

Tiger Red Zone – Rogue Raid 2021

Tiger Red Zone – fitting name for an eventful launch into the A1 Series Adventure Racing. 3 rookies - myself, my PreRogueative training bestie and my Roosters twin - and our fearless Captain. And what an amazing team we were.



Race planning with course maps

Stage 1 (Trek) Stage 2 (Kayak)

We started strong in the pack, all the Kayak CPs and nailing the nav in the early trek CPs. Then halfway up Mt Joyce (highest mountain on course), or 4 hours in, my PreRogueative bestie went downhill fast – pale, started feeling sick – overheating maybe ? We rested and ate/hydrated over that leg. We made it to the top of Mt Joyce, took it easy and made it through all the trek CPs. Tried to keep up spirits.

*View across Wyaralong
Dam from Mt Joyce
summit*



Stage 3 (Trek) Stage 4 (Kayak)

Hit the Kayak, no improvement from bestie, only added dizziness to the mix. Heat Stress our team captain thought. At this point I was really worried, we all were. Race? What Race? We need to head back to the transition TA-B quick stix and if our team mate needs medical help, we can access it there. Captain Red Zone and my Roosters twin fashioned a tow rope so we could pull together and let our team mate rest. It just hit dark as we paddled across the dam.

TA-B transition. Fluids, food, rest. Change of clothes. More fluid, food. He started feeling better. More rest. My bestie wanted to try the next leg (trek). Still cautious, we reviewed our race plan and changed our strategy to get the closest CPs and then come back to TA-B if we needed to, depending on the health of our team mate. Excellent contingency plan, play it safe.

Stage 5 (Trek)

A positive stride out of TA-B and straight into the weeds and spear grass to CPs 19-21. By this time it was a lot cooler at night and our team mate was in better spirits, so we pushed on to get more CPs on foot. Captain Red Zone had started to get "friction" in his shoes. Uh oh, our fearless leader had to make it through the rest of the race AND his feet were signed up to tackle the UTA 50 in Katoomba next weekend. Fixomull and Guernsey Goo treatment on the fly. Onwards and upwards.

Stage 6 (Bike)

Back to TA-B, by now my PreRogueative bestie was keen to hit the bike and Captain Red Zone was happy to see the end of the trek leg, but we were well behind our pre-race planned timings. We got the two MTB CPs that took us to the base of the formidable 5km hike a bike. Tiger Rookies were there, our TA-B transition neighbours. We shared some laughs and weighed up the pros and cons of what we knew would be a significant task, especially if we were not "feeling it". Tiger Red Zone made a pact. Let's do it, so we can say we did it. The logic seemed so reasonable at 3am !

Regret is not a word I would use to describe the hike a bike leg of Rogue Raid 2021, more like insanity wrapped up in the world of Adventure Racing. At the point where I was side stepping my bike up the side of the mountain dodging landslip, rocks and fallen tree limbs, on a conservative estimate of 2:1 grade, the tightest contours on course, I'd be lying if I said I enjoyed that moment. At the top of that first incline, the swear jar IOUs tallied \$126.

And then the most amazing reward unfolded at the peak of Mt Crumpet (no, we didn't have any on us, and Uber Eats was a long shot). A spectacular sunrise; a special shared moment we knew no other team would have experienced. We took some photos and broke bread (opened packets) for breakfast. My Roosters twin shared his desire to brush his teeth. I shared my mandarin and it was the next best thing. Two rewards at the top of Mt Crumpet.



Tiger Red Zone at the Top of Mt Crumpet at sunrise

Reviewing the distance we needed to cover to get back to HQ before 11am, we knew at that point the MTB would be our last stage and we would have to drop the last kayak and trek stages. More hike a bike along a mostly unrideable descent, until we hit the Moto Park CPs. My team mates were so strong on the MTB - I was the weakest link and this was going to be my toughest challenge – downhill, large ruts and sand. My Roosters twin dropped back and stayed close in front of me. I was able to follow his line and better anticipate the terrain ahead. I was so grateful for that small gesture; it gave me the confidence to ride faster.

CP41 and we were 30km from finish. The countdown was on and our revised strategy was to get the CPs visible from the track and drop the ones further off trail (if needed). OK team, let's GO ! That enthusiasm didn't filter down to our legs. More hills. We took turns taking the lead, fighting the fatigue in the last 2 hours, riding up one hill, then pushing the bike up the next, each of us battling our own mental and physical challenges in waves.

Sprint Finish

A glimpse of the dam wall through the trees in the distance (HQ) and 20 minutes to get there; the urgency went up a notch. This was literally the sprint finish we never thought we'd be doing. We started going up (another) hill. I looked down toward the shoreline, "there's a track down there". A check of the map, we'd taken a wrong turn. Only a small backtrack. Phew.

We landed on bitumen and it was on. Another hill, it wasn't necessarily large, but we had nothing left in the tank. Captain Red Zone reached the top, dropped his bike, ran back and helped push me on my bike uphill to the crest. Riding into the service road, we dumped our bikes in the only bit of open ground in the middle of the gathered crowd and sprinted to the final CP tent to nodding heads and wide eyed spectators. We were 3 minutes over, losing 30 points, thrilled with that small margin.

The “Lost” Team

To our surprise the race officials were visibly relieved when they declared Tiger Red Zone. Our GPS tracker had stopped working around 3am at the base of the hike a bike and because we didn't pass through any more transitions, nobody knew where we were for the last third of the race. A friend told me she was at the finish line earlier and overheard race officials talking about a lost team and that it was very much battle stations. Apparently we were that lost team. But, as she pointed out – “thankfully you weren't actually lost - in truth, you knew exactly where you were”.

Photos at the end, presentations and post-race pizza and soft drink. Exhausted, we packed up our gear, said goodbye to each other, the picturesque dam and the landscape. Our first race had a bit of everything. Many obstacles, but they served to bring out the best in each other and to galvanise a camaraderie and spirit that many AR teams talk about; and a key reason I was drawn into the sport. On the drive home, Captain Red Zone asked me “what would you bring next time and what would you leave behind”. “Ankle gators” was all I had to offer, but after what I had just experienced I knew that the best accessory for me during that race were my team mates.

Tiger Red Zone (the Lost team) at the finish line, Mt Joyce and Wyaralong Dam in the background

