

Team Gear Shop Adventure Racing Raid 100 Race Report

The format for Raid 100 is unique to any other event currently running in NZ, and after securing an entry for winning the NZ A1 series, the team was very keen to check it out. We all love adventure racing, we all love rogaining, so what an adventure combining the 2 would be. Thanks to our superstar logistics man on the ground Shaun Jackson, we were soon travelling in style from Brisbane up to Tannum Sands, race headquarters for the week. Saturday was spent travelling, shopping, packing, and getting as ready as we could for registration, map hand out, and the usual chaos on Sunday.



For Dean and Kevin, it was their first look at Australian maps, which even required a google search to find out what a mangrove was, and if you could travel through them, clearly not! The rogaine format provided fuel for extra discussion and debate, which stages to spend more time on, which CP's to target, how did timing work for sleeping etc. What struck us most compared to events in NZ was the small list of compulsory gear, which comprised a jacket, thermal top and foil bivy, and that was it!

Stage 1 – Packraft/trek, “We’ve got a bit of a hole!”

Stage 1 was shaping up as the longest stage at circa 20hrs, and the plan was to clear it or at worst only drop CP16. Starting at Turkey Beach, we sat comfortably in the lead group in the packrafts with only Stu and Chris making a break. Following a warm start to the day the heavens opened, a welcome relief temperature wise! Other than Dean getting smacked in the face by a leaping fish, the start was going smoothly, until 2 hrs in and 200m from the first portage our race got turned on its head. Following another team running aground, the ensuing pile up of rafts found us being pushed into what we thought were just some exposed rocks. In addition to mangroves, we were now a lot more familiar with razor sharp oyster beds! A sound resembling a balloon popping is not the sound anyone wants to hear when sitting in a packraft.



We clambered ashore in thigh deep mud and made our way down to the portage to assess the damage to both our hands and the raft, while also realising that in the commotion we had also lost a compass. It didn't look good, a 20cm vertical split in the side tube with a 100cm horizontal split running off it. Covered in sand and mud, a brief futile attempt was made at a repair before succumbing to the fact this rafts race was run. So, out with the maps to figure out a plan on how to possibly pick up as many points as we could, get to TA, and keep ourselves in the race.

Unfortunately, the maps we had didn't show a clear land-based route to exit the stage from where we were, our route relied on a track on one map joining up with a track on another, through an area of circa 3km that we had no map for. Thankfully it did, and upon making our way round to CP15 we learned that that a replacement raft would be made available to us, the added kicker being that we now needed to carry all 3 out. Thankfully the second reserve packraft carrier had put in some training!

Here we met up again with other teams that had completed the section we had missed, so although now back in touch with the main pack, we had missed 45 points. Thankful to again have 2 floating packrafts, the replacement did come with a few quirks, the front seat didn't inflate, and the inflatable floor seemed to have been retrofitted over the top of the rear seat, with the inflation valve acting as a perfect butt plug for the rear paddler! For the remainder of the stage we enjoyed some varied terrain, bush, estuary's, creeks, tracks and beaches, although being covered in mud and sand was starting to have an impact on the comfort levels in various sensitive areas!

Stage 2 – MTB, Where's the clip card!

At a minimum of 160km, stage 2 was shaping up as big, and with our sleeping bags waiting at the next TA, the goal was to reach it about midnight on the second day. The start of the day was hot, and after only 4 hrs it felt like we had been riding all day, surely this stage won't take 16hrs? We quickly worked out that access to water on the MTB stages was going to be limited, although there were many creeks shown on the map, outback Australia is very dry!



