

Rogue Adventuregain 24hr Race Report

Report by Yan Jiehui & Wilson Low

Our team, WanGoDo Edge Woodlanders, have put together this race report on the 24hr Rogue Adventuregain, a weekend adventure race that saw us navigating, trekking, kayaking and mountain biking in the Sunshine Coast hinterland of Queensland, Australia.



We, together with our fellow WanGoDo Edge squad members Luke Su and The Boon King, traveled with mountain bikes, paddles, and other assorted adventure gear all the way from Singapore, our one chance to do a race with all our favourite elements, that was heavy on navigation, and relatively straightforward for logistics. Our non-stop adventure through the bush saw us racing against several strong Australian teams in the men's as well as mixed categories in the following stages: 20km of down-river paddling + 7km of trekking; a massive 80km mountain bike rogaine, a 19km trek; and a 18km paddle on a dam + 5km of trekking.

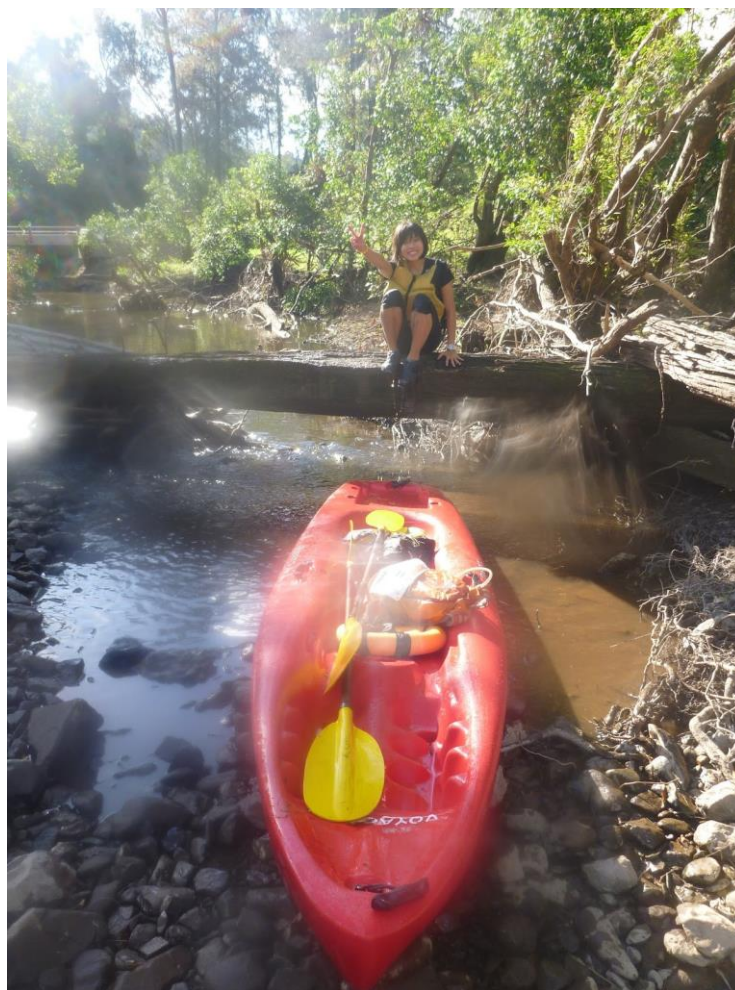
Here is our story.

'First Checkpoint-it is'

Jiehui: The race started with Wilson running away from the track to CP1. I pulled his arm back and told him to follow the rest because Liam has repeated at least twice the track is the best route. I could picture those question marks above his head especially when all teams were running towards the track that I pointed at. It must have been the adrenaline from his 'first checkpoint-itis' that he sped off (without me) towards CP1. I was probably still startled at the speed teams are taking off in this 24hr race and decided that falling at those rocks before CP1 can justify my slowness through the race. The result: a grazed and bruised shin accompanying me for the rest of the race!

Wilson: I initially dashed in the opposite direction of where most people were going, convinced that the open terrain up high was preferable to going along the watercourse – obviously the advice of Liam the race director had fallen on my deaf ears. I spent the next minute being dragged by Jiehui down the track which soon disappeared into a streambed lined with deadfall and big puddles. Of course, the dreaded 'first checkpoint-it is', a malady that plagues many an adventure racer in the frantic opening moments of competition, assured that our team, along with several others, overshot the CP by almost 100m. We also separated as we went our individual routes along the riverbed; a quick turnaround saved us as we doubled back, crowded around the CP flag, and punched in. It was then off to the kayak launch point. It was only when we had jumped into the boat did I realize that Jiehui had injured her shin in a fall when we had been separated in the mad scramble for that first CP.

