

Race Report – “Nothing to see here”

Rogue24 Adventure Race

Somerset Dam – 25-26 April 2015

This race report is a partial self-debrief of the Rogue24 adventure race run by Liam and his trusty army of volunteers.

Something to get out the way from the start is that we weren't joking when we selected our team name. Our goal was to finish the event and not come last (two ticks in the box but not by much!). Being newbies to 24 hour adventure racing my team mate Craig and I tried to read up as much as we could and scoured last year's race reports for any useful information. Most of the reports I came across were from very decent teams so if you are reading this report in future years and have no idea what you are doing then this report is for you!

Pre-Race Strategy (when we thought we had an idea, how funny)

Trek: Craig and I are seasoned trail walkers/joggers so we knew that we could travel decent distances on foot at a good pace. We would hopefully pick up a number of checkpoints on the trek leg or legs.

MTB: Mountain biking would be fun although we aren't great with very technical trails and had very limited light (2 borrowed lamps with small batteries and an assortment of \$5 Anaconda/BCF specials) so we could not do too much MTB at night.

Kayak: This would easily be our weakest leg as we could not find a comfy position on the red tubs. Thanks though to the briefing instructions for the excellent idea to bring along a seat which helped immensely. Last year we completed the mini adventure race and kayaked for roughly 500m before picking up the kayak and spending a good hour scrambling over land to make it to the transition area.

Race day (the excitement builds)

Living in Toowoomba means that we usually have to get up really early to make it to Brisbane events on time. This time we could have a luxurious sleep in before the event as it was only 90 minutes away and the start was much later than other events. We drove over to the MTB dropoff in good spirits and nervously assembled the bikes and chatted away with some of the officials. We were making great time and the day was going to be great. We hopped into the car ready to go to HQ. Click click click goes the engine, a flat battery, no idea how or why. Suddenly time looked much tighter than we had planned.

I raced down the road to find someone with jumper leads and luckily Alex (thanks buddy!) had a pair, phew! One of the Mojo ladies offers the use of the car she borrowed which was really kind of her but her offer would be even better had her battery not been dead as well. At this point, time was slipping away and all we could do was laugh. Along came a third car which we happily used to jump both cars. There were a few comments about the “Bermuda Triangle” of car batteries.

Time to head to HQ. At HQ we collected the maps and spent what felt like an inordinate amount of time just trying to locate each map, arrange them in order and then read through the instructions. A

goal I had was to abseil during the day to see the views on the way down. We weren't trying to win the event so I did not mind sacrificing checkpoints to make it to the abseil in the very tight window of 6-8am. While trying to arrange our plan of attack we heard that the gear boxes had to be delivered to HQ within 30 minutes (11am) which we were not ready for so we ditched the planning to get our gear boxes ready. Then we found out that box A and B would not be at all transition areas which really spun our plans around. Maybe we missed this in the instructions or it is our inexperience showing but we had to empty both gear boxes on the ground and try to split the gear without any idea when we would see each box again. The boxes were delivered by 11am as requested and Team 48 was in chaos already. Fortunately Craig went back to the boxes to swap an item over and he noticed that there were two piles of boxes for Box A and B which we did not see earlier so we very nearly missed having any gear at either TA8 or TA37.

After all this chaos we had hardly any time left for planning so prepared a worst case scenario as follows:

- Kayak: Complete the Kayak leg ASAP and try to pick up 4 checkpoints along the way and sacrificing a heap.
- Trek: Spend as much time on our feet as possible while we can see the terrain and can read the land more accurately.
- MTB: The MTB CP's followed roads much of the time so we could do this at night but the limited torch light made me cautious. The first MTB leg to be completed ASAP to head to TA37.
- Trek: Collect a number of easy points around TA37 to spend more time on the next leg.
- MTB: Take it easy up the climb to the plateau, enjoy the abseil in daylight and enjoy the apparently lovely scenery up there. Head back to the HQ with a few hours spare.
- Kayak: Pick up a few of the bigger CP's around the TA then head back for a shower and food.

But then the event started...

