

Well and truly Bluffed

I have never written a race report for a rogaine before, so thought I would chip in for one. Not from a winners perspective, or a first timer perspective, but from someone who ate a big slice a humble pie.

The 2012 8/15/24 was something we planned for this year, as my wife and new baby boy were going to partake in the roving 15 with another hiking friend who has a baby. The girls ended up bailing sadly due to the weather forecast and one of the young ones coming down with a fever the night before. With Dave, it was an opportunity for me to go a bit harder in the 8. We opted to stay on the flatter stuff, and set a course that should see us do ok, with a bunch of options at the end if we came in early towards HH..

As we set off, there was the usual mad rush in various directions by the group of motley attired characters.

Beautiful open rolling country. The rain was staying away as well. After 3 cp's, we were not seeing any other teams apart from fleeting glimpses, and I reckon that variety of route choice is an absolute credit to the organizers.

Around 3 hours, we converged on CP80 to find it not working. No pencil damn it. Silly. Memory cue for the initials. "Hairy mountain yak" as a well nourished angus steer gazed in curiosity as we trotted past. Nice. Despite a couple of the usual nav rethinks that may have cost us half an hour or so to that point, we had 500 in the bag and were about an hour ahead of the conservative plan - we felt we were quite on track for our planned route and the optional extras towards the end,. We amused ourselves some more thinking up other cues for 80's acronym. "High mountain yodeling". Yeah, good one, though the attempts to yodel were not. What awesome country for a rogaine. Having fun indeed.

Then we wandered off the map. We were chasing CP140. Looking at the map afterwards, we have a vague idea what may have happened, but honestly still not even close to being sure. We think we may have missed a creek junction we were looking for, seen something immediately after just off the map that we took for it, and wandered off. We realised a short time after, but had stupidly stopped looking at our compasses and had just been blasting up to what we thought was the saddle. I mean, we overshoot, we hit a creek., right. Right? Retracing to our last confirmed location ended up being not so easy, especially as night started to come on, and one or 2 more shots at finding 140 proved pointless. As if to emphasise our situation, it was now bucketing down and we quickly became soggy. Well, more soggy. Black spear grass seeds twist when they get wet as a means of burying themselves in the soil. Seems they do the same in flesh. We were now behind schedule by over an hour, and dropped the jewel in the crown of checkpoints. Bugger.

We took a bearing to CP75, and moved on for about 10 minutes. However, when the terrain was not matching up we knew we still were not where we thought we were. It was now dark. "Had enough mate?" "Yeah". With the pace of a race and checkpoint hunting gone, we settled into a stroll heading south-ish. The following few hours ended up being a mixture of splashing happily down creek as the cold water numbed the discomfort from the 3 gazillion spear grass seeds in our legs and feet, and getting frustrated with the 3 gazillion spear grass seeds puncturing our feet when we were not in the creek. I tried singing loudly for a time and out of tune covered everything from Stone Temple Pilots, to Blind Melon, to John Denver. When Dave threatened to break into Gun's n Roses I shut up.

At some point we realized that we should really try and get back to HH by the most direct means. We both have an almost pathological aversion to the idea of ever being the centre of a search or rescue and couldn't bare the thought of dragging Rob et al out from the warm and dry admin tent to look for us if we were too late. South, let us just keep going south until we hit the road. South is this way. Dave disagrees. Standing side by side, our compasses are pointing about 20 degrees different. Oh joy, how long has that been happening? Doubt creeps in about everything. Unless that vehicular track we crossed was in fact the road. No, surely not, surely? It is supposed to be a road isn't it? A momentary lapse of reason, one of a number for the day now it seems. Thankfully, logic prevailed and we decided there was no way we could have crossed the road yet, but we still wanted to get back as quick as possible and minimize the grass seed assault. Dave, voices his thoughts "I am at the point of getting out the gps and going DSQ". "You have a gps?" "Yes, on my phone". "Ummm, I was DSQ in my head about 3 hours ago bud, do it". "No reception". "Righto, lets get out of this gully to the other side and a high point and see if you get it there".

The top of the ridge turned out to be a vehicular track, and reception kicked in. "Ok, that's the most direct way then" as the phone picked up our position. At this point, Susie Williams and teammate wandered along, and I meekly asked where the hell we were exactly on the map. Turns out we were between CP25 and W5, still north from where we thought we were. As the crow flies, about 6 or so km's in over 3 hours. That really was a stroll. "Thanks ladies". And off we trot again. W5, our first 100% confirmed position in over 3 hours, and at this point moving the extra 10 metres to punch the Navlight proved too far. We shoot off on a direct line to HH. "Seriously, Dave, if we stuff this bearing up, I am never going outdoors again, ever." Dave replies that he is not willing to risk that.

Alas, all is well, and we are able to still run into HH a bit after half 7. Disqualified for the gps, but still smiling which is always the sign of a good day in my opinion.

Hot food, treat. Megan and the other good folk involved with the catering had gone where few had gone before, tackling my annoying diet preferences to produce something I truly relished as it went down.

Naturally, things did not turn out as we expected, but fun was still had and our bodies felt fine during and after which is always a good thing. The "try and limit foolery and concentrate when that close the edge of the map" lesson is also pretty well ground in now. Reading Paul's blog and hearing a couple of the 24 hour guns had similar fun in the vicinity of leaving CP80 helps ease the humiliation a tad as well. Enough cannot be said for Rob and crew for putting this one on. The course really was a pleasure to be out on, and checkpoint location (well, the few we saw!) well thought out. However, next time when the spear grass warning is given I will be opting for my gortex hikers over the lightweight runners, and likely my canvas gaiters as well. Maybe Kevlar. Looking forward to the next one and hopefully being able to stay on the map ☺.

~Adam