

## **Real Handful Rogaine – Setter's Report**

Course setting for the Real Handful Rogaine kicked off with a bit of exploration West of Mt Molloy in March. The aim was to check out the Northern end of the Hann Tableland National Park and the foothills on its North East side. Some excellent rogaining terrain was discovered (beneath some fairly lofty grass in places) but a phone conversation with Mike the next week suggested I might have some joy down the opposite end of the Hann Tableland. Talk focused on a bitumen road to the top of the tableland, waterfalls along Leadingham Creek and the East Hodgkinson River, numerous roads and tracks and terrain on top of the tableland which appeared surprisingly navigable (or maybe not surprising given classification as a 'tableland'). However, as NQ rogainers know, topographic maps can be cruel deceivers and an Easter recce was required to confirm or deny this location as appropriate for a 9/3Hr rogaine.

The initial trip to the eventual course site involved exploration of roads and cattle pads by bike and confirmed the area was indeed well suited to rogaining - Some brilliant hiking country, some prominent features, reasonably well mapped and generally very open vegetation above fairly friendly grass.

With land access sorted (after some initial hiccups), the most enjoyable element of course setting could be undertaken – sitting at home deciding where to place 30 something checkpoints. I initially aimed to set an achievable (or almost achievable) course where considered planning could allow teams to gradually climb via gentle spurs and friendly ridges to the higher sections before a rapid descent down either of the roads climbing the hill or vice versa. The topography didn't quite line up like the giant staircase I envisioned but there was definitely the possibility to cover a fair chunk of ground without constantly climbing and descending.

With this in mind, TAFE Outdoor Rec students Alex, Dani and Sean in tow, a bag full of rogaine markers and an ambitiously marked map in hand I headed off bright and early for a big day of course setting. We headed off to the Eastern side of the course as I was less familiar with this and found it was similar in vegetation and terrain to the country West of the road. We worked quickly up to around 750m or 800m altitude thanks to some great cattle pads, the old road and some excellent rogaining territory. Not long after though (around when it started raining), the vegetation got a lot gnarlier, I lost confidence in the accuracy of sections of the map (or maybe my ability to read it??) and the going got a lot slower. After some aimless wandering and a big bash through top of the tableland vegetation, we hit the very top of the road at the tower. From here (and West of the road) some top sites were found including the tree fern patch (CP29), the East Hodgkinson River and the East West spurs and ridges south of here. Daylight beat me however and I returned to the road for the night walk back to the car after what turned into more than 13 hours of walking.

A couple of days later I thankfully pulled up fine from the Speewah Legend Trail Run and headed back out for a big afternoon and evening of marker hanging. This session started down the south west and discovered multiple waterfalls and the very scenic Leadingham Ck along with some markers to 'join' the course with Eastern section already set and then all the markers close to the HH. Another big day with lots of k's, a late finish, rain significantly heavier than both the previous trips but markers were out and a course was set.

Quite a few things seemed to go well over the weekend of the event. 9 Hour teams seemed to like the early map pick up, 2 tags per team went well and I'm still coming to terms with the fact that Navlight operated perfectly. In fact but for a couple of late teams, results could have been presented less than ten minutes after the finish.

Performances were as impressive as results were close. The brisk pace Brainstormers' (Jack Sloss and Sally Cranney) took off with must have continued as they missed only 100 points from a challenging 3 hour course and got home 15 minutes early. The performance of novice team CTG (Cameron Taylor, Graham Moroney, Tara Bell) in second and just 50 points behind was also tremendous and will have a few experienced rogainers looking over their shoulders. Wily Team Grey Fox (Mike Coleman, John Harders and Mary Crabb) (equal 3<sup>rd</sup> on points and 4<sup>th</sup> on time) planned a cunning course that saw them cross one creek in three hours (100m from the HH) and discover the joys of spur surfing.

Similarly the 9hr results featured some excellent performances. The Brush Turkeys (Tani Cooper and Carl Schedlich) showed some very handy navigation skills to win the mixed category (950 points) while The Party Has Arrived (Louise Carver and Rebeka Pople – First Women's Team) put in a performance (1490pts and 3<sup>rd</sup> overall) that will guarantee they are very competitive at the World Rogaining Championships later in the year. First and second were separated by just 20 points despite 9 hours and 'opposite' courses. Fat Adam performed a largely anti clockwise loop and returned with a rapid finish and 1580 points while Woody Willy planned and executed a very efficient and accurate clockwise loop to clock up 1600 points.

To finish up - thanks again to George Lowe of Glen Russell Station for land access, Mike Coleman for his continuous help to course setters and anyone involved in rogaining, the TAFE crew for assistance setting and on the day, Shane and Mum for looking after catering, sponsors It's Extreme, Adventure Equipment and Cairns Plan Print for prizes and discounts, Adam and Kirk for looking after the shittiest job, those who have volunteered to collect markers and to all the wonderful rogainers who turned up on Mothers Day to compete in an event on the side of a big hill and returned safely with hardly a mention of Spear Grass and great positive feedback!

