

As the ultimate rogaining tragic it is essentially impossible for me not to enter the 12-Hr if I'm going to be about. I know that I am now too old and unfit to challenge for outright honours anymore unless none of the fit young boys (and/or girls) enter, but I still enjoy it and Tamsin generally seems willing to indulge me by teaming up.

With this year's event starting less than three weeks after the WRC, indeed it finished less than three weeks after the WRC started, it was always going to be interesting to see how the aging body responded. Still I had expected it to be a nice open area both from the photos on the website, which are not always reliable, and from scouting land in the area for rogaining a few years ago.

Immediately upon arriving at the Hash House we were chased from our preferred camp site by a marauding magpie, a rather inauspicious start to the day!

We had pre-decided that we would be taking it quite easy given both the residual effects of the WRC and the expected warm temperatures, the latter being something that doesn't generally assist my performance. Upon receiving the map we settled on straight line distances of 3km/hour for the first six hours and 2km/hr for the second six hours. We also reckoned that being in the track network to the north of the Hash in the last few hours looked like a good option. The tracks could be a bit confusing at night, but we backed ourselves to sort that out, and they gave us good options for getting back to the Hash if things didn't go according to plan. We also decided that; 54, 105 and 76 were compulsory due to scenic value!

We looked at a few options for achieving this, interestingly one was very similar to that ultimately employed to much better effect by the Tiger Adventure boys. We decided on one that took us down the east side initially then across the bottom and up through the centre to get to 105 on the nice ridge just before dark then continue north and across the top in the dark. We had three pre-determined extra loops if we were ahead and lots of short cut options if we weren't. Only problem was it was 1½ km longer than we had wanted. We figured that we could just bump the rate up to 3½ km/hr for the first three hours given it was mainly on tracks and all would be good!

We headed off with the mob towards 32. All the teams of fit young people charged ahead whilst we walked on steadily. But we cut the corner up the cattle track and were briefly with the leaders again. Dropped off the track 20-30 metres early at 40 costing a minute or so but we were making good progress, even jogging a bit on the downhill track sections. We got a fraction low on 41 coming across from 57 which cost another minute but we were comfortably ahead of plan. We had 65 as a possibly extra between 104 and 54 but felt we weren't far enough ahead to take the risk. Leaving 104 we saw one of the teams of fit young boys charging down from the hill on our left. Seemed an odd route for anything that looked sensible to us which explained why they were wandering aimlessly around the creek junction to the west of 104 with looks of bewilderment when we got there.

Still we were having a very good time, it was wonderful rogaining country and the views from 54 had been worth the climb. Even other teams we met remarked on what a fantastic place it was rogaining. We did briefly see Paul and Liam at 54 but they didn't seem to stop to admire the view! Our only negatives at this point, apart from the couple of minutes we had lost were my feet and Tamsin's nutrition. In the WRC my feet had started to blister within the first hour and were a right mess by the end so early in this event they were quick to remind me of the abuse from those few

weeks prior and explain their dissatisfaction with further insult. Tamsin was feeling nauseous and struggling to eat, never something that assists optimum performance. But we continued to put one foot in front of the other so it wasn't too bad.

From 31 we went round the big hill to 74 and noticed that the vegetation got really scungy as we went towards 74. From there to 65 was dreadfully scungy. More alarmingly when we crossed the creek to west of 65 we came across another similarly sized parallel creek about 30 metres further on. Ah well, assume we are right and the map is wrong and soldier on. It worked but the leg had taken about twice the time expected by our planned km rate. However we were soon out of the scunge again and made 105 well ahead of plan.

The cattle track leading down the spur NW of 105 was very pleasant, however the grunt up the hill to 53 was anything but. We added 33 and 103 to the plan and donned the lights soon after 53. CP 33 really should have been worth more, it was a classic rogaining checkpoint, a well-defined spur that just appeared out of nothing. After the WRC it was wonderful to be on a course set by people that understand what a rogaining course is. The WRC was littered with very poorly chosen CP sites including some spurs that were 100+ metres wide. None of that nonsense happening here!

We were surprised by the amount of water in Cowwah Creek near 103, but managed to find a dry footed crossing but lost another minute or so working out exactly where we had crossed and then got stuck in lantana when we crossed back over near the same spot. Through the camp site where the very welcoming fires and cooking smells were dutifully ignored and onto the water followed by 76 at the base of the waterfall. Spectacular enough in the dark, but no doubt much more impressive during the day.

We took the "low road" option to 45 and Tamsin managed to spot the turn-off to the "Extreme Canyon" track. It lived up to its name. I know I can do \$100s of damage to my MTB in a single wet race, but reckon I could do \$1,000s to a motor vehicle along that track. It was hard enough to walk it! Hell of a climb out of 45 on tired old legs but then good progress around the tracks and into the open country.

After 62 we added 49 and 36 (another classic spur CP) and then decided we had had enough. We could have gotten 35 with some running and, we realised later, 21 without but the fire and food and red wine beckoned and so we called it a night. It made no difference to the outcome so all in all a wise decision!

We really enjoyed the event. I kept thinking "how long has this area been here and we haven't used it!"

Many thanks to Tim, Paul and their helpers for a fantastic event. A well set course in an excellent area, much better than the one we had travelled across the world to do three weeks earlier

Richard Robinson