Paddling & Portaging



J: it was a lovely kayak down Yabba Creek and we were lucky to go through most obstacles without getting out from the boat. There were times Wilson has to get out and push me down some shallow surfaces which I tried sucking in my stomach assuming I will be 10kg lighter for him. Looking at how he gritted his teeth in a painful look, I guess I was no lighter sucking in my stomach then. Portaging has always been my weakness, I can't keep the boat up for even 10seconds and I am cursing on every single portage and hoping my teammate wouldn't think that I am too slow. Glad that Wilson is so skillful and we managed to pull through many weird-looking rapids and glide ahead some teams using less effort.



W: Paddling downstream and picking up checkpoints, we realized our boat could accelerate, turn and traverse shallow rapids much more easily than boats paddled by teams who were physically larger. I found accelerating the boat a breeze with Jiehui and me being so light; our boat could bump down shallow pebble races that had larger teams stalling and pushing.

My task as front paddler was simply to be alert and call out direction changes and other instructions. Jiehui would steer in the rear position, and generally do her best to match my strokes. My favourite move on this paddle was the 'limbo' - floating UNDERNEATH some fallen tree trunks lying horizontal to the river by lying flat on our backs. We got through several such potential show-stoppers, our toes and noses whizzing just centimetres away from the tree bark at times! Thus we avoided what bigger-sized teams often ended up doing – climbing out and getting wet and/or portaging through these 'strainer' logs.

Not Following the Crowd

W: Ditching our boats to attain a couple of land-based CPs, we found the critical one (CP6, at a watercourse junction) only because Jiehui alerted me to whether my direction was 'good' or not. At first I thought she was asking me whether I FELT good! A couple of teams had joined us at our decision point to attain CP6, including a team that was looking for CP 5, but had obviously gone way off-course somehow. I realized something was amiss as the other teams headed downstream, seemingly confident of their route choice. A quick consult with map and compass had us turned in a different direction from the other teams. With all the commotion around us, I fought the instinct to blindly follow them to where they thought CP6 was... and we were shortly rewarded with sight of the CP flag!

Earning a 100-Pointer

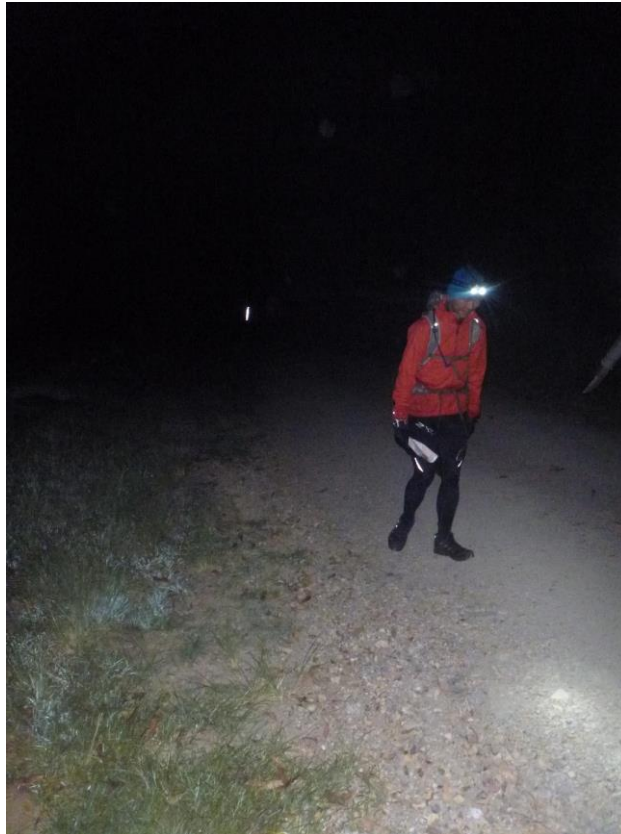


J: On to the bike leg. It was such a long long long long hill. I learnt that you should never praise the terrain until the race ended. Earlier in the stage, I was complimenting that Imbil has many climbs but thankfully they are all long and gradual instead of some Oh-My-Tian climbs. Indeed, Imbil (or is it the Rogue race organizer) decide to show me what they have up their sleeves – a massively long climb to this 100-pointer CP. It feels good to see people feeling as shitty as you going up this hill. I can't be bothered with Wilson who is still riding it like a piece of pancake; he has just finished Cape Epic after all. I constantly look out for Luke and BK for some consolation. We made it up there and have decent fun going down after all the hard work.

