

# Adventure World

magazine

Showdown In The Land Of Fire

by Nathan Ward

The 2008 USARA National  
Championship

Out Of The Office And Into  
The Wild

8 Must See Gear Items

Remembering Dave Boyd

December 2008

Plus

- Czech Adventure Race
- Trinidad Coast to Coast
- Taking a Bearing



**HUNTER SHOTWELL'S**  
*Love* is  
**CASTLETON TOWER**

What's yours?

Maybe you snowshoe. Explore the narrows. Or chance the rapids. However you define your love of the outdoors, we define ours by supporting grassroots conservation efforts to protect North America's wildest places. Hunter Shotwell dedicated his life to Castleton Tower. Surely, you can dedicate an hour to yours.

300 million people. One hour a week. Make it happen.

 **The Conservation Alliance**

[www.conservationalliance.com](http://www.conservationalliance.com)

# contents

## Features

**14** Remembering Dave Boyd

**18** Showdown in the Land of Fire  
by Nathan Ward

**26** BG US Challenge  
Out of the Office and Into the Wild

**29** Czech Adventure Race

**37** 2008 USARA National  
Championship

**52** Trinidad Coast to Coast

**4** Editor's Note

**5** Contributors

**7** News From the Field

**13** Race Director Profile

**33** Athlete Profile

**34** Where Are They Now?

**63** It Happened To Me

## Departments

**45** Training

Adventure Racing Navigation  
Part 5: Taking A Bearing

**57** Gear Closet

Cover Photo:  
Patagonia Expedition Race  
Photo by Nathan Ward

This Page:  
Abu Dhabi Adventure Challenge 2008  
Photo by Monica Dalmasso



*Sunset on Tobago --- after the Trinidad Coast to Coast*

## 2008 Was A Huge Success

After launching our inaugural issue earlier this year, we have seen tremendous growth in our readership across the globe. We now have readers in over 20 countries. Being a digital magazine allows us to reach the world instantly.

We are currently implementing plans for 2009. These enhancements include a new and more interactive website and a digital flip version (as well as the PDF) of the magazine. We believe that the new website will allow us to constantly reach our audience by informing them when new issues are out, race updates, online gear reviews, video clips and more.

We are constantly striving to provide the best information and feature stories to our readers. If you have ideas or suggestions...we urge you to email us and let us know how to better serve you.

[info@adventureworldmagazine.com](mailto:info@adventureworldmagazine.com)

Enjoy the beginning of a new year and we look forward to seeing you in 2009.

Happy New Adventure!

Clay Abney  
Editor-in-chief

### Editor-in-Chief

Clay Abney

### Managing Editor

Dave Poletto

### Contributing Writers

Jacob Thompson • Kip Koelsch  
Jan Smolík • Nathan Ward  
Troy Farrar • Andrea Dahlke  
Mark Manning • Tom Smith  
Tim Holmstrom

### Contributing Photographers

Will Ramos • Monica Dalmasso  
Nathan Ward • Tim Holmstrom  
James O'Connor • Jiri Struk  
Glennon Simmons

Adventure World Magazine is dedicated to the preservation of our natural resources by producing a GreenZine. "Of the approximately 12 billion magazines printed annually in the U.S., over 95 percent are printed on 100 percent virgin paper. That results in more than 35 million trees being cut down each year." (statistic courtesy of Socialfunds.com)

Adventure World Magazine is published six times a year by No Boundaries Media, LLC, Pittsburgh, PA. AWM is only available online at [www.adventureworldmagazine.com](http://www.adventureworldmagazine.com).

The opinions and the advice expressed herein are exclusively those of the authors and are not representative of the publishing company or its members.

Copyright©2008 by No Boundaries Media, LLC. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part without written permission is expressly prohibited.

Adventure Sports are inherently risky and can cause injury and death. Consult your physician prior to beginning any fitness program or activity and where possible, seek out a qualified instructor. No Boundaries Media, LLC will not be held responsible for your decision to live adventurously.

# contributors



Born on the tumbleweed plains of Colorado, Nathan Ward is a professional writer and photographer specializing in adventure, environmental issues and humanitarian work. Recent projects have seen him mountain bike touring in Tibet, designing hand-icraft tours in Lhasa, motorcycling across Nepal and catching huge fish in Mongolia. See his work at [www.nathanward.com](http://www.nathanward.com).



