



# 2018 Australasian Rogaining Championships 'The SunSEQer'

Q&A with Fergus Macleod &  
Emily Rowbotham

## 1. What is your occupation?

**FM:** I am an Honours student at ANU in the Climate Fluid Physics group.

**ER:** I'm in my final year of a Bachelor of Laws and a Bachelor of International Relations at the ANU. I also work part-time in hospitality.

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

**FM:** I would have been 19 when I discovered Rogaining through ANU's "Inward Bound" - a team navigational race which used a 6hr Rogaine as a test to 'qualify' navigators for the event.

**ER:** I competed in my first Rogaine in 2016 when I was 21. I'd had a few of my friends compete in Rogaines but had always thought they were way beyond my ability! When I started training for ANU's 2016 Inward Bound (a navigational endurance race) I was required to complete a 6 hour event to test navigational ability.

## 3. Best Rogaining tip ever received?

**FM:** I think the best tips I have received really came from seeing how other people approach a Rogaine in their route choice and included strategy. I always like seeing David and Julie Baldwin's routes after an event or even watching and listening to more experienced Rogainers planning or discussing a course and strategy.

**ER:** I have a clear memory of my first Rogaine. About four hours in to the event my experienced teammate patiently told me, once again, that the red needle pointed north. Very helpful tip.

## 4. How has Rogaining changed since you started competing?

**FM:** I haven't been around that long but feel like there are definitely more students at the ACT events than I remember when I started.

**ER:** The major change I have noted has been an increase in younger people taking part in events. We even have a local meme page dedicated to Rogaining.

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

**FM:** Growing up I always played soccer and got pretty keen on golf my last few years at school. I still play football with ANU over the winter season and have recently gained an obsession with mountain biking.

**ER:** My early years featured a brief and tragic career as a ballet dancer. In my primary school days I started playing soccer, which I still love. Throughout high-school I was passionate about athletics and loved hurdling and sprints.

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

**FM:** I feel really comfortable Rogaining in the native bush near the ACT but it's always fun being in a totally new environment. Ross River for the world champs was absolutely incredible, as was Waikaia in NZ early last year. It's always nice when the terrain is fast moving (and not too scratchy) with good views!

**ER:** Flat stuff... I hate hills... But then again there is nothing better than being rewarded with a good view.

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

**FM:** The Australasian Champs are great because they aren't too far to travel but always showcase a great location with a challenging course and attract a very competitive field.

**ER:** I've never been to an Australasian Champs so I like that I'm going to one!

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

**FM:** Staying focused and energized on a 24hr is pretty impossible. I think you really rely on your partner(s) to stay motivated and keep up the momentum when it gets inevitably challenging. You also want to work harder when there is somebody else with you to make sure you both get the best result you can - that's a big motivation.

**ER:** The beauty of team-oriented events such as Rogaines is in having a teammate that can be relied upon to help pick you back up when you've hit the wall. Having another person that is dependent on you to pull a good result can be endlessly motivating. A 24hr event is also a really good excuse to eat lots of delicious treats. When the going gets tough another good (mood dependent) tactic is some obnoxious singing – but this can be quite hit or miss.

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

**FM:** There was a rather extended debate over lights (hilux or moon) at Ross River and I always love a long distance control spot, even if it's of a control we had no intention of finding. Navigating at night used to consistently deliver traumatic experiences. Time really slows down when you are lost following a bearing in hope of hitting a road...

**ER:** Rogaining in the bush at night can sometimes get a bit creepy. One of the strangest moments was finding a huge ram's skull suspended by a rope on a tree in the middle of the bush on a Paddy Pallin Rogaine. We got out of there quite quickly.

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

**FM:** Everyone has a unique experience on a Rogaine and you can really control your own destiny - it can be as challenging as you want to make it. With a reliance on navigation things go wrong and there is a lot of fun in that spontaneous problem solving. The Rogaining community is out for being competitive and having a good time in any mix or combination.

**ER:** Rogaining allows you to test your endurance abilities and see how far you can push your body. It teaches teamwork and cooperation, and many practical skills! The Rogaining community is supportive and welcoming regardless of ability!

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

**FM:** I think my favourite or best Rogaine ever was with Max Messenger at the Australian Championships last year. We had done all our 24 hour events together to that point and it was the first one we finished feeling like we had really put together a competitive score. We stayed really focused through a seriously cold night and only started making mistakes when we found too much energy and were running faster than we could navigate in the morning...

**ER:** One of my favourite Rogaining memories has been from the Australian Championships in 2016. In all, the Rogaine went a little poorly – it was my first 24 hour event and my partner felt quite sick. We ended up taking it easy and spent the early hours of the morning marching about with another team who were feeling just as sorry for themselves. But the experience I gained from the Rogaine was priceless. If you don't know how to navigate at the beginning of an event, 24 hours is more than enough time to get some practice in. That race really solidified my love for Rogaining!

Anything else to add?

**FM:** Through Rogaining and good friend and source of wisdom Keith Conley, myself and some fellow Rogainers (Max Messenger, Emily Rowbotham, Anthony Newman and Brad Valette) stumbled into Adventure Racing last year as team Aussie Battlers.

We applied for sponsored youth team entry to the race in China last year and found ourselves frantically trying to paddle, pack and ride bikes two weeks before getting on the plane. We had no idea what we were doing and were constantly on the edge of disaster but hung on with consistent navigation to survive the short course.

After such a wild adventure we thought the only appropriate following action would be to commit to XPD about 9 months later, buy mountain bikes and try to finish the full course. It was awesome.

**ER:** In a similar strain to Ferg's response above, another thing I'd like to add has been how Rogaining has helped to connect me to likeminded people and led me to amazing places. In that same 2016 Australian Champ's event, the other team we spent time with consisted of Anthony Newman and Brad Valette. We began chatting about a new sport Anthony had heard about – 'adventure racing'. It sounded ridiculous. He'd heard rumour that a race in the Kazakh autonomous region of China was seeking to sponsor 'youth teams' to compete in the 500km adventure race coming up. All you had to do was apply. I said I thought it sounded incredible (despite not owning or riding a bike, or ever having kayaked). Guess where we were two and a half weeks later!

After our China experience, our adventure racing team entered the 2018 XPD. Our unexpected success in the race can mostly be attributed to our navigational ability, which can be credited to us all being Rogainers!

