

Mountain Designs Adventure Racing Team

Tuesday, 14 June 2016

Geoquest Port Macquarie 2016 - Race Report - by Kim Beckinsale



Team Mountain Designs - Alex, Leo, Kim, Peter

This year for Geoquest, Leo Theoharis and I were joined by two fresh young athletes, Alex Austin, and Peter Preston. On paper we had a strong team with Leo, Peter, Alex and I having being on the podiums of previous Geoquest and Geoquest Half races, as well as Godzone finishers back in April. We were all very looking forward to testing ourselves out there against some of the strongest and most experienced athletes and teams in the country; ranked as follows Peak Adventure (1), Thortz Sports Shots Nutrition (2), Adventure Junkies (3) Dynamite (4) Neverest (5) and other dark horses such as Rapid Ascent (8). Geoquest being a supported race, means that having an experienced support crew can make a difference, so we were pretty excited to have Lea Schloss (wife of my former Team MD Team mate Dave Schloss) there with Adam Mc Kane one of Alex's best mates and one of Noosa's best lifeguards.

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About Me



 Mountain Designs - Adventure Racing



Leo and Peter test the Stellar Ski

HQ was Port Macquarie and location for the briefing and competencies, and the most exciting of them allMap handout. With the course revealed at 3pm Friday it was obvious we were sitting at the finish line, the ocean paddle was set to start at Bonny Hills and there were 11 legs including one 'mega split'. After map handout the team rushed back to our accommodation at Flynns on Surf Beach, and started getting stuck into map preparation. While Lea cooked up a storm in the kitchen, with Adam worked on gear land logistics. We heard at about 6pm that the ocean paddle had been cancelled, which was not what strong paddling teams had hoped for. By the time we finished the maps we had a team plan – Peter lead navigator, Leo support navigator with myself on logistics as well as backup navigation on trek legs and Alex too on the role of the ferret. We probably finished all of our maps and gear sorting by around 10pm, so a good 8hrs sleep was awesome, with the later start.



Alex - warming up at the start

Leg 1 Mega Split Paddle/Trek 8k

Teams lined up on Pilot Beach for a classic Geoquest mass paddle at 8am for an 8.30am start, except we did not have to venture out into the ocean. This leg allowed teams to split in pairs and then split again and go solo, which was an advantage for teams with 4 navigators. Alex and I paddled together and collected CP A & B from the kayak then split. I collected two on foot while Alex paddled to H then picked me up on the way back to the TA. Meanwhile Leo and Peter paddled up towards CP C and split up to also collect CP G, D and F on foot. Our plan worked well as we arrived into the TA in 2nd just behind Adventure Junkies, and near some of the half teams; Linda and Mandy – Wondering Wookies and Greg Krome's Tri Adventure M & M's. I really enjoyed the Mega Split as encouraged teams to use strategy and it once again tested the navigation skills of the entire team.

Team

Over the past 10 years and more, Team Mountain Designs have been one of the most consistently performing teams in Australian Adventure Racing...with the win at XPD Flinders Ranges 2013 being our highlight! Team Mountain Designs will continue to draw on past racing experience to set new goals and be one of the highest performing teams in the sport of Adventure Racing. Our Vision is to perform at speeds normally reserved for on road terrain while maintaining world class navigation skills.....and we will do this with a smile on our face! Our community vision is to give back what ever possible to a sport that has given us the opportunity to achieve goals beyond our dreams. It is this vision along with support from our partners and sponsors that will allow us to pass on valuable knowledge to aspiring Adventure Racers. Check out our website:-
<http://www.triaventure.com.au/teammountaindesigns.html>

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Peter Preston & Leo vs Rob Preston & Damon

Leg 2 Coastal Trek 8k

We were treated to a very spectacular run north along the coastline up to Bonny Hills. Alex being a surfer was in awe of the pumping waves and glassy conditions on Grants Beach. It was not long before the lead teams were all together looking for a track on the headland up to Grants Head, we were with Adventure Junkies and Thortz Sports, knowing that Peak Adventure were also hot on our heels. The pace was on, but not enough to stop Leo from having a chat to all of his training mates! Alex and I even stopped for a hug and a chat as we passed the 'Cowgirls' doing the Half. It was a pretty social time out there even though we were all racing!

