

## **Team Giant Slayers – race report**

### **MOJO Raid 6 Hour Race Report 2017**

You might think we will be back because of all the wonderful reasons to participate in Adventure Racing and Rogaining. We all know how amazing it is to play and explore in Australia's natural outdoor environment. I love the native animal sightings, the feeling of adventure taking paths and off trail routes most will never know exist. I love the physical challenge and feeling of accomplishment at each checkpoint. I love the strategy and mindfulness required to plan a route with food and water logistics. Let's not forget the allure of a good map and finding its meaning play out in the surrounding topography. Climbing that hill for the joy of a beautiful view from the summit. The rogaining community full of warm greetings from now familiar faces. The gear geek in me which loves the bikes, map boards, kayaks, paddles, multiple compasses, favourite hydration pack, specific shoes and clothing.

The Mojo Raid 2017 had all these in spades. Yet they weren't the highlight for me.

With my son, Noah this was our 3<sup>rd</sup> Mojo Raid as team Giant Slayers. Noah is now 13 and I can emphasise the TEEN. His height is shooting up and his voice has broken. As his Dad this new stage has challenged me. When he doesn't listen (he knows more than me apparently), stubbornly insists on doing things his way, back answers, sleeps in too much. It is all normal teenage patterns of behaviour. It can push my buttons and drive me crazy. My wife points out that I'm hitting cranky old man stage at the same time. Our Father/Son relationship is being challenged and redefined. I spend too much time frustrated and just a bit cranky.

At Mojo Raid we get to come together as team mates. The father son relationship is complemented with the dynamic of working together as teammates to take on the Raid. We spend the Friday night camping and removed from TV, IT, social media. The peaceful bonding starts to happen like magic.

With the wind and waves on Somerset Dam the consensus was Kayaking wasn't a good option. I thought we weren't going to get wet. At the race briefing Erren and Jo point out only 1 person from the team would need to get the boat ramp check point for 100 points. Noah very quickly tells me that we

have to get the 100 points and that it will be me. When the race starts we head straight to the boat ramp and see the Mojo team's sense of fun. Checkpoint 52 is an inflatable pool shark about 20 m out into the heavily wind swept, cold and muddy lake with a small crowd of Mojo volunteers on the bank in fits of laughter at the whole scene. Most teams bypass the checkpoint but a few have the lucky team mate removing unnecessary clothing and plunging into the refreshing water. After a quick Mick Fanning impersonation the shark is dispatched. Noah and I are having a hoot. The laughter on the shoreline is absolutely infectious and sets the mood for the entire race.

We trek the long ridge to our high point. Following the taped trails through dense bush and beautiful rocky creek lines keeps the navigation straight forward. There is a 12 hour team in sight behind us and it motivates us to keep moving. As we meet teams moving in the opposite direction we hear several kind warnings about the bees swarming at the base of the waterfall checkpoint. By the time we arrive at the waterfall our minds have hyped the stories into killer bees waiting to strike. Well not quite but Noah has never had a bee sting, he didn't want to start here. You've got to love these opportunities for character development.

Past the bees and we are enjoying the company of that 12 hour team as we now travel together. Their kids at home are a bit younger than Noah. The defined trail means we pass plenty of teams moving in the opposite direction that are all smiles enjoying the event every bit as much as we are.

A couple more checkpoints and we are back to HQ ready for the kayak leg. The wind and waves are stronger than earlier so like most teams we trek easily along the lake edge to the punch the compulsory 'kayak' leg checkpoint.

4 hours trekking done with 2 hours to go. The bikes are a welcome change cruising along the dirt roads. I'm thinking we should stick to checkpoints without much elevation. Noah tells me we should push on with our plan and climb the sizeable hill to checkpoints 18 and 16. As we pushed our bikes up the hill we saw plenty of others doing the same and people choosing to walk their bikes down the steepest section rather than ride. We appreciated the view from the top but I more raptured with the

joy of being a proud Dad as Noah is pushing his physical boundaries on the climb and testing his determination and bravery when we ride cautiously back down.

A quick ride up the valley as we figure we could squeeze in 2 more checkpoints. Turning for HQ at checkpoint 20 and a 12 hour competitor tells Noah I said I'd treat him to whatever he wants from Maccaa's. All lies! Noah excitedly puts the proposal to me. The idea has him excited so I agree on condition he rides back to HQ without stopping. Noah is inspired with enthusiasm that outweighs any caution. He races down the dirt road and loses control. His bike and body are swerving all over the dirt rode completely out of sync. I'm riding behind him and immediately have that sick feeling as time slows waiting for the moment of impact, blood and thinking this is going to be carnage. Somehow he pulled off the save of the day and got his bike under control. That sick feeling takes a while to go. We ride with care and finish with a comfortable 10 minutes to spare.

What an awesome event. You can feel the enthusiasm and passion that Erren and Jo put into this event. Thank you so much for allowing us to have this experience.

During our 6 hour event Noah was challenged in quite a few different ways. I got to put away the cranky old man that has been coming out a little too frequently at home. Instead I had the opportunity to be Noah's teammate and used the opportunities presented to provide encouragement, support and work on our Father/Son bond through this shared experience. What could beat that?