nature keeps everyone in tune on the course. Me, I just love adventure racing and if anyone over 50 reads this storey, come out and join us, it's a great experience.

### Pa Egg