Leg 3-5 Mountain Bike 35k Trek 8k

Mountain Bike 10k

The crew had set up an amazing transition spot for us, with our chairs all at four corners of a tarp and all our gear and food spread out ready to pack into our bags. From this point we would not see our support for almost 8 hours so we did not rush this TA at all. We needed maps 4,5,6,7; mandatory gear, tracker and our Ay Up Lights – check!

Not long off the bitumen the ride turned rough and soon we had our first hike-a-bike, actually the only one of the race. We were stoked to find the trail off the spur after CP 6 leading to CP 7, however we were soon stopped in our tracks as Peter had a slash in his tyre. So a bit of team work required to get a tube in, gas it then top it up with the hand pump. Strangely, no teams went flying past us, so we must have chosen a slightly different route to others, as by the time we had negotiated the single track through Spring Gully and made it to the highway, we could tell there were definitely a few extra full course teams now ahead of us, one of them Dynamite. We collected our map from CP 13 and worked out how to complete the Q & A Orienteering at the historical town of Herrons Creek. This consisted of riding around the town and reading all of the historical signs, at places like the old post office and the memorial hall. We then set off to CP 15 for the long climb up Blackbutt Road and Sandy Hollow Road to the next TA at CP16. We weren't killing ourselves on the bike, we were just riding together as a team and discussing the next leg preparation. We arrived at the TA in 5th spot behind Peak Adventure, Thortz Sports, Adventure Junkies and the men's team Percival Properties.



Map 6 Leg 4 Rogaine

At the TA we were required to mark up 6 CP's on our maps and collect these in any order. We opted for the anticlockwise route (J P O N M L K) as did most teams, however we did see a few teams going in the opposite direction as we headed back up the creek, so I got a hug from Thor and a kiss from Kev along the way. Peter was clearly on his game at this point, and I happily followed behind holding map and compass feeling very confident and as a team we were pretty stoked when we arrived back to the TA in 4th spot. Unfortunately after the race, we did find out that we received a 15minute penalty on this leg, as we did not punch the 'control card' just the wristbands – the TA officials told just to punch the wrist bands, but as the CP's were written on the 'Control Card' we just should have known we had to 'our responsibility to know the rules', so you do have to be on the ball all the time!



Leo heads out of the creek to CP K

The ride out of this TA was interesting as the track that most teams would have travelled along to CP 18 ended in a creek full of overgrown Lantana, and there was no way anyone would have wanted to back track. So Leo forged ahead through the very overgrown trail and then when it seemed to end, I went to the front and found a way through the lantana to the spur, and then we found the track we were after. We worked out that we had actually travelled down the trail before our marked course, so now it all made sense. At this point we were with two other teams, Brett's all male half team, 'Just Ride Run Paddle' and the all men's team – 'Percival Properties'. We all rode into CP20 / TA at Bago Winery together. The support crew had had a lovely time at the winery enjoying the wine and beer and local produce, but it was full on when we arrived just on sunset.



Looks easy on the map!

Leg 6 Trek – Abseil – Trek 15k

This leg was a trek with an abseil and the crew did promise us hot chips at the next TA, so we had a pretty slick transition here, leaving ahead of both teams we had arrived with.

The trek to the abseil seemed to take no time at all expect for our brief encounter with a pretty upset resident near the quarry. She was concerned their dogs would be up barking all night and we explained we were in a race, but in an area that was not marked OOB, so politely suggested she go down to the TA and chat to someone down there, as we knew other teams would be going the exact same route as us. We punched CP21 and headed towards the abseil, as we approached we could see the city lights in the distance. The full course all male team 'Percival Properties' were catching us, so we did speed up as we approached the top of the hill as we didn't want to have to wait. It turned out there were two lines set up and the rules were one line per team, so all good. Both teams did the abseil together, then headed off down off the top of the hill on a pretty gnarly bit of steep single track. The next CPs 23 in the creek junction, and CP24 - track junction, were not too hard to find before a 4k run to CP25/ TA in Wauchope. I am pretty sure we got through this leg in less than 2 ½ hours.