Jacob Thompson is a freelance writer. He and his friends, Sean and Goat (along with some guest riders), are out to ride the spine of the Western Hemisphere from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. They have currently paddled from Panama to Columbia and have resumed their bike journey and are now in Ecuador. For more information about thier journey, visit their site at: [www.ridingthespine.com](http://www.ridingthespine.com).



Kip Koelsch is a two-time member of the US Canoe/Kayak Marathon Team and a two-time winner of the Florida Coast to Coast Adventure Race. Currently working as the Outdoor Program Coordinator for BayCare Wellness Centers where he teaches paddling, navigation, trail running and other outdoor fitness activities, Kip is also close to finishing his first novel.



**SHEER SPEED**  
Alex and Thomas Huber race up the Nose of El Capitan, California during the world speed climbing record attempt



Altimeter, Barometer, Compass—  
The new Suunto Core is your genuine guide for real outdoor adventures.

  
suunto.com



# SANTA'S GOT SOLE.

24 HOURS. 168,000,000 HOMES VISITED.

6,720,000,000 GIFTS DELIVERED.

13,440,000,000 COOKIES CONSUMED.

FOOT PAIN? NOT A CHANCE.



The best moldable footbed on the market. **ONLY \$44.95**

**BUY ONLINE** [yoursole.com](http://yoursole.com)

Available at  & other fine retailers



# news from the field

## Desert Islands Wins Gripping Duel At Abu Dhabi



Richard USSHER, captain of DESERT ISLANDS (NZ), draws on the experience and talents of his teammates to complete an error free final day, inspiring his team all the way to the finish at Al Ain to win the 2008 Abu Dhabi Adventure Challenge.

6 days ago, the 36 teams competing in the 2008 Abu Dhabi Adventure Challenge set out from Abu Dhabi city to cover a 361km adventure racing course that would not only test their capacity for physical and mental endurance but also take them on a journey of discovery, as they kayaked, biked and trekked across some of Abu Dhabi's most remarkable and treasured natural attractions. From the very start on Corniche Beach, competition among the teams was fierce but it was impossible to predict how tight the race would be by the time the teams reached the garden city of Al Ain for the final showdown on the last day. With only 63 seconds between the first and second teams and 2 seconds separating third and fourth, the contenders for the podium places would have to give of their best and remain focussed for

the duration of the final three sections of this 6-day race.

At 06:00 this morning, in the shadow of the Jebel Hafeet Mountains, the teams raced away on their bikes from the bivouac in Green Mubazzarah up the smooth tarmac road that twists and turns 12km to the 1000m summit of this a jagged rock formation that rips across the skyline east of the city. At the outcome TEAM NZ (NZ) were squeezed into 4th fastest allowing race leaders DESERT ISLANDS (NZ) to stretch their slim race lead to just over 3 minutes. French team SPORT 2000 VIBRAM OUTDRY (FRA) managed the third fastest over this section, taking advantage of a puncture that slowed rivals WILSA HH (FRA), to finish 8 minutes ahead of their compatriots and subsequently steal 3rd place.

On the following section, comprising a 14.5km trek across rocky tracks interspersed with some breathtaking rope works, one of which was a spine-tingling 200m abseil, DESERTS ISLANDS (NZ) finished third but were still widening the narrow gap between them-

selves and second place TEAM NZ, who clocked in 28 seconds slower. SPORT 2000 VIBRAM OUTDRY (FRA) were elated with their performance on the ropes, putting a further 6 minutes on WILSA HH (FRA) and virtually securing the last podium place.

The final 27km bike ride into the finish at the historic Jahli Fort in the centre of Al Ain would determine the outcome for the team that had taken the race lead on the first day, DESERT ISLANDS (NZ), and clung to it throughout the 6 days, staving off repeated, strong challenges from compatriots TEAM NZ. Making sure they kept out of trouble by racing slightly to the side of the speeding peloton, this remarkable quartet of Elina and Richard USSHER, Jarad KOHLAR and Jay HENRY produced a flawless finish to what had been a flawless race.

### Final Ranking – Top 5

DESERT ISLANDS (NZ) 39:18:20,  
TEAM NZ (NZ) 39:25:23, SPORT 2000  
VIBRAM OUTDRY (FRA) 39:31:42,  
WILSA HH (FRA) 39:46:34 and NIKE  
(USA) 40:06:20

photo courtesy of Monica Dalmaso

## The 'Old' Jay Challenge Returns As The Ultimate XC Challenge in 2010

I am please to officially announce that we are now working on re-introducing The Ultimate XC Challenge in 2010 in the Beautiful Laurantian region (located 1-hour north of Montreal).

