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Rogue Adventuregaine

Posted on [April 30, 2014](#) by [lxtmb](#)

The weekend just gone marked the first bash at a [24 hour event](#) for Vetti and I. Being relatively new to the sports of rogaining and adventure racing, having been active for just over a year, I'm not sure if we left this step too late or attacked it too early. Speaking personally I felt rather good about it in the lead up, the right balance of excitement and minimal worry. I'd enforced a very strict tapering protocol over the past few months in which I spent more time buying race equipment like boxes and food instead of actually doing any constructive training, so I was both fresh and laden with gear. Some of the more critical bits (I'm looking at you hydration bladder) managed to turn up in the post just in time, sneaking through in the three day week prior to the event.

We turned up to the positively luxurious race centre (beds! showers! meals!) a little late Friday, having used the day to procrastinate-prepare and giving my race partner time to study for an exam on the Monday after the race, just in case anyone else thought they had it tough. The idea to strap course notes onto the mapboard (a crowning accomplishment of self constructed wizardry – pvc pipe, a few bolts, some nylox nuts and the cheapest plastic chopping boards I could find) was thrown around and half seriously considered before weight considerations vetoed that plan.

Anyway, after digesting some dinner and pre-race psyche up films, dutifully avoided by the team mate, who spent the evening studying alone in one of the cabins, we crashed out early ready to get moving. That night had me dreaming about the race, a dream in which we made it back to the cabins mid-event only to forget to set an alarm and get a solid 8 hours. No such luck race day.



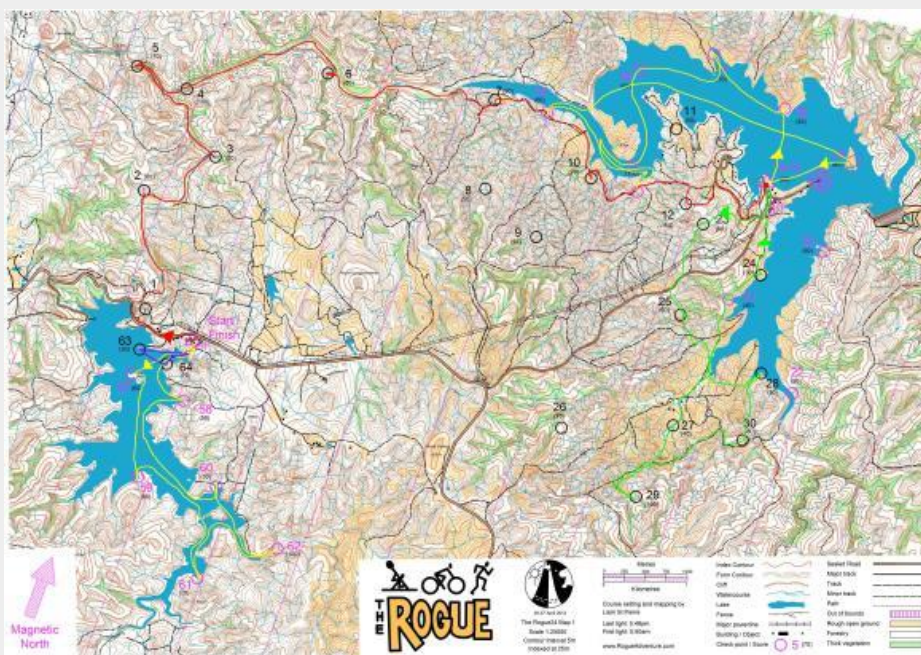
Posing – AKA race prep.

Note many photo credits [here](#).

Map prep went smoothly until it came time to contact. I think I need to set up a training day with some of the more experienced racers, so they can run me through proper techniques. Perhaps then I'd avoid wrinkles, bubbles and frustratingly getting contact stuck to my everywhere and itself. We had a good plan within our ability, knowing we weren't likely to be competitive against the strong field we figured we'd need to drop a few to make it through the night alive. We spiced it up by electing to take some trickier nav choices during the second night trek. Extra focus was given to bike leg where we had to guess cut off times for some optional loops if we were running out of hours.



Pre-race excitement.



Trek – Kayak – Trek – (Bike) – Kayak – Paddle Board route.

We set off at a run when the race started, joining 95% of the field heading down Perseverance Creek, past the friendly robo-coptor and out onto the course proper. The linear first stage was an outstanding part of the world. My climbing muscles twitched as I spotted countless opportunities to climb on the worn river rocks, sadly unable to stop. We made decent time up the creek, and emerged some hours later with numerous bumps, bruises and already sore legs from the unconventional rock hopping. I personally loved it, although I hear it wasn't so much appreciated by others. We ticked all of the first seven CP's with minimal fuss, a small wrong turn after the weir where the creek met the dam was quickly rectified and we followed the easy path back to camp, dropping CPs 8, 9 and 11 while collecting 10 and 12. In retrospect I wish we had gone for 11, but by that stage there was some significant footwear issues with the teammate, who was wincing with each step, getting to the drop boxes and a change of shoes was a priority over points, especially with so much of the race to go.



