





Racing to see as many beautiful places as I can before I die.

Wednesday, June 15, 2016

## GEOQUEST ADVENTURE RACE 2016 - PORT MACQUARIE

I'm sitting here with my feet elevated trying to reduce the swelling which is apparently 'normal' after a 29 hour adventure race. If I had to pick an area that took the worst beating it would be the feet. Though, considering the brutal terrain they covered, I'm surprised they don't feel worse. I love that each Geoquest is different and the 2016 course was a change-up from last year. Located in Port Macquarie, there was actual single-track, paddle legs where navigation would be critical, and a night abseil. Thankfully I couldn't see any leg that would require naked swimming (see 2015 report). At briefing we were also warned the second foot rogain would be 'epic', taking between 6 and 8 hours.

Our team name, Tiger New Caledonia, reflected the work of Trevor from Tiger Adventure matching adventure race legend Gary Sutherland and I, with Laurent and Martial from the French-speaking islands. Along with our Hungarian-heritage support crew, Attila, we were like the United Nations of racing. We only met two days before the gun went off but we were going to give it a crack and make it work. I knew we were at pro-level when Gary brought his laminating machine to waterproof the maps. Everything had a process that has clearly been tried and tested. There was a 'WTF?' exclamation when he saw my rookie beanie which may have been a little bulky and 50 grams overweight. I didn't know there were beanies for weight-weenies!

A little dance was performed (by me) when the traditional ocean paddle start was cancelled due to big swell. Relocating to the quiet river mouth, the first leg was a game of strategy allowing teams to split up and get checkpoints (CPs) using any combination of running and paddling. Our strategy turned out to be rubbish and we lost a bit of time when Gary and I got tangled in rope from an oyster farm and the New Cali guys got a hole in their boat after a close call with some rocks.

On to the run leg and due to things getting lost in translation we discovered a CP hadn't been punched on our card when we passed. It was a case of everyone thinking that someone had done it so no one did it. The most important skill in AR is clear communication with team mates, closely followed by the ability to put mistakes behind you and focus on a solution. After a 30 minute round trip we were back on track, across the rocky coastline and on to the mountain bikes. This Geoquest was one for the climbers so the buff Police Tactical Squad member on our team was not enjoying this scenario.

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## About Me



 [Jodie Willett](mailto:jodie@jodiewillett.com.au)

I'm a athlete who is passionate about pushing herself as far as her body and mind will allow.

Juggling a business and a daughter as a single parent just adds to the excitement!

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The last 3 races I've had to rock run and I'm still no better at it. Always stunning though

Gear was showing the signs of strain as the event went on – skis filled with 10 kilos of water; the MTB helmet clasp failure which induced a blind-folded descent; lost screws from vital equipment. They were all fixed with two things – stubbornness and gaffa tape. Stuff broke and we fixed it as best we could. On the night paddle all 12 of our glow sticks failed to glow so we begged around other support crews for spares. Thanks to Team 21 for the multi-coloured glow bands which meant we were prepared for any raves we should encounter on the way. It was incredible the camaraderie with other racers and their crews. We arrived at one transition well before our support guy and were showered with offers of hot soup, chips and assistance from everyone there. To the lady who fed me the bacon and cheese scroll – you are a legend!

Each team had different strengths and I'd say ours was navigation. Between Gary and Laurent we found crazy rogaine CPs in indescribably dense scrub littered with fallen trees from recent storms. It was impossible to walk around all of them but treading on top risked falling through the branches. Making a path through thick vegetation is not my gift apparently and I constantly lagged behind. Having short legs and protecting the recent stitches in my knee I was being far too dainty. After hours of frustration I went full-blown ninja on the branches and vines while punctuating the forest with F-bombs. I'm not sure it was effective but it made me feel better. 6 hours of bush-bashing later, we emerged and agreed to never speak of the Punchbowl Rogaine again.

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## Followers



I'm with you Matt Bacon. Burn baby burn.

The sun had come up by this time and we had a straightforward MTB to our last TA before a 2-3 hour paddle to the finish. Making our way down the river was lovely and serene but not what you really want when you're sleep deprived. Every few strokes my paddling partner's stroke rating dropped as he had micro-sleeps so I had to yell and splash him with water to keep us moving. It was when he started hallucinating and dodging boats that weren't there that I showed concern. I did this by laughing so hysterically I almost fell off the ski.

It was a big relief to cross the finish line at 29 and a half hours. To finish 6<sup>th</sup> after last year's DNF was unbelievable. The post-race analysis started immediately and there were definitely time-savings to be made but seeing the winning team 5 hours ahead of us, the mind boggles at the consistent speeds they must have been moving at.

I had such a great time and learned an incredible amount that I'm looking forward to putting into practice at my next adventure race. It's refreshing to start at the bottom and have so much to improve on and I don't seem to lack any motivation for those 4.30am starts. I haven't been able to say that for a while.



Finished at last. You probably can't tell but I have a touch of hypothermia at this stage.

Thanks to:

Team mates: Gary Sutherland, Laurent Devaud and Martial Devillers – seriously tough guys. Our support crew of one who did an amazing job with almost no instruction or experience – couldn't have done it without you Attila Kiss.

Tiger Adventure: for throwing us all together.

Bikes and suspension: For the Riders and NS Dynamics for the immaculate pre-race service

Ride Mechanic: The new Bike Mix longer lasting lube was perfect and went the distance

Shotz nutrition: Gels to keep the carbs going in

Tineli Australia: Best fitting kit around



Gary waiting for his shower after I used up all the hot water

Posted by [Jodie Willett](#) at 1:51 AM

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