

BMX Bandits - 2016 Rogue 24hr Race Report.

The past few years, I've made sure that the [Rogue 24hr Adventure](#) has been on my race calendar. Liam, and his fantastic team of volunteers, consistently put on a first class event, including everything I love about adventure racing:

- a challenging course, where route selection and navigation skills are critically important
- a race format in which both beginners and experienced racers can participate side by side
- reliable maps and accurate CP marking/locations
- varied, scenic and interesting race locations
- good communication pre, during and post event
- enough paddling to warrant some training
- all for a super affordable race entry fee.

With my wife out of action, due to a niggling hip injury, I was on the lookout for a race buddy. Dave Ellis and I have raced against each other a few times in recent years and when I contacted him he was keen. While I knew Dave was super experienced (multiple 24's, Geo's and Expedition races), until you've trained or raced with someone, it always feels like you're 'rolling the dice'.... I have fond memories of the Mongoose riding Nicole Kidman in the 1980's, so racing under the **BMX Bandits** name seemed like a good idea.



From the outset, we hoped to be competitive, expecting that Team Area51 and Team Explore, both with a history of strong Rogue performances, were likely contenders. The 2016 course had 56 controls on offer (over 220km), obviously too many to sweep the course, our plan was to get most of the CP's during the first 3 stages... then check the time to determine which controls we would visit during the second half of the race. During map prep, Dave and I discussed options, routes etc and I was immediately impressed with the way he approached the event, I could tell he was going to be a great team-mate for the next 24 hours. For those that like to 'play along' and look at maps and CP descriptions, here is a link to the [Rogue website](#).



The calm before the storm (Race Start)

Just before starting **Stage 1**, a MTB leg titled - **“What goes up....”**, I remember saying to Dave, “Let’s not get caught up in the excitement of the race, going too hard too early.” Within 2 mins of the race start, we found ourselves pulling away from the field on a short climb beside Lake Manchester Dam wall! We headed north, collecting CP’s 4 and 6, before the first of many long climbs up to CP7. We kept chatting up the climb, both of us felt the pace was comfortable, still no sign of any other teams. We wasted about 15mins looking for CP17 (Seismic Bunker), taking a turn a few hundred meters too early. CP’s 18, 20 and 21 were pretty straightforward, the highlight being a fairly ‘gnarly’ descent from Goodes Rd to Westridge Break Rd. Every couple of water bars, I’d stop to see where Dave was... was he riding or walking? Each time he was right on my hammer, in my mind I thought, ‘yep, so this guy can ride’. Unfortunately the sharp, loose rocks on the descent punctured one of Dave’s tyres, so we wasted a little time sorting that. 35 km on this first MTB.

Leaving TA 22, I was super excited about the **Stage 2 “Northbrook Gorge Trek”**, having heard about it many years ago, being labelled one of Brisbane’s best day hikes. Thinking it would be quicker, we headed NW out of transition, choosing to stay on Mt Glorious Rd, heading for CP33. We wrongly assumed that we’d be able to cut across from the buildings marked on the map, just south of the control. We were soon met by some seriously thick Lantana and Lawyer Vine, aptly named ‘Wait a while’. Back to the road, “maybe we get CP33 later.” The solid climb up to CP28 was a sign of things to come, rather than retracing our steps, we dropped off the ridge directly north, back down to Lawnton Rd. The vertical walls and rock pools of Northbrook Gorge were magnificent, the refreshing ‘swim throughs’ very welcome. Definitely a spot to revisit with the family. Just before climbing out of the Gorge at CP26, we bumped into Team Area 51. Hmmm, I wonder how many points they have...?? You never know with the rogaine format, another great aspect of this event. We moved well through the remainder of this stage, jogging the flats and downhill (Dave runs well too!). We wasted a little time looking for CP30, in hindsight, probably a loss of concentration on my behalf that had us searching the next creek after the one we wanted. Dave guided us accurately to CP31, spotting a Koala on route. Before returning to TA, we revisited CP33 via the walking track, sweeping the 28km stage.