Stage 1 Trek



Stage 1 Trek

We refilled our now empty water stash and grabbed one of the delightful red kayaks (which despite everything we are lucky to have... I guess) to head out for a bit of a paddle. I hear we should have grabbed a canoe. Sadly, canoe conjures in my mind some enormous, wide wooden monstrosity and we never even entertained the idea. With my six foot plus frame (flexible as a steel girder) wedged into the kayak, grateful for my crappy bit of foam, off we went. Knowing we probably wouldn't have the chops to clear this Kayak we opted to gather the higher density of CPs in the northern/ western part of the dam. Fighting a persistent drift we clocked 18, 17 and 16 before rounding the bend to the 100 pointer at CP15. Regrettably we made a small error here. One we should have caught in map planning. One I had noticed looking at the race location maps from the race instructions a week prior! Thinking we'd get CP14 and double back to CP15 we completely overlooked the opportunity to portage the small land bridge between CP14 and CP16 saving precious time and effort. Luckily we spotted some not so stupid teams crossing over, made the rapid decision to flip around and double back to get CP15, and were back on track before too long.



Stage 2 Kayak (probablynot us).

At this point we saw our race friends and cabin buddies finishing up the trek on the shore, wondering if they'd got lost in the tricky terrain around CPs 8 and 9, we later discover a broken toe (at CP1 no less!!!) had slowed them right up, and ended their race at the first TA. I felt terrible for them, and now wish I had the foresight to offer the uninjured friend a chance to join us for some of the remaining legs. Sorry Nick, we only realised too late this was an option. So, after adding an extra kilometre or so to the paddle, grabbing CP14 and making the portage shortcut we headed back via CP19 on the island. Glow sticks cracked and ready to party, we drifted back into the TA around 5:30, roughly on schedule and absolutely thrilled to change into dry shoes and clothes.



Gross

Finding out a few teams were on track to clear the course was some exciting news, and in the dark, with the benefit of clear skies, we set off to test our rogaining skills. Heading up the road and up the ridge to CP23 wasn't too bad, although we were slightly off track for a while. The only real error on the leg (to be explained in a minute) came with a confused bearing to try and re-join the road and get back on track to CP25. We managed eventually, but not before some frustration. Similar confusion followed on our way to CP25, bemused at our ability to be off kilter on two ridges in a row we managed to track the CP down soon enough.

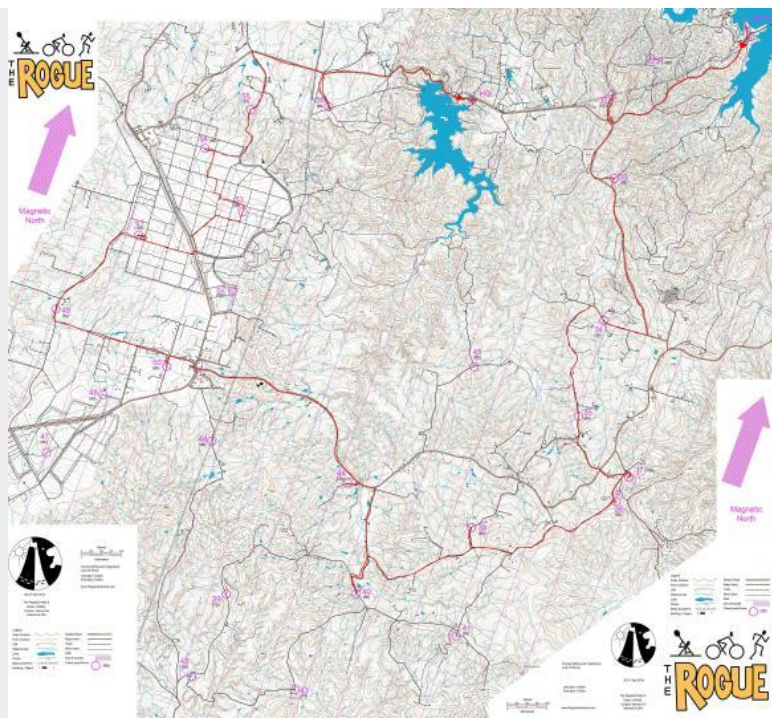
After that was simple cruise down the track and up the flat creek to CP27. Beware hidden ditches on that creek, I got lucky when the hole I stepped in turned out to be longer than my leg and my chest graciously absorbed the brunt of my fall. Winded I jumped up only to watch someone from the team just ahead do the exact same thing, emerging similarly unscathed. Nursing our pride we punched and rolled out, never to mention the embarrassment in any form ever again.