Kayak (1):



We jogged up to the first checkpoint which was a crush with all the people there. There was a small squabble between a couple that kayaked to the CP and those queued up waiting to check in. Apparently approaching the CP from a different direction means that you can check in first. This must be an obscure by-law but I was not keen to hang around to see who was correct.

We jogged back to the kayaks wondering why we did not drop the PFD and backpack at the kayak at the start as they were really uncomfortable bouncing around.

We were in the water and it was going well until 5 minutes into the race at which point Craig starts to cramp up. At that point we make the first and only rule that we managed to stick to – we must collect 1 CP in each leg. We collected CP3 then headed to the transition.

We carried the awkward, heavy and slippery red tub up the hill on our shoulders to the transition area when Craig accidentally dropped the kayak causing the point of the kayak to fall perfectly onto the top of my right foot. The pain was excruciating, the foot was numb instantly and the leg was on fire. Poor Craig looked horrified and I had to chuckle through gritted teeth as it really was quite funny. On we went to the transition area.

Trek (1):

Finally we were going to head out on foot, our strong leg! We went out west to collect CP10 which was only 10 points but we were keen to pick up a CP after a slow start. At the TA one of the Mojo ladies said “I hope you have gators as there is *sharp grass*”. Sharp grass? What’s that? She must be talking about the lantana like grass that can cut you. Not a drama as we had gators so this will be fun.

After a few K’s we realised that when she said “Sharp Grass” she meant grass with seeds like shards of glass that made their way through shoes and all other protection to be embedded into the skin. This was a whole new experience and I don’t know how some of you crazy teams could run through this stuff with apparent indifference to this Satan grass.

We collected CP’s 10, 11 and 20, spent a while trying to find 14, and at this point I could not take this spear grass any more so coerced Craig into abandoning the rest of the CP’s to head to the road so that we could make a faster path back to TA8 to switch to MTB. I did not mind missing a few points here as we would collect a heap of points on the plateau when we abseiled.

When we arrived at the road I spent a few minutes pulling seeds out of my feet which at this point resembled a pin cushion.



We hightailed it back to TA8 and collected CP13 for the fun of it.

MTB (1):

We grabbed a few items out of our boxes and duct-taped our shoes to stop the spear grass. It was fantastic to ride the bikes after a few hours on the feet. Sadly it was only going to be a short bike ride to collect CP21 and CP22 before trekking from TA37 to allow enough time for the abseil in MTB2 (Stage 6).

Trek (2):

Back on the feet again and now it was dark. Reading the land at night time was hard for us novices so we planned to collect some of the close CP's before heading out for a long MTB and you guessed it, an abseil when the sun is up.

Before heading out of TA37 I brought out the butane burner and heated up a can of chunky stew. I felt like Jamie Oliver and Gordon Ramsay could not prepare a better meal as this hot, fatty, carby meal was amazing. Unfortunately the meal did not agree with Craig who felt unwell and could not eat for the next few hours.



We headed out to CP39 only about 1.5km away and gave ourselves a big pat on the back for noticing that the CP is North of the river so we must approach it from the North. We followed the bank and the bank became more and more overgrown. Eventually it was so bad that we had to take our packs off to squeeze through sections. We spent at least 2 hours covering the 1.5 km and returned to TA37 frustrated with the measly 40 points collected. The guys manning the TA asked about the trek and we let them know how bad it was. They gleefully informed us that we could have approached the CP from the South where there was no vegetation and nice clear meadows to walk through apparently. Great. That made me feel so much better.

We needed a morale booster so decided to skip this cross country craziness and hightail it on the road to collect CP41. Finally in our element being able to put our head down and go for it. We collected CP41 and noticed that we were still the only trekking team on the course. This could only mean that our approach was not a good one but I didn't mind as I would be abseiling during daylight. Sure we won't win but I would have awesome photos!

We raced on back to TA37 and the crew there kindly suggested that we head north to collect CP38 as it was an easy one to find and the country was fairly clear. I think that they had taken pity on us for making such a mess of CP39. We spent a while chasing down CP38 which we finally found hidden in the grass. We struggled finding this at night time and it probably would have been much easier to find in daylight. We really should have had a much longer MTB leg initially and trekked during the daylight. Makes so much sense in hindsight. At least we made nice clear tracks in the dew for other teams to follow so you are welcome to donate a few points to our needy cause (course?) if you wish... A few wild dogs started howling when we were near CP38 so I had no intention of hanging around to see how close they were. Once again we hightailed our way back to TA37 where we were practically locals by now.