Leg 7 Paddle 17k

Lea and Adam had hot chips and our ski's waiting for us when we arrived. They told us to rug up as it was getting cold and that Adventure Junkies portaged from the TA. We opted not to portage from the start as we thought our boats were too heavy. We seemed to have a lot of glow sticks on us and our craft, as we headed down the river. The story goes....last year our support cut off our glow sticks and we received a penalty for not replacing them, even though it had been a daylight paddle.....so the upshot was we learned from this mistake, so decided if it's not glowing add another one and keep adding, but never remove. We were enjoying our night-time paddle under the stars until we realised the short option we had marked up was shallow and rocky at Narrowgut. We tried a very short portage over the rocks, however this proved troublesome as both of our ski's rudders did not function well after that. So as a result we had to paddle the long way, except the problem was we were off the map. We continued paddling, expecting to come to a bridge at Rawdon Channel however the boys worked out as we went past Rawdon Creek, that we had taken the north channel instead, so we would not see a bridge. Thankfully we were going the right way as we were slowly getting very cold. As we were travelling along Balyngara Creek on the final stretch to the approaching the TA we saw Brett and his team heading towards us. Now this was a little confusing as we wondered, what's happening here? Brett told us they had ridden from the previous TA to our paddle finish TA, and the half course started paddling from Pembroke Village in the opposite direction. We were so frozen at the end of the paddle, I attempted to run from the water to the TA did not warm up at all. Rowdy and Lea went and collected the second ski for us (this was allowed) however were not permitted to punch in until we had our two boats in TA. After we dried off and did a complete change of clothes we were treated to some home cooked pumpkin soup and some hot coffee....just perfect, thanks!



Kim drying off after the paddle

Leg 8-10 MTB 35k Trek – 12-16k MTB 34k

It was 11pm and we were told that the trek could take over 6hrs, and our MTB legs 2-3 each, so we were in for a big night! I was wearing everything Gore-Tex and looked a bit like the 'Michelin Man'. I didn't care as last year at Geoquest after the night paddle, I could not get warm on the bike and spent the next 6hrs falling asleep, so just did not want that to happen again. I did soon warm up and after about 20mins off with the Gore-Tex pants! Not long after this our race came to a dramatic halt, and Peter crashed right in front of my eyes and I had to take evasive action to avoid not running over him and his bike. He was riding over a bridge and suddenly noticed an obstacle on the left side, causing him to react and slightly change direction, however this action at speed on a wooden bridge with planks running in different directions resulted in him flying forward over the bars. He certainly hit the ground pretty hard, but like most was more worried about his bike than himself. Leo did a quick bike check for him and soon we made our way up the big climb to the TA at Bellangry .



The Punch Bowl Rogaine

Alex and Pete sat by the fire here chatting to Linda Davis (TA Official) while Leo and I marked up the maps, it was important for Peter to just rest a bit here and make sure he was ok before heading out on this crucial part of the race. There were 8 CP's here and we had to find 6. We agreed on a course and off we set, jogging the flats and down hills, walking the hills. All the CP's were off-track, so there were not to many easy options out there. We opted for CP Q S T

then made our way to the Punch Bowl, CP U. This was a pretty spectacular place, but challenging travel, as there were cliffs and waterfalls all the way down the creek as we travelled to CP V. We saw up high above us at one stage another team, we think it was Team Neverest, as we thought we heard Paul Elby's voice. Travel was slow and I had quite a few falls along the way and felt my luck was running out, so we opted to finish the trek with CP X instead of staying in the creek. It was a bit longer but it meant less climbing and we realised we would be likely to cover the ground much faster than we would in the creek. We hit CP X just as it was getting light. On our way back to TA we ran into Ray, Johnny and Mike - Team Damaged Goods; they had forgotten their maps for the next ride. So we checked at the TA if we could give them our second set, and it was ok, so we did. We arrived back at the TA in around 5hrs 30, similar to the 4 teams ahead. Linda and Suwati the TA officials, were in for a long day and night it seemed as many of the teams were still on their way up to their TA.