Chris

## **Winners Report from Team Woody Willies – 9 Hour**

With members from each of the teams soon to represent the far north in XPD 2010 present the pace at the Real Handful 9 hour Rogaine on the Hann tableland was going to be fast. Maps were handed out the night before which allowed a bit of extra time to strategise. Initially 'Woody Willies' planned course had us trying to sweep the course however by halfway through the event we realised this was a bit unrealistic. Most teams tackled the course in a clockwise fashion with the main difference in route selection being at what stage to head to back to Andy Shepherd drive to collect the five central checkpoints.

Had it not been a competition you would have found most of the teams enjoying the spectacular scenery from one of the many lookouts or swimming in one of the beautiful pools along the creek between checkpoints 78 and 87. The cattle pads along many of the ridges and pleasant undergrowth through much of the area also meant that the walking was some of the best in the region.

For the first few hours we enjoyed the company of the girls in 'The party has arrived' before a bit of skinny dipping forced the girls to choose an alternate route. We chose to collect the middle checkpoints from 87 returning to the clockwise route via 58 and 69 which proved to be a good strategy because of the clear cattle pads along the two ridges.

Our last hour and a half became a bit frantic as we pushed for home with the lure of a few extra points on the way pulling us from the most obvious and sensible route. In the end those extra points gave us the margin we needed. In hindsight we wouldn't have gone to the bottom south west as these points cost a lot of time and weren't worth many points – but at this stage we were still hoping to sweep the course. We should also have read Chris' very helpful course notes as they provided excellent information which was not much good to us after the event when we finally got around to reading them.

All in all an excellent event hosted by Chris and his family. Some great country, well placed checkpoints and very big thanks to Rogaining NQ and the property owners of Glen Russell Station.

Course Route:12-20-25-37-43-81-35-51-39-78-87-87-49-70-48-26-108-58-69-106-29-79-96-93-17-57-82-68-95-65-46-HH

Dave Wood and Brett Wilson

### **Winners Report from Team Brainstormers – 3 Hour**

Sally and I had great fun, lots of panoramic views and by running the high country first we only struck the spear grass during the third hour of our adventure.

This was Sally's' first bush rogaine and the first I have run in for 18months or so and on arrival I had to get a quick reminder from Mike on how to use the compass. I had in my head put red in the shed and follow Fred, but just needed a reminder of what that meant.

We only had a few minutes to plan and I dont know how others do it but we looked towards a high point scorer and plotted a course around that.

The plan was to run East and collect 18, 65 ,46, 11 then do the West side. On getting to 65 we realised we were making good time so instead of going for 46, we headed for 95 and 70. When we crossed the road we decided not to go for 51 as it looked a bit too undulating to make it back in time, then cleaned up the rest on the East side of the road. The topographical features were easily realised on the ground, so instead of using the compass all the time and following a line we followed the ridges and looked for outstanding topographical features to delineate our travel. This is a fast way to travel, however it is easy in undulating country to take a wrong ridge line. We over-ran 70 by 50 m and took a while to find it and under ran 81 by 50 m and took a while to find it as well but taking a reading from a major point on the map was fairly easy in this country.

We really enjoyed the course it was great country to be looking out over and we went pretty close to maxing out on our abilities.

I am aware in this spear grass country the earlier in the year the less likely to be savaged by the spears. Look forward to the next rogaine.

Jack and Sally

Team Brainstormers

### **The Party Has Arrived report – Louise Carver & Rebeka Pople**

If this country is not a rogainers heaven, it sure is very close. What an event!!! The country was stunning and the weather mild. We travelled to waterfalls, waterholes, granite slabs and features, along shady cattle pads and rolling spurs with awesome views.

In our course design we were realistically looking at travelling 3.5 to 4km/hr where we would be covering 30-36km in 9 hours if all went to plan. On studying the map, we decided that the SW corner looked fast and open. Why not get a few quick ones to get our eyes in and help our confidence.

By the time we started ascending the ridge at 37, we were warmed up and all systems go. We had chosen the same path as the Woody Willy's and no matter what we tried we couldn't shake them. We were blessed with great walking country, waterfalls, and granite slabs. By the time we reached the waterfall at 87, we finally parted company, as they headed east and we headed north to 69. At last we were on our own. We proceeded north east to hit the road and headed up to the radar at 79. We were travelling well and reached this point exactly half way through the allotted time. Here we passed Fat Adam having lunch and enjoying the view. We then embarked on clearing the north east section of the course. The vegetation was a little tougher initially, but once we gathered 93, 96, giving 17 a miss, the going got nice again. We ran into Star Factor at 82 and played cat and mouse with them for a while.

Initially on inspection we thought the south east section of the map was hilly, but still it presented itself with some nice spurs to follow. We arrived at 95 with a little over an hour to go, so we played it safe and decided to head home and proceeded to 65, 46, and then 18. We made it to hash with 15 mins to spare.

Nine hours seemed to fly by due to the quality of the country we traversed. Chris White placed his controls in awesome locations, which highlighted the many great features of the area. The only slight detraction was a little bit of spear grass.

Great course, great country.

Congratulations Chris!!!