The Ultimate XC Challenge will be the only off road stage race of it's kind in the world.

The race will start on a Friday (day one) with the first stage consisting of paddling through a series of lakes and rivers with extensive portage sections. Day 2 (Saturday) will

consist of an 80-mile mountain bike course with 13,000 feet of Climbing on 90% of single track. On Sunday (day 3), this stage will consist of running our established foot race that is already part of our running series in the town of Val Morin (see our race descriptions and details on our running series section).

4 different options will be available:

- 1- SOLO for the full distance
- 2- SOLO for 1/2 the distance
- 3- Teams of 3 for the full distance (one member of each team has to complete one stage each day)
- 4- Teams of 3 for the 1/2 distance (one member of each team has to complete one stage each day)

Only 100 spots will be available per option. In other words, only 100 SOLO athletes will be able to compete in this category. 100 Solo for the 1/2, 100 team for the full and finally 100 team for the 1/2.

NO DAY racer will be able to compete in the bike race or kayak/canoe race. The only discipline that will be open for day racers will be the 50km foot race. Therefore, if you want to do the bike race, you will have to build a team in order to race that day.

Stay tuned as we will be releasing more info as the date get closer. If you plan to do this race in 2010, you should seriously consider doing our 50km or our 1/2 marathon next summer to have a better idea what you are getting into.



# news from the field

## The Coastal Challenge Panama Island Run Scouting Report

by Tim Holmstrom



A little more than 5 years ago, I introduced the running community to the notion of a remote and rugged long-distance foot race in Costa Rica called The Coastal Challenge. It was an exciting time for me.

Over the years we've had the opportunity to stage the race throughout different parts of Costa Rica while meeting competitive runners from all over the world.

Recently we set out to create something new and different. After a recent scout to Panama to help lay out our TCC Panama: Island Run course I can say that we have created an event in a place that surpasses our wildest expectations.

"This place is freakin' sweet" I heard myself say countless times as we touched down upon multiple exotic islands to map out a 3-day running route. The odd thing is that it's an expression I never use. It seemed that while marveling at the

beauty of this place I was suddenly channeling a young OC surfer dude in some sort of dreamy, over-stimulated state-of-consciousness.

Might be I never said it at all but only thought it so ferociously. Could be that it just felt like I was saying it. Either way, this quiet corner of Panama was simply stunning on so many different levels that it made my mind swirl with thoughts of the race we were planning, early retirement, Corona beer commercials, Life is Good t-shirts, Sports Illustrated swimsuit photo shoots and ultimately brought me back to the simple and youthful dreams of one day finding some authentic adventure in an otherwise misspent life.

But let's jump back to where our scout began. After leaving Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica I drove with Sergio and Andres to Sixaola, a town that borders Panama.

And here's where our brief odyssey

begins.

### Day 1 - RIO SIXAOLA

Crossing an enormous bridge to Panama I look down through wide openings and gaps between loose planks placed on top of decaying railroad ties. I see flowing water the color of milk chocolate...so inviting in this oppressive heat. There is a fleeting hope that a railroad tie might give way or I get bumped off by one of the large trucks that come within inches of clipping people as they squeeze between the steady cross current of pedestrian traffic. All the bridges in this part of Costa Rica were originally part of a vast railway system. This bridge is no different, only more sketchy than most. The span of the bridge is impressive because the river is so damn wide.

That water has got to be cool but it's moving very fast and we are very near it's mouth spilling out to the Caribbean. Crocs...? Probably.

Photos by Tim Holmstrom/Sidelight Images

# news from the field

They seem to inhabit every other brown muddy river and delta in these parts. So just keep walking.

About half way across the bridge a smiling, energetic man in his 50's named Solomon greets us. He's to be our driver and guide for about an hour. This meeting was pre-arranged by Sergio because he knows from experience that Solomon is a tremendous asset. Once across and into Panama Solomon helps expedite the complex 3 door, 3 office process of getting our passports stamped and returned. He easily spares us an extra hour of standing in the hot sun, breathing in car exhaust at the edge of the bridge. He then guides us to his truck and drops us off in the bustling town of Changuinola for a bite to eat. We're hot and hungry so we waste no time or energy talking about sports or the weather while devouring lunch. The good food eventually restores our friendlier natures and hope for a better world.