MTB (2):

Finally we were back on the bikes, whoohoo! In case you did not pick up on the theme, we were excited to go abseiling so headed towards the big climb straight away and picked up CP28 along the

way. Approaching CP29 we came across many teams who look entirely defeated and give us the look of *"thank goodness that's over, you have no idea what you are in for"*. Craig brings a bit of reality to the situation by pointing out that we actually don't have enough time now to make it to abseiling, kayak and finish in time. No way! Delaying the MTB to abseil during the daylight actually forced us to miss the abseil all together. I am super disappointed but Craig is correct and back down we go.

We headed out to CP24 and Craig noticed that the road curved a bit too much so we checked the compass and had swung around to face completely the opposite direction. Craig clicks that we must have been inadvertently on the private property and we started to head back. As we headed back a pair of bikes raced towards and past us with a few teams following. I flagged down the second pair of bikes chasing them and asked them where they thought they were as we thought that this was private property. The second team duly informed us that the team that raced past us was Team Rush and that they were the top team. After a quick check of the compass we all agreed that we were on the wrong path and headed back to the correct path. This made up one of the highlights of the event that we could give the eventual winners a nav tip (not that we are desperately looking for positives!). Well done Craig, you told Team Rush where to go ;)

We swung around anticlockwise on the roads we know all too well now from trekking them for far too long and collected CP's 25, 26 and 27 down south.

From there we blitzed it back towards HQ. I became increasingly hungry and searched for the 'something' to fill the spot. I couldn't eat any more processed stuff and was craving fresh fruit which was a huge change from my usual dietary needs after 20+ hours. Craig was chugging along like the trooper he always is. We call him CAM (Chip Away Man, he puts his head down and gets it done). An hour later and I was feeling really really hungry. There was no spare energy for the peddling up the last few hills.

We made it back to HQ and bought a German Sausage from the shop. Not a great choice for sensitive stomachs but boy was it great to sit for a few minutes and enjoy something fatty and a cold bubbly drink (once again not a great choice but so nice). The shop owner looked at us and shook his head in disbelief that people would actually do this to themselves.

Kayak (2):

We were now back on the bikes after the short respite and were heading north to the kayak stage. There were a few good points on the dam so I said to Craig that he can just chill out and I would paddle us around. That was the plan before we arrived and saw the state of the water! The wind had picked up strongly and was causing substantial waves in the centre of the dam. We decided to head into the weather to seek shelter in the leeward side of the dam but it was tough work controlling the kayak with the wind and current trying to spin us around.

We finally made it out to CP46 for a juicy 100 points but were spent. After a break for a few minutes we tried the reverse approach and it felt as if the weather had picked up even more! At this stage we were only paddling on the left of the kayak as hard as we could to counter the wind and current and were only barely holding course. We finally arrived on the bank and rolled out of the kayak. Rather than kayak a few hundred metres we simply picked up the kayak and spent a few minutes walking the beast over. Fortunately without dropping it on any more innocent feet. We caught up with a few of the other white water rafting survivors who expressed in no uncertain terms how they felt about that leg. A few teams arriving at the leg as we completed it decided that they would rather skip the points than head out there.



From there we biked back to the finish and with little fanfare the event was over. It felt a little anticlimactic after all the work but it wasn't a linear event like an Oxfam or Kokoda Challenge so that was understandable.

We cleaned up and traded stories with other teams while waiting for the last few teams to return. A bit of a generalisation but the types of people that do these events seem to be such lovely people and it is a pleasure to hang out with them. Everyone is really nice and willing to help one another out which is fantastic.

In summary:

A massive thanks to Liam and the Rogue crew for putting so much work into this and other events, it really is appreciated.

Sure there were a few low points but on the whole we had a blast and have great memories. There were so many lessons for us rookies to learn. I am sure that we will make many mistakes in future events but we can only improve from here!