My favourite CP location, Northbrook Gorge

We headed out onto **Stage 3 “.... Must come down,”** keen to collect as many bike controls as possible, In total we covered another 60 km and while there was plenty of fun descents, there was no shortage of climbs. After picking up CP's 9, 11 and 12, we made the decision to travel west along Gold Creek Boundary Break, probably not our best idea! There must have been a dozen short, steep, hike a bikes which took their toll on the legs. I reached a pretty low point during this Stage, thinking.... “I'm over this now” on more than one occasion. I suspect I didn't eat enough, during the gorge hike, despite this, Dave remained upbeat, kept talking to me and took over nav responsibilities. Another flat tyre on the way to CP5 slowed us up a bit, and we arrived back at race HQ about 3am, a few hours behind Area 51 and Team Explore, but having collected more points. Much to our delight, Liam's volunteers hadn't eaten all of their garlic bread or pizza, this certainly helped to lift my spirits!

For us, the **Stage 4 “Farmland Trek”** was short and sweet, we only collected CP's 35 and 36 on route to the kayaks at TA38. The 12 km paddle to Kholo bridge - **Stage 5 “Kayak Down River”** was one to remember. Dave was shocked to hear the sound of rapids as we paddled away from the transition - surely we couldn't be paddling rapids at night? Sure enough, we rounded a corner and swept through a small gravel race rapid, absolutely brilliant. And due to the evening mist on the water, the headlamps were pretty ineffective, so we ended up having an epic paddle under the light of the full moon. After fixing a small rudder/steering issue (self-inflicted), we quickly got the Spirit CTR Double skis up to speed, without doubt the best plastic 'sit-on-top' I've paddled. We were literally humming along (Dave can paddle too) and at one point even caught a fish... that jumped into our boat. There was no real nav required during this paddle, so it was head down all the way to the 240 point CP40 and TA41.

Wet and a little cold, we departed the TA onto **Stage 6 “Mount Crosby Trek”** as quickly as possible, trying to warm up. The sun rising as we travelled north along the road to CP43. Despite the fairly open terrain, we drifted south of the control and wasted 20 mins searching for the gully. Knowing it was worth 80 points, we decided to try a different attack route, finding the trail to the east and then tracking back along the creek to the NE of the control location. Got it! CP44 and 45 were straightforward, but time was quickly running away from us. Would we have time to duck into CP48? It's worth 100 points.... While still under the power lines, we did some calculations and decided we probably needed to head back to HQ and get back into the kayaks. Around this time, Dave and I had discussed the fact that we'd had a good 'training run' but were most likely out of contention, given a few nav errors and a couple of flat tyres etc. Shortly after this, on route back to HQ and for the first time in the race, we caught sight of Paul and Darren from Team Explore. We jogged up to them, said hello, chatted about the course and next thing... After 21 hours of racing, neither of us aware of how many points the other team had collected, we're in a testosterone fuelled running race back to HQ! I estimate we covered 15km during this stage.

As it turned out, Area 51, Team Explore and ourselves all hit **Stage 7 “Lake Manchester”** kayak within a few minutes of each other. Resigned to the fact that we had probably missed too many points in the previous trek stage, we were determined to sweep the final 10 km paddle quicker than both of our rivals. Travelling in a counterclockwise direction around the lake, we were on track to do just that, when on the way to CP51 we noticed that Team Area 51 had gone back to TA and headed for home.... “That's weird, why would they miss this final control?” Because it's a run control, that's why! Oops, should have read those course notes more closely.

After 23 hours and 38 mins / 160+ km's and almost 5,000m of elevation gain (see [Strava Route](#)) / 101,457 steps on Dave's Fit Bit - it was great to be welcomed home by my kids who were cheering us on.

BMX Bandits strolled across the finish line, obviously fatigued, but satisfied that we'd moved well through each of the stages/disciplines. Somewhat surprised to take 2nd place, 100 points behind Team Explore, congratulations to Paul and Darren who took a well deserved win.



Happy to see the finish line and the kids!

Finally, thanks to:

- Liam (and his understanding family) for his tireless effort, a huge task, coordinating one of the best AR's on the Australian calendar
- all volunteers and race officials
- Paul Elby for assisting Dave with pre race travel and accommodation
- my wife for allowing me to race (without her) and
- Dave, really enjoyed racing with you.... Until next time!

Race report by Chris Delaney
May, 2016



BMX Bandits take 2nd place!

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