Route Error

W: Our bike ride was smooth until we went into some forestry tracks that traversed the side of a spur. As soon as the track turned off in a direction that was not reflected on the map, alarm bells started ringing in my head. To summarize, we found a straight track with a few junctions to the left that led us out of our pickle. But it took a firm decision by Luke to follow this track and have us rejoining a known 'handrail' feature – in this case, a main fire-road – without getting distracted about possibly exploring those left-hander junctions. Navigating by 'cutting our losses' is inherently better than going gut feel, and the great thing was that we still managed to get our target CP, and sweep the entire 80km+ bike stage as well!

Wee-hours Trekking



J: I have been a strong runner but not in terms of Rogaine-style trekking, all the contour bashing or downhill running just killed me with the lack in confidence in the bushy, rocky and steep terrain of the Rogue. I remember flying down Bukit Timah Hill back home in Singapore like nobody's business (even with a heavy pack), but became the chicken along the Rogue's contour treks. I was stumbling my way through to keep up with Wilson who was navigating at the same time. I keep consoling myself that i had a fall earlier and it was also dark. The end of the trek concluded with a long, steep, and loose-surfaced track down to the HQ. I saw Wilson run down with style while I tried imitating but failed miserably. In the end, I squatted down and slid all the way downhill to HQ.

Sleepmonsters



J: This being my second 24hr race, it was however the first time I got to understand the term 'sleepmonsters'. After clearing the majority of the checkpoints west of HQ, we were heading towards the last 3 CPs in the south. Walking on the uphill road out from the HQ, I saw this massive vertical rock slab ahead of me and literally rubbed my eyes to double check. IT WAS THERE! I asked Wilson are we heading up there, pointing towards the rock mountain and he told me yes. As we approached the foot of the hill, the rock mountain disappeared – I did not question much and was just happy that I had less to climb. Heading towards the CP at the knoll, we were greeted by a crimson sky as the sun rose. Being a morning person, I was elated and thought the kayak will go on smoothly. We hit the dam waters and started paddling in the beautiful foggy morning air. One moment, I am paddling along, the next moment I find myself being jerked awake from the drag of my paddle dipping into the water. DAMN, I have fallen asleep in the boat and found Luke/BK team ahead of us! I tried asking Wilson to sing me songs and whatever it takes to keep me awake. Wilson did the worse thing ever by singing lullaby and I have to shut him up. I started singing to myself and eventually leave Luke/BK team at least 5 minutes behind us.

Sweeping All But One



W: What an invigorating, if cold, early morning paddle! Interspersed by little trekking sections, our team moves decently well. The on-water navigation is methodical as we do not want to overshoot the little inlets where the CPs are located, or paddle in curves when a straight line approach will do. However, we find ourselves seemingly short on time and Luke suggests we skip a 70-pointer CP located on a knoll some distance from the water's edge, in favour of some higher-scoring ones. We don't question this decision until we pass the CP on the way to the 100-pointer on this leg (interestingly, this CP was tied to a dead tree, one amongst hundreds scattered about the middle of the dam!). At this point, I'm more concerned about missing the 100-pointer entirely, considering the fact that we are on the limits of our sleep deprivation. Of course, we soon realize that we have more than ample time to get that last CP.

A Pleasant Surprise



J: We came in an hour earlier than the cut-off and I was still agonized at the fact that we let ONE CP off. We could have swept the course – if only we made a better decision, if only I could hike faster, if only we didn't make a navigation error on the bike leg. Too many factors to account for this and I believe it was the unpredictability of the race format that keeps me racing. I enjoyed the race and coming in first in mixed category is more of a bonus.

W: We were kept guessing as to whether other mixed teams had swept the course as there were still several teams still out there when we reached back over an hour before the cut-off time. Luke and BK arrived some 5 minutes later and as expected the analysis of our decision to pull the plug on the one remaining CP ensued. Feeling kind of dejected, Jiehui and I started washing our kit. Only when the first rounds of applause emanated from the loose circle of racers at the awards ceremony (itself a low—key affair) did we wander closer. Then, the announcement that Jiehui and I were winners of the Mixed Category simply astounded us!



Our team raced hard on a 24-hr course that was demanding both physically and mentally in equal measure, in an environment that is so different from what we are used to in Singapore. With a strategy of efficient navigation and minimal faffing, plus collaborating with our squad mates Luke and BK proved largely beneficial, we came out tops. The fact that we beat several strong Australian mixed teams on their home turf is something we will be talking about for some time to come.

A real 'racer's race' with a grassroots vibe, on a beautiful course in a scenic location – our Rogue Adventure gained us valuable race experience, lessons to do even better in future, and of course good memories!