Thanks to Vetti we adjusted our course around (instead of over) the large hill on the fly, cruising down the path to find, relatively easily, CP29 for a healthy 100 points. Thinking the track would be quicker than the creek we scurried back up the hill and moved at pace to CP30. Once there a team in the distance asked us if we knew where we were, which, thankfully, we did, and warned us of tricky nav that led to CP28 on the waterside, which they had attempted and somehow ended up circling back to the starting point. Wishing them luck we decided to chance it and headed off. Remember those bearing issues from earlier? Looking at the map and not reconciling our path with the terrain I realised, at 9:30pm, approximately 13 hours too late, magnetic north was skewed on the map. Idiots. All our bearing issues came sharply into focus, no wonder we had hit the wrong ridge on three separate occasions. It's a wonder we didn't end up navigating our way to Cairns. After silently, and then loudly, cursing ourselves, we adjusted and managed to end up near enough to the CP to figure it out and grab the points. With our now perfect bearings leading us back we successfully worked our way back to the TA via CP24, having only dropped CP26 way off to the west.



TA by lake Cressbrook. Our box is the black one.

Back at the TA we decided to grab some calories before attempting the monster bike leg. Whipping out the stove and dehydrated meat, better than it sounds, we had a hot meal in ten minutes (cous-cous and mince) got into bike gear and packed up shop to attempt the tiny hill out from the lake. That was a grim start to the ride. Tow ropes required next time round. Also more focus despite being tired. At one point I accidentally had my head down for too long and moved way too far ahead of my team mate. Foolish. Opting to take the 'easier' bitumen path out and do a quick in and out to CP32 we hit my personal low point of the race. Coming back up the hill to re-join the main track my bike double shifted as I hit a divot, forcing way too much power on the down stroke and effectively exploding my chain. What followed was an increasingly frustrating half an hour both unable to make two chain breakers work properly (one was missing a part and the other warped links as it broke them) and unable to fit the so called quick link. Eventually the planets and my focus aligned and I sorted the mess out. Missing a significant portion of my chain and grateful to have a total of four functional gears we moved on.



Bike route.

The rest of the bike leg, while long, and with some gruelling climbs, was reasonably uneventful. Having to opt for a shorter course we dropped a lot of the CPs to the far south. We picked up 34, 35, 37 and 36 in the national park. After CP38, our adjusted route took us to the 90 pointer at CP40, before taking the easier road through the paltry 20 point CP44, which was perhaps not worth the effort of the small but steep hill involved.

Once we hit the flatter sections around Hampton our pace really improved. In retrospect there were several better route choices to be had, and we probably should have collected an extra 180 – 230 points on this leg even with our setbacks, but we were mostly grateful to be moving and keeping warm in the cold. We picked off the broken CP50, down the long straight hill to CP49, back up to CP51, and through the forestry to CPs 53 and 54. We took what we thought was a trail, painted trees mark trails generally, to CP54 only to realise all the marked trails were in much better condition and there was no cause for us to ride through the fire that was still slowly burning in the trees. Nevertheless we'd gone the right way and soon found it. The highlights of the bike leg were the following downhill sections. The only shame was that we had to stop to punch CP55 instead of barrelling down the hill. With the sun up we shot through CP56 and then floored it down the road and back into the event centre, hunched over like wannabe racers and with giant smiles we eschewed brakes and let the bikes run as a brilliant end to the leg.

Happy to be out of the saddles we decided to attempt the final kayak as the first of the optional final legs. It had the most points and, thankful for our trolley, we jumped on the lake in the cool morning and set off to clear the stage. CPs 57, 59, a filthy muddy portage to the filthy muddy CP61 which some scoundrel had chopped were all relatively easy points. We were even paddling a good deal faster than a selection of other teams which had our spirits up. A cruel final rock hopping section to CP62 on cold muscles was an unwelcome treat and CPs 60 and 58 were the last on the leg. CP60 almost being overshot until a quick look at the compass saved us from doubling around. A team behind us wasn't so lucky and they opted to pass it up with time ticking away.