Solomon picks us up an hour later and now has two more "fares/bridge crossers" in his truck and we rush off to nearby canal put-in for our next bit of transportation. We hop out of his truck and run toward the put-in just in time to catch a zippy little dual-outboard riverboat. It's still sunny and warm so the voyage on the boat is incredibly refreshing. We see enormous birds, including cranes and blue heron. The canal is home to fisherman and river guides and we come across plenty of them or their families in dugout canoes. The boat slows down and comes to nearly a complete stop whenever we pass a home along the side of the canal. It's like a 5 mph zone



without the speed bumps.

The boat continues down this lush and beautiful tropical canal for 30 minutes until we hit the mouth where we round a spit of land and look out on to the gleaming blue Caribbean.

30 more minutes on open water

and we start seeing the scattered islands that make up the archipelago of Bocas del Toro.

As we near the northwestern coast of Isle Colon and pass Bocas del Drago the boat driver slows down and points out at the water. Two dolphins surface and their arched backs gleam silver-grey in the af-

# news from the field



ternoon sun...a great maritime omen!

We make our way round a point and see the waterfront row of corrugated tin roofed buildings, colonial styled homes and businesses, bars and restaurants. There are water taxi's moving in every direction. We have arrived in Bocas Town.

## BOCAS DEL TORO

There is both a laid back bohemian atmosphere and a palpable energy in Bocas that would seem contradictory, but it works. You hear many accents walking down any given street. It's not overrun with tourists from any one country but there are many travelers and business owners from a wide swath of European and South American countries. With so many European countries having economic ties to Panama City, there's a steady flow of visitors from across the pond and a very European vibe here. It's a relatively small port town and the days are languid and quiet.

Local street vendors compete with traveling artisans from Argentina and Peru. An interesting thing I note is that no one is shirtless. Turns out that's because there is a fairly strict dress code here that requires people not to walk the streets without shirts. Enforced by tough looking policeman in black fatigues, the dress code makes me think about what other rules I'm bound to break during my stay that can get me unceremoniously thrown off the island or even worse, "deported". I've never been deported but Isle Carenero is only about 3 football fields away and there does appear to be a good bar there. I guess it wouldn't be so bad. But I suppose I'd better get with the program.

Before I even get another random thought in my head or question out of my throat Sergio, who knows me well by now, tells me not to worry because visitors usually get off with stern warnings. I think "hmmm, usually".

We spend our first day walk-

ing around exploring the waterfront area in Bocas Town. We're done in about 20 minutes, give or take. Upon our second pass by the German Bakery we give in to the thought of sitting in the shade and the siren-song of waffles and a "batido" (basically a milk or water based fruit-smoothie) The adventure-filled bragging rights of our scout now deeply called into question, we gamely decide that tomorrow we have a big day ahead of us and this is now merely part of a preliminary planning session. Yes, of course we'll have another round of batidos, we decide impulsively. Our day is officially derailed and we are lost.

The rest of our day is not nearly as eventful as the German Bakery but we do have big plans to check out the local nightlife. We go back to our bungalow/lodge to regroup but those plans "hit the clubs" never materialize. Worn out by travel and movement all we manage is to fall asleep in our rooms in a heat and batido induced haze. Sad but true.

---

Days 2 and 3 of the Island Run Scouting Report can be found in subsequent issues.

# news from the field

## 2009 Primal Quest to Stay Domestic

By Craig Stein

By now, most hard-core adventure racing enthusiasts know the location of the next Primal Quest, "The World's Most Challenging Human Endurance Competition." The 600+ mile, ten day expedition length, multi discipline race will be held August 15th - 24th, 2009 in the Badlands and Black Hills of South Dakota, USA. Don Mann Productions and the South Dakota Department of Tourism announced the dates and location of the 6th edition of this legendary adventure Friday, September 26th on location at Custer State Park.

After the extremely successful return of Primal Quest Montana in the Summer of 2008 the organization was focusing on taking the race to several international locations, but that was to change. "We have always enjoyed producing this event in the U.S.," expressed Race Director Chris Caul. "We had a lot of racer feedback saying they wanted the race to stay domestic."

Veteran adventure racer Robyn Benincasa, captain of Team Merrell/



Photo By Aaron Swisher

Zanfell, agrees that the Badlands venue is a positive decision. "I love racing in the United States... I'm so used to packing up everything for airline weight specs and paying way too much in excess baggage fees that driving to a race is a rare treat."

