

Your first adventure race?

Those were the words that got us started. My friend Tom and I had been out exploring the MTB trails in Daisy Hill state forest early one Sunday morning and returned to the car to find these words on a small card on the windshield. I was showing Tom, a relative mountain bike novice but a natural on any bike, the trails I used to ride in the good old days when I was fit and healthy. In January 2013 I was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukaemia, a form of blood cancer which basically stops your blood stem cells from maturing into Red, White and Platelets, leaving you without any form of useful blood. Within 2 days of the diagnosis I was in hospital on heavy chemotherapy. What followed was a further 4 rounds of chemo, total body radiation, and finally a bone marrow transplant which has managed to maintain my remission. 10 months on and I am finally starting to rebuild my life, and regain some level of the previously high level of fitness which was totally lost through all the treatment.

So we thought... this might be good for my rehab! A quick email was fired off to Gordon for more details and before we knew it we were learning about the world of Rogaine and navigation, terminology such as Hand Rails, Aiming off and the contents of a Nav Kit! The info night was a must, and I must say it was invaluable for the small tips and tricks imparted by Porky and Gordon throughout the evening. We knew we were in for an enjoyable day whatever the outcome.

Race day arrived and we were really impressed with the level of organisation and professionalism that had gone into the race preparation. These guys obviously do it for the love of it. The planning hour passed too quickly of course, and with the race brief over, and everyone standing around looking at each other, Porky made the call, "Race has started everyone.... Umm... Run!"

Our team plan? Take it slow, get a few controls, don't get lost and try to come in on time!

After knocking off the pre kayak controls easily, we started off downstream and immediately realised that we would spend the next hour or so cursing the tide! Some preexisting knowledge of river travel would be needed to conserve energy. We skirted close to the bank where the current was slowest, and found ourselves almost immediately passing teams who had ventured off into the deep part of the bends. With the rest of the 'near river' controls found, and a lot more mud in our boat, we came to the rope climb. Leading straight out of the river, up a steep muddy embankment, we hoisted ourselves up carrying paddles and PFD's to the bike transition. This is where Tom and I thought we would be able to get some easy points, I mean we both have good mountain bikes with cleated pedals... should be a cinch! Unfortunately the first hill put pay to my enthusiasm as my chain started skipping, then finally jammed itself between the chainstay and chainring, forcing some trackside repairs and a bit of a loss of time. To avoid the risk of catastrophic chain breakage, I then had to soft pedal up the hills (not easy) and get off and walk some of the steeper sections which kept the heart rate over what my doctors would be happy with I imagine!

They say time flies when you're having fun, and before we knew it we were looking at our watches and calculating how many more controls we could find in the last hour, given we still had to transition to the run leg. We made a final push to get a few points on an 'out and back' section on road which should have been easy and quick enough. Minor disaster no. 2... the sole of my mountain bike shoe fell off

completely at the bottom of a steep hill. Pedalling virtually on one leg now we crawled our way back up the road to the final transition with 40 minutes to spare. We realised there were some high value controls not too far from the hash house, so plans were quickly recalculated to maximize points in minimal distance, and to our great satisfaction this plan worked! We came home with 9 minutes to spare, having achieved all but one control we had originally planned, and even got one which we didn't!

Back at the hash house, other teams were coming in with great stories of their trials and tribulations, and it was obvious from the looks on all the tired but happy faces that everyone had had a blast.

Satisfied with our effort and having no idea of the results, we assumed we had probably come in about mid field. What a surprise to find out we had actually come 2nd overall and took out the men's open category! It was a real case of the tortoise and the hare. Slow and steady was our aim, and we carried out our plan with minimal navigation errors and, apart from the mechanical issues, no time standing around wondering where we were or where to go next. I think these are the keys to a successful and fun Rogaine outing.

Enormous thanks must go to all the team who made the event possible, as well as the SES for their massive input, and Globe Trekker for their sponsorship and support. Their passion for this sport is infectious and I'm sure that many of the 'novices' who took part in the Mini Rogue will be coming back for another challenge at the next level!

Perry, for 'The Rebel Alliance'