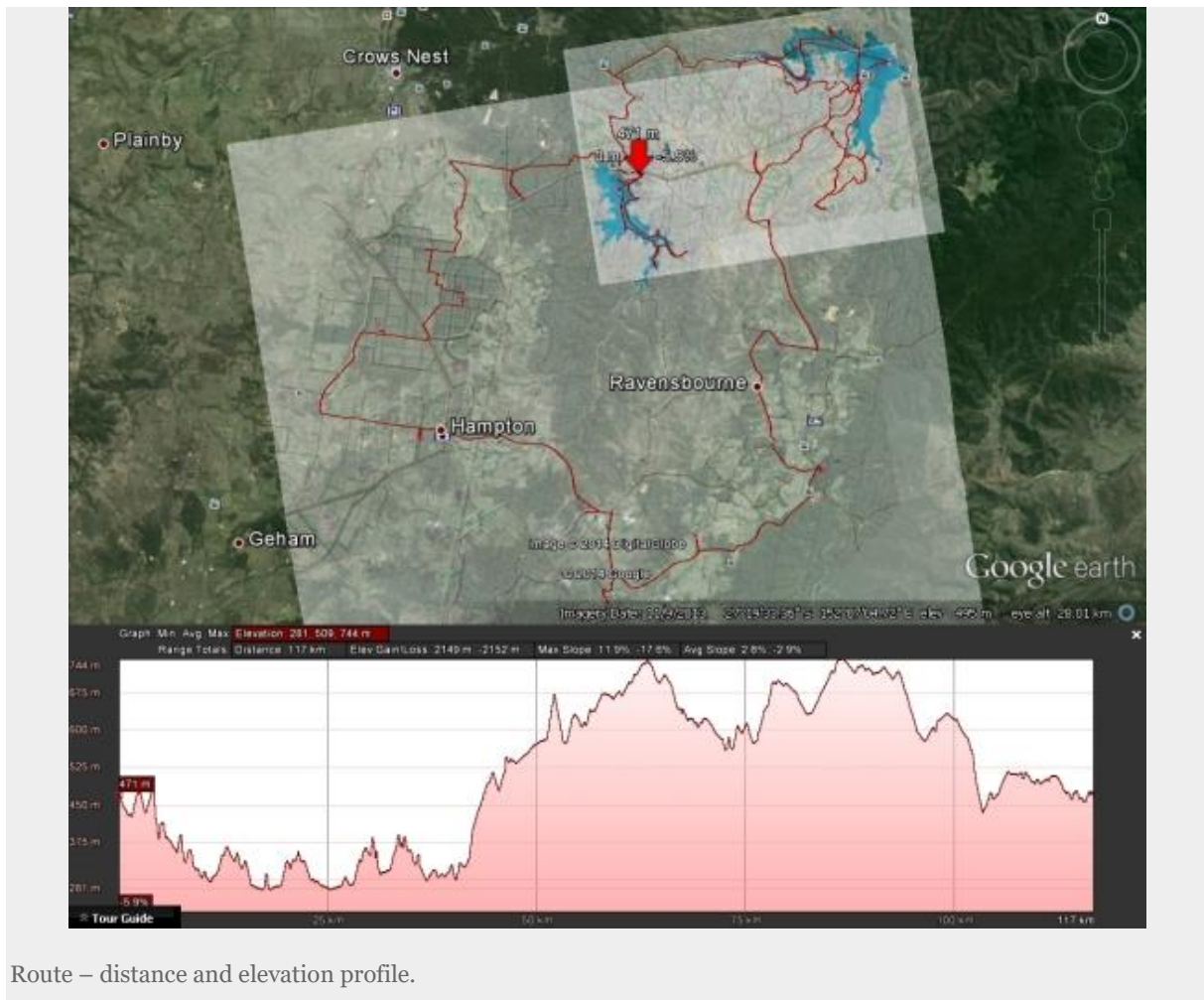
We had a few issues reattaching the kayak to the trolley to get it back up the hill, sleep deprivation and frozen fingers the main culprits, but managed eventually. I later saw a picture of somebody walking it up on their back like a turtle shell and stood in awe.

Since we were wet already we opted to run back to the paddle boards and despite not having done it previously I seemed to pick up the gist rather quickly. A key part of our success was my willingness to jump into the water to turn the damn things around. It was a fairly unique section and good fun for a hundred points.



Kneel up paddle boarding.

We probably should have elected to run the orienteering course post kayak, collecting the 150 points first before doing what we could on the boards. As it happened we were running out of time and energy, and, with 45 minutes left (10:15am) on the clock found ourselves making some embarrassing, but ultimately successful attempts at the archery before rolling back in to call it a day. I was in the shower and drinking coffee by 10:20. Glad to be able to watch the remaining serious contenders roll in in clean comfort.



We finished up with 2960 points around the middle of the pack. Pretty pleasing for a first go. And after the fun of the presentations made our way home for some essential sleep and beer (also several more hours of study for Vetti – hardcore – we think she passed).

Thank you so much to everyone involved in putting on this amazing event. The course, organisers, volunteers, sponsors, event centre and all other aspects were brilliant and made for a fantastic weekend. I'm keen to give it another bash, and perhaps once the memories are clouded with the rosy lens of time, I can convince Vetti she actually had a brilliant time and can't wait to try it again.

Lex