Robyn, at the time of this interview, had just returned from the Furnace Creek 508 in Death Valley to her home in San Diego, California. She finished the non-stop bike race in 33 hours: 10 minutes. "This was actually my first bike race, believe it or not." Robyn revealed, "Interestingly, all of the girls on the podium were in the 40-plus age group. Nice to be reminded that we ultra types are actually just hitting our stride in our early 40s! Definitely not a race for the youngsters."

kota representatives contacted Primal Quest and invited the organization to check out what the state had to offer. "After several follow-up conversations, a scouting trip was planned," said Chris Caul. "From spending time on the ground, seeing the terrain, we knew we had our next race course!" Caul expounded, "We are excited about the vast and trailless areas South Dakota holds. I have never seen a location that has such variable terrain. The different landscapes of the area will be an unbelievable experience for the racers."

"Most people have never experienced the beauty of South Dakota. The scenery of the Badlands is like another planet," Don Mann, Primal Quest Producer, enthusiastically conveyed.

In the Summer of 2008 South Da-

As the most prolific adventure sport



Photo By South Dakota Tourism

# news from the field



event producer in the world, Don Mann has been instrumental in reviving the Primal Quest brand. He is moving it forward, with a fraction of the initial budget, regaining the image it once had when backed by seriously large capital. Mann is very optimistic about the success of

Primal Quest Badlands - presented by SPOT. "We expect even more media coverage and exposure than we had in Montana. With more than nine months before race day we already have the entire course planned and expect to have nearly 90% of this layout unchanged by the time permitting is finalized." Don and Chris have already been on most of the 603 mile tentative race course. "In South Dakota, unlike other previous Primal Quest venues, bushwhacking is OK unless otherwise posted." This means teams will be able to pick their own route between check points along the course." Don Mann's optimism is bolstered by the warm reception South Dakota has shown the Primal Quest organization. "We have around 75 local and state officials backing this event 100%. We should have less issues with permitting than any previous race," Don proclaimed.



Photo By South Dakota Tourism

Governor said, "The Primal Quest team's goal is to be environmentally friendly and we will hold them to it." Primal Quest could mean millions of extra dollars in visitor spending from the exposure the race will bring the State. The Tourism Department is already a partner in bringing Primal Quest to South Dakota. "We have substantial time and money invested in it's success. That commitment will continue until the last team finishes the race and beyond." The Governor's office feels strongly that South Dakotans will embrace this event and want to be involved with it.

"We have a saying here in South Dakota, we roll out the red carpet, not the red tape," stated South Dakota Governor Mike Rounds. "That doesn't mean we'll cut corners; what we will do, is give an up or down answer very quickly." This approach to such a large expedition type event should help speed along the permitting process, at least at the state level. Governor Rounds continued, "In South Dakota, we don't want people to just look at the natural beauty of our rugged terrain, wide open prairies and beautiful Black Hills, we want them to use the trails, streams and rivers. We just ask folks to leave these areas just as they found them." Commenting on the organization's ecological standards the

The Primal Quest media team will showcase the wonders of South Dakota to the world through it's television agreement with Rush HD and other standard definition networks. Print media magazines and newspapers will publish articles before during and after the race. The public will also follow the race online through the Primal Quest web site and the near real time tracking of each four person coed team through GPS devices, provided by presenting partner SPOT. Unlike the 2008 Montana version of Primal Quest, the Badlands event will be an unsupported race. This means no plush RV's and multi-person support crews to