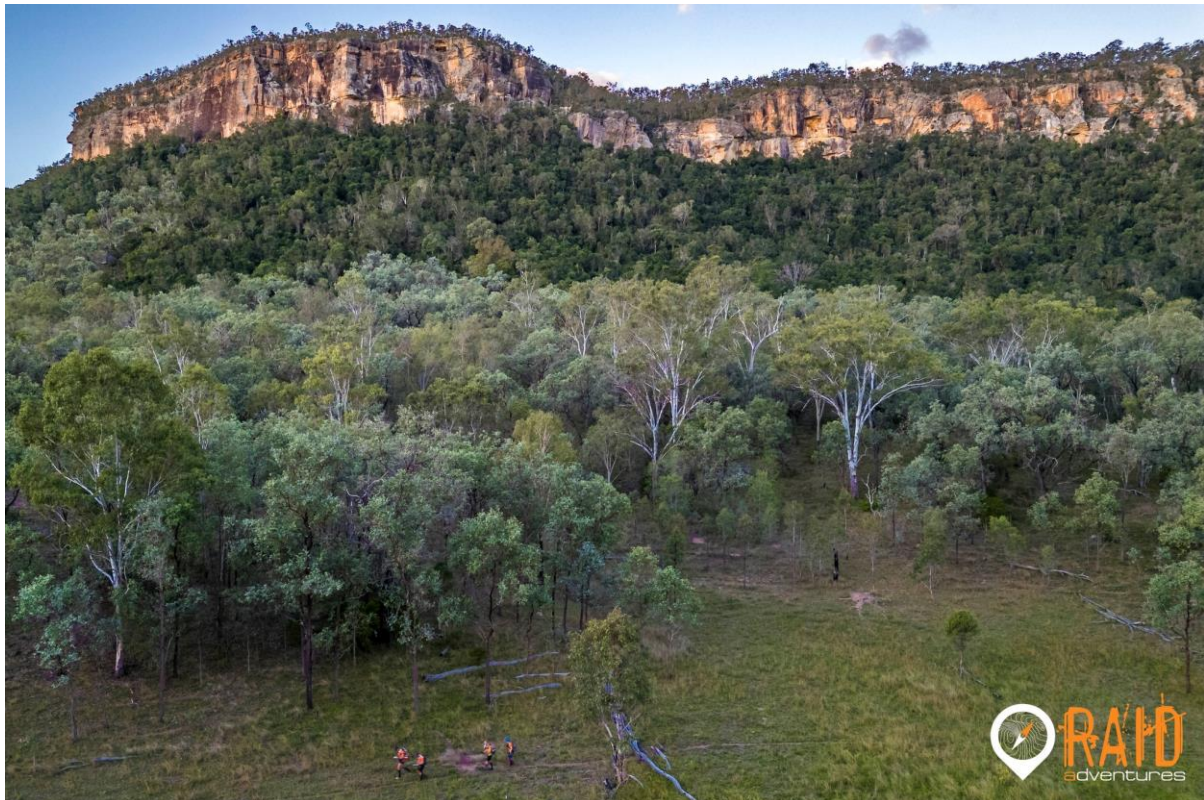
Making what seemed steady progress, we approached the only significant climb of the stage through the Bulburin National Park. Little did we know that many hours of steep, muddy, night time hike a bike in torrential rain would ensue. Fun times! After an exhilarating downhill off the tops, our desire for a quick pit stop at the Many Peak pub was curtailed by a sign noting they were “Closed on Tuesdays”! The final part of the stage was a ride along the Boyne Burnett Inland Rail Trail where we made the alarming discovery that we had somehow lost our clip card since the last CP. We had a quick look around for it, realising it could be anywhere. With no sleep in over 36hrs of racing, we decided to proceed to TA and sadly accept any subsequent consequences. Thankfully, it was located by a following team and later handed in. After a mammoth day on the bike, TA was a welcome sight.

Stage 3 – Trek, Dominos anyone?

Picking up our first Z’s of the race, the sound of Kevin making pizzas while narrowly missing his team mates was not the way we wanted to be woken up. It was shaping up as a tough day for Kevin, illness, heat, and a mounting fax count made for a miserable day for him. Pushing on was the only option unfortunately, no doubt Kevin just wanted to curl up and be eaten by a crocodile! Behind on our race timing following our short sleep, we decided to only collect the 3 closest CP’s before getting back on the bike for another day in the saddle.

Stage 4 – MTB, Baking in the sun

After a quick detour to collect Dean’s poles that were left at a stage 3 CP, and the misfortune of missing the turnoff onto the appropriately named ‘Misfortune Rd’, we settled into our work for another hot day on the bike. Seeing our first snake of the race on the side of the road was another tick in a box for the team. Once again water was in short supply, and a quick cooling off under an overflowing water tank was another team highlight for the stage. Perhaps our luck was starting to change?



Stage 5 – Trek/Kayak, The dog ate my homework, or was it a cow?

Stage 5 was a target stage for the team, Liam talked it up at registration, and it had a high points to time ratio should we be able to clear it efficiently. Arriving into TA late afternoon, the plan was to pick up the 4 low check points on the way to the lake before sunset. We figured these would be even harder in the dark, so we'd paddle the lake and return to TA overnight, where we would sleep and clear the balance of the trek in the morning. With only a couple of hours to sunset, time wasn't going to be our friend. Turns out an overly inquisitive and hungry cow wasn't our friend either! After spending the best part of an hour undertaking a full grid search for the first CP, a race official appeared with a replacement CP flag just as we were about to depart. We were given a time credit of 52 minutes, that we could use at the end of the race.

