

## **Toowoomba Metrogaine Event Report from Brenton and Meredith Gray**

So a metrogaine in Toowoomba? It sounded like a nice venue and somewhere we didn't know at all. The flyer mentioned streets and escarpment so this time we had a plan before we arrived (always a dangerous idea):

- 1) We would run the streets first on the assumption they would be flat and we would be fresh;
- 2) We would aim to visit the escarpment later in the day as we would no doubt walk up the hills whether fresh or tired so may as well do when tired.
- 3) The rogaine would be our traditional romantic getaway (how could all that running not be fun?) but we wanted to try to be competitive.

In a rogaining first for us we actually arrived before the map handout and 90 mins to plan a course seemed like an eternity. We had every reason to be confident in our precision planning down to the last kilometre...

The rulers and pencils were out and in a nerdy contribution to the sport we used a calculator to work out our estimated distances; 6k per hour for 6 hours equalled 36k in total (n.b. we ended up running 39k so this part of the plan was relatively accurate). Richie yells out start and off we go. I think we made it ten metres before we realised neither of us had a compass (great planning hey!).

Take two and off we go again, South-East to get a couple of controls and then the big swing around on the Western edge of the map via the Streets. Something odd happened at the first control. It seemed to be a lot further than we expected. By the time we had hit the third control our precision planning was in disarray. We had run something like 8k versus an estimated distance of 5.2k. We were in trouble 45mins into the event. Our first crisis meeting was held. We were of the opinion the most densely populated area of the map for control points was in the escarpment on the North-East side (excluding the three most Northerly ones which we never planned to do) and if we kept running South we would never make it back to do either a) the pleasant escarpment or b) get the tighter bunched points. This really sucked. So we threw our plan pretty much into the bin and ran West hell-bent on finishing the Street stuff as quickly as we could.

There were no navigational issues the entire day courtesy of an accurate map and simple control sites (thanks Richie for ensuring no ambiguity here). A couple of footpaths between streets were never found but apart from that we had no excuses.

But the Streets took forever. We were always behind any game plan (I think we used half a dozen by the time the day was over), distances kept creeping up and up and even a faster than expected average pace couldn't save us. Bunches of controls were excised from route plans. Our intended pleasant sit-down cafe lunch was abandoned and the lasagne was served cold and in glad wrap (this was the subject of considerable discussion with the café owner who really could not understand why we would want that). This frazzled Brenton who realised a few blocks later he had left his hat back at the café - extra Street running back just for fun. And so the Streets kept going. Brenton began cursing our route choice, "Oh how we have stuffed up, look how far apart these Street controls are compared to the ones near the escarpment".

We eventually got off the Streets with two hours to go and into the fun stuff. The green was exactly that, green and impenetrable, so any possible shortcuts were scrapped and more controls fell by the wayside. But in a touch of irony the hills (as mapped) had made it such slow-going that we began to wish we had completed more controls on the Streets (you can probably guess the grass was always greener somewhere else on this map!).

So what went wrong in the planning stage? The sad part is we have no idea (unless someone puts us out of our misery and says there was an issue with the map scale).

What went right? An early decision to abandon the original course probably saved us from still being out there late Sunday night.

Could we have done better? Probably only marginally, all reports indicate a lot of the escarpment controls, especially at the top North-East were hard work so luck favoured us never going there in the first place.

Meredith in particular loved the rogaine and wouldn't have minded further and faster. Brenton was pretty happy it was six hours and no more.

Thanks to Richie for the setting, we clearly found it a devilish one to plan, and also to all the other helpers.

Brenton and Meredith