

Getting Wet at Ewen Maddock Dam

By Tony Scott

We achieved our first navigational feat before we even started the Get Wet Bigaine – we found Ewen Maddock Dam. Despite living in Brisbane for quite a few years, I'd never actually known where it was. This picturesque dam is hidden very close to the main highway, and was a great place to spend the day.

Paul and I had planned to hire boats from Camp Koongamoon, who mysteriously withdrew their hire canoes just days before the event. Many thanks to Meredyth and Peter (and the canoe towers) who organised replacement boats at very short notice.

The course notes included phrases such as 'maintain your sense of humour', which should have warned us to plan conservatively. Despite paddling a slower canoe, our conservative plan (which took us all of 30 mins) involved clearing the course. But then Paul and I have always had eyes larger than our stomachs...

After the final briefing, we were off, clearing the buoyed rope around the launch site with ease. Just as well, as our event would have been very short if we didn't get past this small obstacle. We amused ourselves trying to keep pace with those walking to 23 around the shoreline.

Even though they were already a long way ahead of us, we were able to follow the faster boats across the water, so navigation was fairly straightforward. At least until we hit the reeds. It was tricky finding a way to shore through the reeds, though we could see flattened areas where other boats had been before us. Progress was tough - Paul was kind enough to jump overboard and pull the boat forward, but it wasn't long before I had to jump overboard too – the event was living up to its name, and there was no way we were keeping dry.

For our next foray into the reeds at 34, we shipped our paddles and used the reeds to pull ourselves forward. We followed another kayak to make our job easier, but our fat canoe was a bit too wide for their slender path. Eventually we gave up, illegally parking our boat in the middle of the flattened reed path and jumping overboard. On our way back out we hit a traffic jam, running into several others following our path to land. No worries, we used their boats to pull ourselves out, so everyone was happy.

We were enjoying the reeds so much that we forced our way ashore at 50 without looking too hard at the map. After wading about in the reeds a bit, we realised that the organisers had been kind enough to allow us to get that control from the water. Sheepishly we got back in our boat and paddled round to it.

By the time we hit 52 we were looking forward to walking for a bit. We soon discovered that the setters were quite fond of hiding the controls – while they were in the right spot, controls 62 and 80 were nicely tucked into lantana 'caves' which made them fun to find. Control placement was generally very good, though unfortunately an unmarked track near 100 meant that the control was hung a fair way outside the circle. Luckily there were a few nearby teams who did find it and were happy to spread the word. We enjoyed climbing the tree over the water to get to 32, and wondered if any teams had fallen in trying to get to it.

Time was running out, so we cut our ambitious plan short and headed for home, looking forward to a good feed after a great day out. We weren't disappointed – the Sunshine Orienteers laid on a fantastic spread, with tables brimming with fruit, salads and steaks. However the highlight had to be the spectacular desserts table. I wanted to try everything, but my stomach wouldn't let me. I did take home my event fee worth of leftovers though, so I definitely got my money's worth. A huge thanks to the organisers and caterers for a brilliant event!