As darkness descended, a very inquisitive herd of cattle, Sakkie nearly standing on 2 more snakes in the long grass, and some brief navigational challenges all punctuated the trip up to the lake. We walked down the longest boat ramp known to man, and with some fried navigational brains, Sakkie took the lead on the lake. The low lake level made the shoreline very different to that shown on the map. It was a lovely paddle under the stary sky. Following the paddle, we climbed a rather sketchy taped route up to the top of Cania Gorge NP, and made our way back to the welcome sight of TA and our sleeping bags. As we awoke a couple of hours later to the commotion of most teams heading off on the bike for Stage 6, we had other plans, we wanted to clear the stage, so headed out into the Coomanglah State Forrest. We then successfully cleared the rest of the stage.

Stage 6 – MTB

We were the final team to depart TA-B, and by some time. The final bike route did have some amendments due to Kroombit Tops NP no longer being open. To compensate, a number of additional out and back sections were added, and time would dictate what we would then target. It was another long ride, circa 130km in very hot conditions. The team had been riding well, so we

were hopeful of reeling in a couple of teams before the next TA. This stage was a magnificent ride, beautiful rolling terrain through outback Australia, and a creek with water in it! A highlight was a long rugged downhill section that thankfully we just negotiated on dusk, a welcome surprise when Dean has just told the team it was going to be an uphill climb!



The team was on the charge, and there was good fast riding to finish the stage where we did catch up with a couple of teams, and do our good deed by returning a clip card Sakkie had found along the way to another unfortunate team. Rolling into TA, just about every team was there, quite an unusual feeling so far into an expedition race. Some teams were departing, some arriving, many having a sleep before the last push to the finish line. A quick look at the timings for the following stages allowed for a short 90 minute sleep.

Stage 7 – Kayak/trek, Catamaran

Stage 7 provided options, paddling with plenty of land-based CP's. Conditions on Lake Awoonga were pretty good, we negotiated the abundance of lily pads, and made good progress down the lake in the dark. Low lake levels again made the shoreline very different to what was shown on the map, combined with darkness and tired minds this wasn't going to be as easy as we first thought.

The first few CP's were collected without much drama, there were a lot of other boats around and everyone seemed to be going to the same place. That's when everything started to go a bit pear shaped. Teams were spread out over multiple headlands looking for the same checkpoint, the wind increased significantly, our boats were being swamped by broadside waves, and it would be fair to say we weren't exactly sure where we were. By now there didn't seem to be any other teams around, we were being battered by the wind and waves, and we had been paddling for hrs trying to reach the illusive catamaran that Dean had sworn he had seen! We finally reached shore, worked out where we were, the sun came up and we picked up a couple more CP's on the way to TA. We then discovered one of our boats was half full of water.



Stage 8 – Packraft/trek, Mildly bad luck or good luck

Not a fan of walking on tarseal, we found an alternative route to put onto the Boyne River, unfortunately this section was more lily pads than water. We also wouldn't necessarily describe the Boyne as a river, more a stationary body of water. As was the nature of our race, we had started to reclassify mildly bad luck, as opposed to really bad luck, as being good luck. That theme continued as the team in front of us beached in some shallows. Following close by we also beached, however we unfortunately managed to puncture the borrowed raft, and luckily, it wasn't as large as the last one! After a futile attempt to repair, we decided to tow the raft while Rachel sat in the back pumping air into the raft at the same rate air was leaking out. Now that's what we call good luck!



Every time we faced another hurdle we stuck together as a team and were determined to keep racing. Unfortunately, we were unable claw back all the points we missed on the first stage, but we certainly had a lot of fun trying, finishing up in 3rd place in the Mixed 4 person category. Congratulations to all the other teams who took part, and especially to Wildflow Tigers and Backcountry Banter who took out the other 2 podium spots. It was also great to connect and catch up with all the other teams at the finish line and prizegiving that immediately followed the completion of the race. This was a real benefit of the rogaine format of adventure racing that is unlike anything the team had experienced before. Finally massive thanks to Liam and his team for putting on a fantastic event, it was superbly organised, and we certainly couldn't fault it. We hope see you again in the future.

Thanks [Gearshop - Quality Outdoor Equipment](#) for keeping us well equipped and fuelled for Raid 100!

