

There is a conventional wisdom that becoming involved with a younger woman will generally bring brief moments of euphoria, followed by extended periods of pain, suffering and humiliation to the mature-aged man. My Bunyaville Mini-Rogaine experience rather fitted this pattern.

Some weeks ahead of the event I suggested to Clare Leung, a regular weekend training partner, that we might like to team up for the event. We generally ran around at the back of the Saturday pack and she had some endurance background in addition to her orienteering experience. I felt we should be well matched. Apparently after we arrived at the event she received a number comments about her foolhardiness to agree to such an arrangement, but I was quite confident that if one of us was going to struggle it wouldn't be Clare!

A quick check of the map showed 16km straight-line and 18km actual distance to get the lot. We reckoned we could do that so set about deciding how best to attack it. Basic plan was to get everything to the west, except 21, first and then do an anti-clockwise sweep around with 21 the last one. Idea was to get the steep stuff done whilst fresh. Biggest question was how to fit in 33, there really wasn't an obvious flow through there, good course setting albeit if it was worth 50 points it may have been even more confusing. We set ourselves km rates of 6½, 6 and 5½ for each of the hours based on jogging the downhills and flats and walking the uphills thinking we would probably slow down a bit as we went.

We headed down the road and down into 22, across the ridges to 40 and 20, then along the track to 50 and 10. Drifted a bit to the left coming out of 10 which probably cost us 30 seconds. Back across the road and into 30. Contoured into 31 which was a mistake and cost us a couple of minutes but then started to flow; 52, 60, 42. At our nominal one hour mark we were three minutes ahead of schedule, albeit I was feeling the strain.

Navigation was starting to work well and we worked our way through; 14, 24, 53, 54, 35 and 43 then to 62 in the SE corner of the map. Coming out of 62 there were tracks on the map that we couldn't find but we were quickly into the picnic area and started to grind our way up the big bitumen hill. Were quickly down through 34, 61 and 41 and at the end of our second nominal hour we were seven minutes ahead. I was feeling a bit weaker, but reckoned we were good things for finishing 20 minutes early.

Alas, the old body decided that it maybe should have been a 2-hr event and started to refuse duty. Clare of course was going like a train, but I was dragging! On the uphills it became a real effort to put one foot in front of the other and the easy track jogs became 100 metres of shuffling followed by 100 of slow walking. We pushed on through; 32, 33, 23 13 and 12. The climb up the track and over the ridge to 51 took me forever and then we ridge hopped onto 11 and 21. Would have thought that we could jog back to the Hash from there, and no doubt Clare could have! I shuffled a bit along the main road but that was all and we got in 40 seconds after Thor, Jon and Dave Holmes. The combination of our two early errors and my near death cruelled it for us, but at least Thor and Jon picking up Dave as a third allowed us to take the Mixed Vets. I just lay on the ground for five minutes before I had capacity to comprehend any of this. Interestingly this was my third 3-hr and the pattern has been identical in each, I guess I start out a bit quick!

Then we all five adjourned to Thor and Jon's where we were joined by Clare's husband Andy and had a very nice late lunch. Thereafter Thor, Jon and Dave went off for kayak training, Clare and Andy attended to their family duties and I headed home for a long nap as a proper senior citizen should!

We questioned whether we may have been better doing the route in reverse and get the long track jogs out of the way early with climb at the end when we would have been slow anyway. Who knows??? Clare's very keen to team up again so hopefully I can become less of a burden on a longer event.

Richard Robinson