Back from the trek getting ready for the final MTB

We knew that Peak Adventure had a penalty, but did not know how much, so we just continued to work well as a team, set a good pace and not make mistakes. Peter now was solo map man and we had 3 CP's on the way to the final paddle. Most of the ride was downhill, so a great reward for the nights effort. We arrived at the final TA at around 9am, unbeknown to us at the time that the crew had only arrived 4 minutes earlier as our tracker had not shown how close we were till we were just about 3k from the TA. They must have handled this like professionals as we had absolutely no idea, our little set up was once again set up perfectly and our ski's out ready to go...what an amazing crew!



The final paddle to the finish

Leg 11 Paddle 27K

We knew now it was just about staying strong and consistent and getting to the finish. I was a little worried about getting sleepy and cold, so we all dressed sensibly and ate well before we set off. We decided to portage 1k which meant carrying our ski's but saving 6k of paddling. It took us just 16 minutes, so it definitely worked. Alex and I were having a few troubles with the rudder sticking, so paddled the last 6k without steering, Alex was strong just as he had

been for the entire race. After we punched the final CP we had one short portage over the weir to the finish. What a relief the final CP always is to find, but approaching the finish line is the best feeling ever. We crossed the line 5th outright and 4th Premier Mixed and absolutely stoked with big smiles on our faces. We were greeted at the finish by our supporters and support crew who were all pretty confident that we may be upgraded to 3rd Premier Mixed following the issuing of penalties.

Final Results Premier Mixed

1st Adventure Junkies; 2nd Thortz Sportz Shots Nutrition; 3rd Mountain Designs; 4th Peak Adventure
5th Neverest



Team Mountain Designs Finish Geoquest 2016

To finish off the report, here are a few bits of extra trivia for those who are still reading.....

Most Interesting Leg - Mega Split - because we had no idea how we would end up

Most Challenging Leg - Leg 7 Paddle - because we got so cold and we were off the map

Most Spectacular Legs - Leg 2 Coastal Trek - the ocean was magnificent; Leg 6 Abseil Trek - the reflections off the rocks as we bounced off the rock were amazing; Leg 9 Punchbowl Rogaine - spectacular waterfalls and stunning cliffs.

Funniest Leg - Final Paddle - Seeing Leo's eyes light up when he saw Slosly on the shore with his piece of carrot cake that he had been promised for the entire race.

Congratulations to all the other teams out there racing the full and half, some of whom we crossed paths with along the way. As always it was a tough event and getting through it always a true test of endurance, mental toughness, team work and sometimes just a little patience.



Adam on the left and Lea on the right

Thanks **Lea Schloss** and **Adam Mc Kane**, our super slick support crew and all the other support crews out there looking after their teams, we know that without you our gear and nutrition would not be on par! We always had the right gear when we needed it: **Mountain Designs Gore-Tex Jackets** and **thermals**; **Ay Up Lights**; **Hokas**; as well as our trusty **Trek Superfly** mountain bikes and the list goes on!

Thanks to **Geocentric Outdoors** for setting such an amazing course once again and allowing us to explore some more of the spectacular NSW coast and hinterland.



Kim saying a few words at presentations

Thanks to our major sponsors - **Mountain Designs**, for not only supporting our team, but for your continued support for the sport of Adventure Racing. Mountain Designs have been sponsoring #GeoquestAR for over 15 years which is testament to the quality of the gear and its ongoing commitment to Adventure Racing in Australia.

Finally I would like to thank my awesome team mates for such an amazing race.

Leo Theoharis - The Smiling Assassin (for his never waning enthusiasm)

Alex Austin - The Pin Up Boy (for making our photos look good)

Peter Preston - P1 (because he's our favourite Preston)

I really enjoyed our time out there, so thanks for being a part of the Team and I look forward to getting out there again with you all soon.



Thanks boys

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