



2018 Australasian Rogaining Championships 'The SunSEQer'

Q&A with Richard Robinson

1. What is your occupation?

Not a simple question. I trained as a Civil Engineer but went into the Oil & Gas industry as a graduate and made my career initially running development projects but later operations and businesses both for Oil & Gas companies and contracting companies serving the industry. I retired from corporate life in early 2013 and have since worked as a Non-Executive Director (NED) and consultant. I am currently an NED on one ASX listed company and also the CEO of a start-up Independent Power Producer (IPP) in Papua New Guinea, a country where I have worked much of the past 30 years

2. What age were you and why did you start competing in Rogaining events at that time?

I was part of the group that brought rogaining to Queensland but circumstances meant that my first event was not until the third one conducted here. A 12-Hour in the Glasshouse Mountains conducted on 7th November 1992, four weeks after my 32nd birthday. Thus, in another 18 months I will have been rogaining for more than half of my entire life. As an aside, my partner in that event was Rod Gray, now the only person to have competed in all 17 WRCs. I have done only 16 as the first WRC was three weeks before 7th November 1992!

3. Best Rogaining tip ever received?

From Rod Gray at that first event. Plan your full course before you start based on your expected km rates for each part of the event and mark each hour on your plan. Your plan should include short-cut and extra loop options.

4. How has Rogaining changed since you started competing?

When I started, events used copies of standard topo maps, often with some hand mark-ups. You had to mark your own Magnetic North lines. These days maps are normally specially drawn, oriented to Magnetic North and often on waterproof paper. Also in those days we had punch cards and cheating by sending only one team member to a CP, was rather too common. Electronic punching has fixed all that and made our sport a lot fairer.

5. What sports did you participate in as a kid?

As a kid growing up in Western NSW one played cricket and rugby league. I also came from a very keen tennis family so I played that regularly too. Rugby league was played in weight divisions in those days and by the time I reached 10yo there weren't 13 boys in the school weighing more than 6 Stone (38Kg for you young people) so I started playing soccer and found I was actually quite good at it albeit I took up rugby league again for a couple of years from age 16 in the Open Weight division and our school had a lot of success in those years. I also started golf at 14 years old. So I have played all those competitively and also as a teenager and/or young adult; volleyball, squash, hockey and indoor cricket. I started orienteering at age 31 and the rest is history. I competed in Foot-O until my knee gave out at age 58 and still compete regularly in MTBO plus some Adventure Racing and occasional MTB races.

6. What is your favourite type of geographic area to Rogaine in?

I prefer terrain that has challenging navigation but not too much scunge. The 2017 ARC and 2015 WRC are prime examples of my preferred terrain from recent times, but there are dozens from the past.

7. What is it you like about the Australasian Champs event in particular?

For ARCs in general I like that I can compete against the best but still mix with the newcomers. For the 2018 ARC it is a wonderful rogaine area without being either too physical or technical. I have competed in that area three times over the past 25 years and always enjoyed it but always had some serious challenges in the dark.

8. How do you stay focused and energized in the 24hr Championship events?

Stay focused on the big picture of the event (i.e. forget that mistake you just made) and eat every hour.

9. What has been the hardest and or strangest moment you can recall on a Rogaine?

With 169 rogaines, including 63 24-hour events behind me there are too many stories so I'll provide a few.

- My total balls-up of the 2017 WRC in Latvia was probably the lowest point of my rogaining life, significantly lower even than the balls-up of the 2013 WRC in Russia in very similar terrain - 100km away.
- Failing to find a CP in a vague scrubby gully in the fog, in the dark, high in the Snowy Mountains in the 2014 ACT Champs was also pretty miserable. Garmin shows we got within 20 metres of it a couple of times but we had no idea and went for four hours without any points until we managed to find a track at dawn.
- In the 1994 QRC at Manumbar, the site of the 2018 ARC, partner Walter and I were totally lost in the dark. We found an unmapped track and started following it on the basis that unmapped tracks lead to mapped tracks. We ran across Peter Merrotsy and Phil Scott crossing said track. We started chatting and Peter wandered off into the bush still chatting and then returned. We bid farewell and each went on our ways. After the event Peter informed us that his wander into the bush wasn't to respond to organic needs but rather to visit and "punch" the CP we had been aiming for! The irony is that Walter & I then continued on our track and within 20 minutes hit a mapped track, relocated less than 300 metres from the next CP on our plan, grabbed it and went on. Peter & Phil on the other hand spent 90 minutes battling lantana on the straight line to the same CP! That area is NOT on the 2018 ARC map.
- In the 2005 Upside Down at Old Hidden Vale I was partnered by a work colleague that I had roped into doing the Sydney Trail-walker later into the year. We had a few problems early and then were working our way along a leg. Saw the CP marker in a slightly unexpected place and headed off on the next leg. Within 100 metres nothing fitted and then I realised that the CP we had just visited was about 1km from the one we had been "navigating" to!

10. For those who may be considering participating in a Rogaining event, what do you believe are the merits of Rogaining?

The challenge is with yourself. Beginners and Elites do the same course, they start and finish at the same time in the same place. You can do as little or as much as you want. It often annoys me that people think that they have some obligation to stay on the course for the full nominal duration. This is neither required nor expected but the "norm" varies greatly from place to place. I lived the first 9 months of 2002 in WA and then returned to Qld. I did a 24-hour rogaïne in WA that year and another in Qld. In the WA event there were 200 teams and 5 teams stayed out overnight. In the Qld event there were 20 teams and 19 teams stayed out overnight! Rogaining is a naturally social activity.

11. Not necessarily based on the win or podium result, what do you personally believe has been your greatest Rogaine?

This is actually a very easy question for me. The answer is the Wandering West Rogaine, the 2009 ARC. Myself and Jane Cooksley were defending XV Champions having been 5th Outright in 2008. We had planned that Jane's husband, Andrew, would join the team for 2009. He was stronger than both of us so no problem. A month out I get an email from Jane saying she was injured. I had been doing some Nav training with Tamsin Barnes whom I knew a little at the time and who had just qualified for Vets. I got Jane's email at Milan Airport on the way home so sent a query to Tamsin. By the time I reached Dubai she had said yes! In the event we covered 116km and were 4th Outright as well as 1st XV. At nearly 54 years old it was so wonderful to have someone who could just sit on my shoulder for the full 24 hours and be such good company. Five months later we moved in together and 18 months after that were married. Life is wonderful!

I must also say that winning XV in the 2006 WRC with Viv Prince, having already won the NZRC and ARC that year was pretty good as was winning XSV in the 2014 WRC, our first win outside Australasia, and 2nd in XSV in the 2015 WRC, our first podium in Europe.

