

The 'current look' Team Peak Adventure was formed for an assault on the 2015 GeoQuest adventure race and XPD expedition race. Peak Adventure is a familiar name at the pointy end of Geo, however this was the first attempt as this team of four and we are now preparing for XPD.



As those familiar with adventure racing know, getting four team mates to the start line in peak racing condition (pardon the pun) is a challenge in itself. Emma Weitnauer joined the team after a successful race at Falls Creek Mountain Raid with Peak Adventure. This was Emma's first GeoQuest and she has found a passion for the bush after a career racing 12 Ironman Triathlons, including three world championships at Kona. Living in Tasmania, Emma has a great backyard for training and they certainly make people tough down there. Josh Street biked his way into the team from a history hundreds of kilometers long of mountain bike races all over the world, 24hr and cross country, including state and national champion and world championships. Add to the list a bag full of podiums in some of the toughest expeditions races around the world meant Josh brought more than his fair share to the team. Jarad Kolhar needs little introduction. His is a name synonymous with adventure racing, having racked up an impressive and extensive list of podium finishes in adventure races worldwide. Then there's me, Sam Stedman. This was my first time racing GeoQuest with team Peak Adventure, but not my first GeoQuest. I've placed second in the last two GeoQuest Adventure Races, and was hungry for a win this time round.

A winning team at GeoQuest needs a winning support crew! Joining us on this weekend of adventure was Kim Vaughan from Melbourne and our old mate

Lincoln Murdoch. Come Friday night, we were all set and prepared for the race but the best part about adventure racing is that anything can happen. At any time. To any one.

In an adventure race making mistakes are just part of it; it's how you overcome those mistakes and move on that define your race. With 12 legs - 64kms of paddling, 130kms of mountain biking and 54kms of running through the day and night, seeking out small orienteering markers placed on top of hills and hidden in deep, thick vegetated creeks, anything could happen and mistakes were going to be made. Throw into the mix a few highly competitive and experienced teams, including Mountain Designs, Shotz Nutrition and CBD Cycles, producing a highly competitive field.

The race....

The 12km ocean paddle got shortened due to rough ocean conditions. We did paddle around the headland and over to the next bay. Paddling elite double ocean skis is great unless you don't spend much in rough conditions. I live in Townsville, and don't paddle much in the rough and Nor does Josh. It made for a tricky paddle for Josh and I, with Jarad and Emma getting through unscathed. We literally hit the beach running and soon found ourselves in front and running along a magical coastline. Next minute, all our friends joined in and it would have been a sight to see 16 adventure racers running through the trails and streets of the small coastal communities.

Leg 3 was an 18km bike leg with a quick stop for a swim to find some CP's in the water. Whilst it was a great spot for snorkeling, we were not hanging around in the sun like tourists. Then it was back on foot headed for the sand dunes which was definitely a highlight of the course. We headed up the dune with team Shotz and Mountain Designs, with CBD Cycles not far behind. Once over the dune it was a long road run which was something new for a Geo course. I think they wanted to test our mental strength on long straight roads. We bridged a gap on Shotz but ran with MD's to the rafting leg.



We decided to use two inflatable Stand-Up Paddle boards for this leg. It was about 2km across the lake. I paddled 1 with Josh lying down and JK paddled the other with Em lying down. Now, I can SUP but I am no gun and now in a race (and trying to keep up with JK) with Josh on board made for a whole new SUP experience. MD's were in sight behind us as we crossed to the first CP and then we pushed forward to the TA. Our decision to SUP had paid off and we had a small gap on the field as we headed off on a 13km paddle up a river.

Leg 6 was a 22km trek and we set off at a good pace after more hot pizza in transition and chocolate in our pockets (support crew – this is why we love you). We quickly made our way to the first CP of that leg only to find it wasn't there. Map check, nav check, look left, look right; still not there. But, we did manage to find team Shotz who got the message that the CP and the kayaks to help us across the river might not make it in time (I told you anything can happen in a AR) so together with Shotz, and in the absence of kayaks, we swam across the river and continued on our way. The next two CPs were off track and require some tricky navigation and moving through the thick scrub. Shotz, led by Rob Preston, who was once the coach of the national orienteering team, joined by Kathryn Preston and Peter Preston, who can also find a needle in a very large haystack in the dark, so as expected they played their cards right and moved quickly from the first CP and left us pushing on our own through the bush. Darkness fell as we hit the last CP for this leg and we headed down another long road run to the TA.

Leg 7 was a 13km paddle up a river in the dark of night. We said g'day to Shotz as we passed them on an out-and-back CP to the top of a hill, we also said hi to the couple having a romantic camping weekend (being interrupted by some crazy adventure racers) with a nice fire and wine on the edge of the river. Soon it was more hot pizza and coke in TA as we prepared for a long night ahead with a 56km bike, 10km trek and 25km bike.

The bike leg started pretty smoothly with sealed road that was quite easy going. We biked along with Shotz for some time and kept the pace up. At one stage, we pulled away as they had a quick pitstop, but only to be passed by them when we made a navigation error and we began to chase again. We got into the TA as Shotz were heading out on the trek, it was 1 or 2 in the morning as we geared up for a tricky orienteering leg through the thick scrub. We had to get 4 CPs and we were moving quite well on foot with JK on the map looking sharp after a rest on the bike leg. With JK and Josh at the front it gave Em and I a chance to chat and to stay awake. Next thing - BAM - 1 CP down, feeling confident on to 2, then a crazy 100m vertical climb over 300 meters up to CP3, then a tricky traverse across a ridge line and we ran head into team CBD Cycles. With no time to trade stories we nailed CP 4 then ran our way back the TA only to find Shotz bikes still in the TA. It was 5am as we began the 3<sup>rd</sup> last leg on the bike into a very chilly morning. Collecting 1 CP

along the way it was hot chips and bacon and egg rolls that our legendary support crew had waiting for us!

25km is a long way in a ski when you have not had any sleep. This called for some good team work and a few energy gels and we picked up the pace across the longest last 5km stretch of water I have paddle in a while, you could see the end but it wasn't getting any closer. With no time for pizza in the



last TA is was on the bikes and off to the finish line on a very straight and flat road. The sun was up and our spirits high as it seemed effortless to pedal the last 20km (well I think Josh's legs go around on their own anyway).

27 hours and 40 minutes and we crossed a picturesque finish line overlooking the Hawks Nest coast line in first place. It was a great team effort and an amazing support crew. Well done to all the teams and CBD cycles who finished 2<sup>nd</sup> and Shotz a close 3<sup>rd</sup>. Geocentric put on another great event and we look forward to racing XPD Townsville.

