



TEAM 6: SA Ambulance Adventure Racing (Owen Jones, Morgan Coull, Scott Bemmer, Beau Griffiths)

Mountain Designs Geoquest 48 hour Race Report

With support crew in tow the team embarked upon a mission driving with a load of bikes and team kit from Adelaide and beyond in SA. Arriving after 22 hours of driving the team quickly went about sorting team gear, tuning bikes and preparing fuel/food supplied for the arduous task ahead of them.

With a late team mate change due to injury, SAAS stalwart and original race member Scott Bemmer was given the call up and came out of retirement to boost the team stocks. Labelled "The Rock" and "Dozer" for good reason, he was true to form and was unbreakable for the duration of the race. Such was Scotty's enthusiasm he held court at the front of the field during the first stage leading the "not-a-peleton" group of teams along the opening road for 5 minutes of glory.

This glory was short lived when the teams hit the sandy tracks through Hat Head National park. Settling back into about 10th position, SA Ambulance ground its way through the sand traps and headed off onto Leg 2's split Rogaine in a good position. Touted as favourite to take out the mens category, the pressure soon got to the team with Team Captain Morgan Coull suffering early cramping on the Rogaine. Reduced to a walk, the team rapidly lost time over the field and slipped back into 16th place after leg 2 and held in check for much of the daylight hours managing cramping.

Leg 3's sandy mtn bike tracks did nothing to alleviate the cramping stakes with its Sandy tracks, punishing hamstrings and quads alike. 1hour and 56 minutes of 22km of sand traps was a torture test for the captain going down a number of times whilst cleated in with cramp. A very supportive team offered up some salt tablets which were greatly appreciated and got the Captain back on track again.

Leg 4 and other team members were feeling the effects of pushing harder through the sand and the unseasonably warmer weather. The 11km trek whilst not hard by any means in navigation nor terrain saw the team reduced still to a steady walk. More valuable time was given up to teams ahead as they charged through this section. Now back in 17th/18th position the team was grateful for a rest during the team orienteering section with a chance to rest the legs, refuel and rehydrate.

With the bikes and packs fully loaded with rafting supplies, SA Ambulance rode on steadily out of transition and ready to launch an assault on the field during the team rafting section. A reasonable rafting set up saw the team grab a couple of places back up the leaderboard. It wasn't without dramas though and things got interesting and bit too intimate in the small rafts as both Team Captain and our Chief nav man Owen simultaneously cramp in the very small children's inflatable boat.

With a long climb ahead of the team leading into the Forest Rogaine, the team made a great call to stash some of the heavy rafting gear and pfd's into a nearby bush that the team would be visiting on it's way back down the mountain. This proved to be a game changing plan allowing fast ascent and descent of the mountain on the bikes. Gaining now a couple of places and in 16th the team was looking forward to the night Rogaine and testing out Owens Nav skills which have been renowned for making up laces in past races.

True to form, Owen's Nav didn't disappoint. Whilst the team was lightning fast on foot by any means, the nav was however perfect, nailing checkpoint after checkpoint. Team spirits were now high and we were all suitably rehydrate after drinking what we affectionately called that 'Crazy Ass Coconut juice' at transition. Now in 11th position and leapfrogging a number of teams we charged on ahead in the mountain bike leg towards the kayak. A quick stop at the bottom of the mountain to pick up our rafts and supplies and it was onwards and upwards for the South Aussies.

Leg 9, the Kayak/portage leg. When you are paddling 40+kg boats it always scares you when you see a portage section in one of your legs. Particularly so when you don't have any kayak trolleys to portage with... In a frantic effort on Friday afternoon, Devine intervention took hold when Scotty and support crew member Sarge stumbled across a tip. With 3 minutes to closing time on a public holiday the staff were not to pleased to see these guys. A quick rummage through the heaps and the boys popped out to the front office with a pair cheap folding prams. When asked how much for the prams the boys were told to kindly and quickly "F-off" as the staff locked the doors and gates and tore off down the road at break neck speed to the local pub.... A few alterations here and there, a bit of 100 mile an hour tape and there we had it. The Prambulator portage 2000!! Strapped to the top of the Mirages we copped a few funny looks from other teams but even more so as we belted past them during the portage section!!

Leg 10... Surely the longest 45km in mountain biking history. This leg took us 6 hours + and we thought it was never going to end. Coming off wet off the kayak leg

and a tardy transition saw the team suffer with mild hypothermia for a while. With our Nav man fast falling in a whole, the team did well to keep it together. Especially given the “slightly overgrown track through the creek...???!!??” The rising sun was a welcome sight in the morning and soon reinvigorated the racing spirit within the team.

Leg 11. The team kicked off the final rogaie leg with a spot of archery. As Team Captain, I admit, I was awful at it missing the target wide to the left on both occasions. Now back in 12th place it was make or break time during this leg to make the top 10. The first two checkpoints were nailed pretty quickly whilst there was a mild mishap on the third saw the team ascend to early and have to take a wide berth to safely nail the third checkpoint. Gaining on a number of teams if quickly became crunch time and key decisions had to be made. Play it safe on the last checkpoint or go for broke and the glory. The vote went three to one. We decided on all or nothing and put our trust in Owens quality navigation skills. It was a move that ultimately cement us in the top 10 and take out the 1st place in the male category. We headed out of the Rogaine leg narrowly ahead of about 4 other teams now in 8th place. The team charged down the descents towards the last rafting section at break neck speeds. The team rafting section was flawless compared to the last effort with set up and pack up completed in double time. Now heading to the last kayak and penultimate stage the team were geared up for a lightning quick transition. Wasting no time at all the team were quickly on the river and sitting in 7th place as a number of other teams were preparing their tilt on the final legs home.

Leg 13 was a relatively easy 15km kayak leg with a short portage over the weir. Thanks to Team Rouge going 10km down the wrong way we were elevated into 6th position. As I punched the control card at the checkpoint the following team pulled up the bank in their race skis having made up great time on the first section of the paddle. Fully expecting to be caught by the faster boats Team SA Ambulance somehow held off the attack coming into the transition and quickly set about taking off on the final 11km coastal trek.

Light was now starting to fade fast and leaving transition there was a bit of a concern about losing the google earth image map of the final checkpoint in the dunes. The map was nowhere to be found so we had to make do with what we had. After 10 minute or so hiccup in finding the final checkpoint we could now see the following team hot on our hammer about 500m away. A quick punch of the control card and we motored through the scrub and onto the beach ensuring we kept a low profile and no lights on. Now struggling and with a team member close to collapse and vomiting we trudged along up the beach in what seemed like an eternity to reach Crescent Head. The lights behind us soon became a number of teams that were fast gaining on us. With a few km's to go the light behind us went out and we now knew they had a sniff of us and were executing their final assault on our placing. It wasn't to be..... Somehow, we managed to hold off by the barest of margins, 3 minutes followed shortly by a number of other teams. It was racing at its best. Places unimportant, team vs team aiming at being the best they can be.

What an amazing effort by the top teams too, they obliterated the course and left nothing out there, those guys and girls are truly inspirational racers. Well done to all who came and competed this weekend and thanks to Geoquest and all their merry men and women on a great course, race and job well done! Last but not least, thank you to the wonderful support crews (Millie and Sarge) whom without you there would be no race.