

Bike, trek, bike, kayak, bike, trek, bike, kayak

The genesis for me, for this adventure racing lark was the decision to have a go at the GeoQuest 48 hour (well, the GeoHalf to be precise) and as part of our strategy to get there, we knew we would have to build up to the longer races. This weekend, Mel and I had a go at our first 24 hour gig, The Rogue Adventuregaine, to see if we could do it.



Unfortunately we weren't able to complete it and we withdrew after 10 hours. But 10 hours is a mighty feat! That is almost double the amount of racing time of past races. And this was a seriously tough race.

The race rolled through a sequence of nine legs that I thought had a nice cadence all of their own - bike, trek, bike, kayak, bike, trek, bike, kayak, bike.

The first leg of the race was on bike and took us up what seemed to be an almost perpendicular incline. Pushing our bikes uphill, trying desperately to find purchase for our feet in the loose scree, we burned off the adrenalin early.

It kicked in again for me when we came across three cows barring the track. They looked kinda mean - one in particular looked as stubborn as a three year old. So, I chickened out and, as Mel rolled her eyes at me, we lifted our bikes and ourselves over yet another barbed wire fence.

Running into animals of all sorts was a real risk on the race. The legendary size of some of the spiders that we narrowly avoided would make an Irwin gawp and, at the initial race briefing, we were told to be on the watch for wild pigs (apparently the only escape is to climb a strong, tall tree).

We had so much fun on the race. For all of the uphill on the race, I got a kick out of some of the wicked downhills that followed and Mel enthused about the trekking part, relishing the rogaining challenge. I was amused at our kayaking technique that saw Mel calling out 'two left' multiple times to keep us on course, as our craft seemed to have an aversion to going straight.

Nutrition was a key part of this race and we took a lot of food. Even so, watching what other teams had packed gave us some great tips for next time. In our boxes, which we could access at transition areas, we had packed peanut butter sandwiches, baked beans, rice desserts, sultanas, bananas, savoury nut mix, biscuit bars and chocolate. That seemed like plenty, but when we sat down to eat at night and saw teams with delicious-smelling pasta dishes - huge portions of it too! - it made us think differently about what to pack next time.

We also carried gels with us, though we didn't have them as regularly as we would on shorter races, trying to save them for later in the race when we might need the boost more. Although it was my idea, I now doubt the wisdom of it. I've since read more about the usefulness of caffeine and some nutrition strategies for long races. Maybe having my gels more often would have lifted me at key points in the race.

I noticed my mental and emotional states shift in direct relation to my hunger and tiredness. It may have driven Mel nuts, but I would share every shift with her. My thinking was that as a team, we needed to keep communicating about how we were feeling and coping.

I hit an emotional funk as we were on the kayak. It was dark and I was wet. We had picked up the last control of that leg and were heading to transition. Another team was keeping pace with us and the two guys seemed in high spirits. They were singing loudly, songs from Rocky Horror Picture Show. I wanted so much to get into the spirit of it, but I just needed to eat something. I had food in my pack, which I could have pulled out, but that would have meant slowing as I stopped paddling and we would have lost our serenading neighbours and the bit of brightness their voices lent us. It seems all quite dramatic, but tired, wet and hungry makes for a dramatic mix. Next time, I will try to remember that a little loss of pace is preferable to feeling low.



The kayak leg was challenging, but it was beautiful scenery. As night fell we turned our lights on, only to later switch them off when we realised the light from the moon was more than enough in the open water. We used them then, only to search the banks for controls as we approached the likely locations. We passed a number of camp sites along the way and were teased by the smell of bar-b-ques and the thought of a cold beer - or a warm cup of tea.

As soon as we stepped out of the kayak and were no longer sweeping our arms through a paddle, the cold kicked in. I couldn't think of where to start as we reached our boxes at transition. Eventually, I pulled it together and got into dry, warm clothes and ate some food. We took our time at this transition and when we finally climbed back on the bikes and hit the track, I felt like a new woman. We were almost half way through and we were dry. Unfortunately, the cold night air got the better of Mel, who had not been well leading into the race and so she chose to stop when we came across one of the race organisers.

I had the option to find another team to finish the race with, but that didn't seem right. Mel and I went into it together and although I was disappointed to not be making it to the end, it wouldn't be the same success to cross the line without my team mate. I had no qualms about pulling out in favour of protecting the health of the team. There will be other races.

We caught a lift back with Amanda and Matt, the owners of BlackHeart Events. We had plenty of time to chat with them as they hauled the biggest, reddest, heaviest trailer along the hilly, winding road that threads through Brisbane Forest Park. Given the size and weight of the thing, we made good time. Mel and I got a good insight into the behind-the-scenes workings of race event organisation and all credit has to go to Liam from QRA and the guys from BlackHeart and other

organisers like Geocentric and In 2 Adventure, for the time and effort they put in to all of these events. The volunteers also need a mention. Wayne Benton, who we met through the Intro2AR course, was one of the many officials we came across as they manned transition areas and offered encouragement to all the teams.

All in all, it was a great experience another learning curve in our foray into adventure racing. I was quietly proud to notice that my stamina and recovery seem good and I have already told my trainer that I want to work on my speed. I learned how I can improve my nutrition and how I deal with physical, emotional and mental pressures. And on a practical level, I will need to get myself a pair of proper trail shoes and cleats and shoes for the bike - I know it will make a huge difference to my race.

Perhaps the 48 hour GeoHalf is going to be too tough to achieve this year, but it's still on my list of goals. Mel has spied a 12 hour Rogaine that may be our next challenge and we're both keen to have another shot at a 24 hour race with this year's Hells Bells/Fairy Bells - we'll do the Fairy Bells, thank you.

Taryn Doherty