

Organiser's Race Report from the Yarrabilby Hop Rogaine, Oct 2020.

I always knew that volunteering to run a longer urban/rural rogaine was going to be a challenge when I put my hand up late last year. I mean, I had done a small 3hr Metrogaine many years back, but I had not expected the additional impact of the covid requirements.

Regardless, everyone I spoke to seemed to enjoy the opportunity to get out on the only long foot Rogaine Race of the year to remember what we love about the sport.

For me, I enjoyed creating a race in the hills surrounding my old house. The hills, waterways and gullies of the eastern half of the course was my recreational and training area for 10 years and I placed a number of the checkpoints in my own memorable locations. CP52 is a rock waterfall in the wet and the best traversing path between a number of checkpoints were either nice ridgelines with a great view or stony creek lines that flow over rocks with 5 inches of water during rainfall.

The drought being experienced in SE QLD has had many effects, not least that the farming land in the south was now unavailable because of it. So, nine days before the race started we sat down to redesign the course. The old railway line (CP42 and 81) got added, the water drop was moved to the east (CP14), CP10 and 20 were pushed south under the powerlines, CP55 and CP12 were also moved up from the farmland and CP72 was moved east from the farmland to the forest.

One of my concerns from these changes is that the course would become too easy and multiple teams would clear it. However, the heat on the day ensured that wouldn't happen.

Saturday was a beautiful Spring (or was it Summer) day in South East Queensland. Beaudesert BOM reported 30.0 degrees at 1pm, but it felt hotter than that for the competitors as they started the race in the urban area that was devoid of the trees they are used to having for shade. Luckily a nice breeze came up during the afternoon that helped cool all the competitors down but by then the damage had already been done to some teams.

I would like to apologise for CP32 being in the wrong place. It was the only CP on the map that didn't follow the GPS checking process as it was an "easy" to place CP. Lesson learnt.

It was a pity that many teams missed out on experiencing the rock bowl in the location I hung CP65. One of the times I visited it the mist was rising slowly and it was quite magical being surrounded by the rock terraces with all the native Australian flora around. On the weekend, Ross and I went through all the finalised team checkpoint times in detail and can confirm (100%) it was definitely not one of our teams that moved the checkpoint. It was moved sometime between Wednesday night when placed (GPS checked) and the race. I personally did set that checkpoint on Wednesday night and can confirm it was in the rockbowl. I can only assume the Yarrabilba Bilbies were up to some tricks.

The final results were amazingly close. Gary Sutherland, Ben Malby and Clint Fella took out the win with 1370 points. Christine Perry, Anthony Pohlner and Mark Wilson were only 20 points behind (1350) after losing 10 points due to arriving just after the cut off time, and took first place in the mixed competition. Mark Murray and Dave Collins finished off the podium with 1300 points.

Amazingly 4th, 5th and 6th all finished with 1270 points, with only finishing time separating them.

Some interesting points from the race.

- More volunteers is better!
- The lantana marked on the map despite the drought was tough around CP82, CP52, CP100.

- Checkpoint 72. Vince decided to prove it was possible to use a compass bearing to go from the NW corner of the forest to the checkpoint correctly. He succeeded but confirmed my decision to move that checkpoint away from the lantana in the middle of that forest to the southern track was a good one.

What would I do differently? What learnings should we take from the course.

- If possible, 2 more volunteers at the start and end of the day would have enabled a slightly better race with the gym being able to be open the entire race instead of being limited to 1pm to 7pm. One more volunteer setting in the morning and CP50 would not have been placed at 1:05pm with one team waiting for it to arrive. Urban courses are great for location, but also create the challenge of avoiding stolen punches.
- Follow the GPS checking process on every point, do not skip this process for the obvious one next to HH.
- Potentially in high bystander traffic areas such as these urban rogaines we could consider using tape only. We were already setting a lot of CP's in the morning of the rogaïne to combat this, but tape only is best for extremely obvious locations.
- I would have put more points on the ridgeline in the north east to encourage more teams up there.

Thanks!

A big thank you to all the volunteers that gave up time to make this work.

Ross McKinnon who came out and placed controls both the first time, then collected them and then placed them again. It looks like he will be back out this weekend with Vince finishing off the last few too. He also spent most of Saturday setting early checkpoints in high traffic areas and carrying water around to the water drops.

Debby, Tashi and Calli McKinnon, my family, for putting up with me being busy all the time and spending all of Saturday out here helping me run the race.

Thanks to Mark Roberts for the map. If you look closely at the farmlands that is now out of bounds he had put in the individual trees that could be found there. Amazing level of detail for an area we had never mapped before.

Also Kim, Jan, Yoris, Michael, David, Astrid, Leah, Andrew, Allan, Adam, Vince, Mitchell and Sean for all the setting, hanging and collecting and anyone else I've forgotten.

Also thank you to Lend Lease who are developing this area for permission to race on their land. National Parks for letting us race in the hills and Logan Village Falcons for letting us put the checkpoint on their land AND refilling the water bottles for us during the day.

Derek McKinnon