

Beyond the Black Stumps 6/12hr Multi Sport Rogaine – Koombooloomba Dam Organisers Report – by Adam Fletcher

Following from my experiences in navigating in a sleep deprived state through the area during the 2004 *Quoll* Adventure Race, and a weekend of recon prior to the course setting, the Koombooloomba area was chosen for its excellent tracks and scenery, patchy open forest and anticipated mild wet season autumn weather of warm days and mild nights.

Compiling the map to include optional use of paddling, hiking or biking was a challenge, with over 150 sq kms of accessible area to choose from, placement of controls was mainly restricted to short side trips from the main roads and old tracks due to the presence of dense vegetation not amenable to cross country navigation. One main loop was available for the MTB stage, offering limited chance of navigational error, apart from a difficult to see turnoff if travelling anti clockwise which caught a couple of teams off guard late in the evening. Riding conditions offered a supreme array of technical terrain with washed out bridges and logging tracks, fallen trees and rocky country dominating the western area, whilst graded roads were present on the eastern side of the course. With a 3pm and 6pm restriction for MTB use for the 6 and 12hr teams respectively, few managed to see the full beauty of the wet eucalypt forests and black stumps in the daylight. Hiking conditions presented either graded gravel roads with short deviations into the thick undergrowth, or after a sizable walk from the hash house, pleasant open country with a thick grass under story. Cross country straight line navigation was severely restricted over most of the course due the presence of dense undergrowth and difficult to read terrain at a 1:50000 scale. With the dam at only 23% capacity, the features visible and those on the map were very different, not to mention the dense forest of tree skeletons in the south east corner of the dam.

In hind sight the points achievable through each of the disciplines needed to be more balanced, but due to the difficulty in differentiating between some of the controls achievable by hike or bike and an absence of good open country near the hash house, the chosen course design was the best achievable for the first time use of the area.

Seventy two competitors in 29 teams departed the Hash House at 12 noon. Most opted to start with an attempt to collect the ten controls accessible by paddling, but with the dam at 23% capacity all who attempted the paddle commented on the thick thigh deep mud that greeted them as they disembarked to collect controls with clues like "A stump stuck in the mud". All teams in the 6hr returned before 6pm to a creatively prepared BBQ and presentations. No major navigational disasters were noted but three teams were over due at 12 midnight, with one team unfortunately losing their card on the course on the return to the finish and three teams took a wrong turn on the MTB loop. A brief BBQ and presentations were wrapped up by about 2am.

Due to the imbalance in the potential weighting of points between the three disciplines, and the ability to elect to do one two or all three disciplines, results were presented to reflect a short and long course format. Course total was 1400 pts, with all controls being visited, but no team cleaning the course.

Thanks to the support of Bike Man, Bicycle Centre, Pump and Pedals, Edge Cycle Works, Skybolt Reverse Bungy, Green Ant Cantina, Amanda Gale Physiotherapy, and long time sponsors of NQ Rogaine events, Its Extreme, Adventure Equipment and Cairns Plan Printing for the \$800 of prizes.

Despite the absence of the important hose bit that joins the gas bottle to the BBQ, the helping hands that graced the kitchen at 6pm and 12am completed a magic task of providing food for the hungry masses. Many thanks to Yvonne, Helen, Darby, Peter and Debbie, on the day, and Chris, Rebeka and Ruth for rounding up the supplies prior to the event. A big thanks to Dave Foster – roped in as labourer and computer wiz, Sue Donoghoe for admin assistance Julia

Mulhulenberg, Struan Lamont, Shane White and Tropical NQ TAFE students for course setting assistance. All of the above allowed the event to be an enjoyable journey back from beyond the black stumps for most competitors!

Regards,
Adam Fletcher

6hr Winners Report – by William Simpson

I have been entering Rogaine's for years and have enjoyed every one, in hindsight! Thursday was wet, low cloud and showers, so as we prepared for the event we were expecting more of the same. The Gods however smiled upon us and we had the perfect day. A six-hour event with canoe, hike and then mountain bike for our team, of two 56 year old gentlemen and a 17 year old girl - a German, International student, Magdalena, who is staying with us for six months. She has been in Australia for 5 weeks, still has lily-white skin and is a magnet for mosquitoes. Luckily she enjoys dancing and is fit and keen for adventure. My 17 y/o son Nicholas entered the 12-hour event with 3 other boys his age; it was his second event with no adult in the team. They lasted nine and a half hours; the night was very dark and scary! I'm positive that they are hooked for life, if only more young people could get the chance that these kids are getting.

We arrived 1020 hrs, frantically unloaded our camping gear, bikes, canoes, backpacks. Gear spread everywhere, canoes to the water, shock horror, 150 meters to the water's edge, the dam only 23 % full. Back for the maps and clue sheets we had to start on the water, as the boys wanted to hike for 2 hours, then get on the lake. So far so good, what next? No bikes until 3pm so 1 hour hike, where to go? Unable to decide we left it open. Now the bike, 3 hours this way or that Humm what points? O no ! briefing. I have never been in this position; normally we have a clear plan of attack. Off we go. The start is on time, we have 3 canoes, one does circles on flat water so I used Silastic and glued a wooden keel on it, worked well. Found number 2 control, the first one is always a worry. Off to an island, number 25. No island, instead an isthmus, quick decision. Portage over the saddle, back in the water and off to number 27. Blocked again, another portage, Leena is up to her knees in mud, one shoe off and buried deep in the mud, what next ? 27 ticked off and a compass bearing straight across the lake to 21. 1,400 meters 098 deg magnetic, wrong! Solid trees and land ahead. Another portage made it up to 21. One hour into the event and we could see 1,100 metres across the lake to 26 an 80 pointer, a hard decision was made, we had to get back for the boys and Leena was struggling with the head wind. Back we go, four portages, Ian fell out, the canoe full of water another small drama to be sorted out, such is Rogaining. Arrived at the landing just as the boys emerged from the tree line, what timing, a small triumph. On foot we headed around the lake to 34 , sweet, as the boys say. Next number 1, not so sweet, try the next creek, lots of tracks but still no control, back into the open where is it? It looked so simple on the map. Perhaps down that huge gully up the ridge and into the next creek around the bay, success. Time to head back to the hash for the bikes. Three hours into the event and we needed a quick feed, a change of clothes and a new mode of travel, bikes, what bliss. Up the hill to control number 30 a quarry found that, up the hill to 29, maybe these bicycles are not so easy after all. More uphill to 33, clue head of gully, I plunge off the road to find a six metre drop, no control, what the Back to the road and Ian has found it 20 metres back up the hill. Next a ruin, then no. 19 a 70 pointer. Then number 4, The knoll, 400 meters in , walking out I remarked that it would be easy to get lost in this country, straight into a clump of bracken, no sign of bracken on the way up. Oops! out with the compass. Picked up no. 5 then back home with a quick addition of no. 20 on the way Arrived with 10 minutes to spare.

I must thank the administrator Adam Fletcher, it was a wonderful event. He and his offsideers, Dave and Darby should be very proud of what they achieved.

William Simpson, Cairns, Queensland