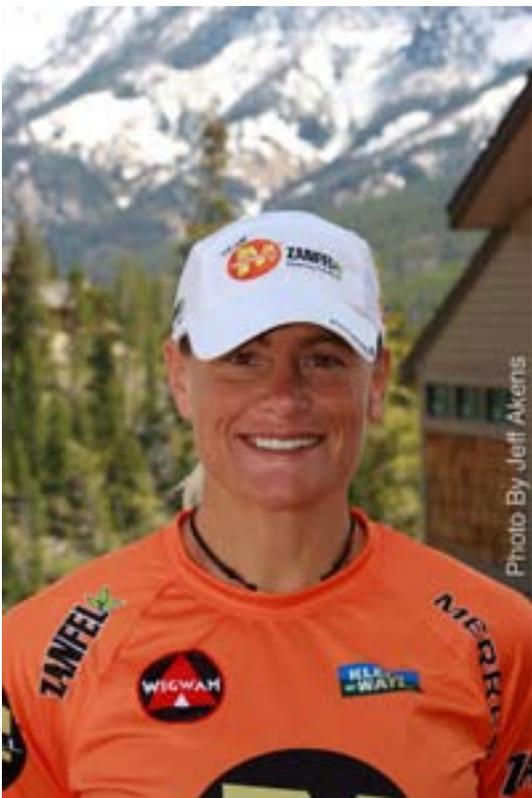


Photo By Jeff Avents

# news from the field

pamper the racers at each transition area. Race team's will be responsible for carrying their own food and vital equipment during each leg of the course. "I'm a big fan of support crews, so that aspect about the 2009 edition is a bit of a bummer for me," racer Robyn Benincasa replies. "I think support crews allow family and friends to be involved at a deeper level and to really be part of the team, not to mention the ever important emotional support they can offer." Robyn continues, "On the other hand, a non-supported race definitely levels the playing field a bit. For example, in the 2008 primal quest, the timing of the sections worked out perfectly for team Nike to run the race like a stage race and sleep comfortably in their motor home every night. That was a huge factor in their speed and ultimate success, since they had warm food and a bed every night versus a bag of cheetos and a puppy pile of teammates on the freezing ground like most other teams. Good for them for using their crew to their benefit and working hard to get back to them every night."

There are other major differences the South Dakota environment will pose. 580 of the total 600 mile course will be comprised of off-road travel. Orienteering and route finding will be required during each leg of the race. According to producer Don Mann; one-third of the race duration will be spent on the water, one-third will be on mountain bikes, and one-third will be comprised of the trekking/climbing/spelunking. "The race through the South Dakota Badlands will have more single track mountain biking than any previous Primal Quest,"



proclaimed Don. The planning team is excited about the number of terrain options course designer Rick Emerson has presented to them. "We have a very knowledgeable course designer who truly knows every inch of the course," said race director Chris Caul. "He has found us more climb sites and caves than we can ever use. We are working closely with the local spelunking groups, as well as the land managers, to select our best options," Chris continued. "The climb sites are truly unlimited, and much like Utah, endlessly beautiful," Don Mann expressed. The entire Primal Quest production team believes that the South Dakota event will be, "The benchmark that all future Primal Quest races will be judged against!"

Team and Volunteer registration is now open at [www.ecoprimalquest.com](http://www.ecoprimalquest.com). Primal Quest Badlands 2009 will cost each team \$11,500. The price is \$1000 less than it was for the Montana 2008 race. This should help to encourage more teams to enter the event. While the cost has dropped, the prize purse has increased from \$100,000 to \$175,000 in cash and prizes for the top finishing teams. "Bring it on!" exclaims

Robyn Benincasa. "That will probably draw at least a few more international teams to the party." Robyn continued, "I've never raced for the money, so its not a factor for me. Just a nice bonus when it happens! If I were in AR for a living, I'd definitely be living on the streets of San Diego in a Geo Metro by now. Prize money is a nice-to-have, but with four people and so much gear and equipment, you can't count on it! Just getting to the finish line of the Primal Quest and feeling like you had a great race is a victory for most teams. That's worth far more than any prize money."

---

Craig Stein is a freelance photo-journalist residing in Telluride, CO.



**The USARA would like to thank these sponsors for being a part of the 2008 USARA Adventure Race National Championship. The following sponsors are a key component to the success of this event:**

**ARNavSupplies**

[www.arnavsupplies.com](http://www.arnavsupplies.com)

**Nuun**

[www.nuun.com](http://www.nuun.com)

**Axis Gear**

[www.axisgear.ca](http://www.axisgear.ca)

**O2 Rainwear**

[www.rainshield.com](http://www.rainshield.com)

**Buff**

[www.buffwear.com](http://www.buffwear.com)

**Old Man Mountain**

[www.oldmanmountain.com](http://www.oldmanmountain.com)

**Crumpler Bags**

[www.crumplerbags.com](http://www.crumplerbags.com)

**Photon Light**

[www.laughingrabbitinc.com](http://www.laughingrabbitinc.com)

**E-Caps/Hammergel**

[www.e-caps.com](http://www.e-caps.com)

**Polar Pak**

[www.polarpak.com](http://www.polarpak.com)

**Essential Gear**

[www.essentialgear.com](http://www.essentialgear.com)

**Rokit Fuel**

[www.rokitfuel.com](http://www.rokitfuel.com)

**Five Hour Energy**

[www.fivehour.com](http://www.fivehour.com)

**Salomon**

[www.salomonsports.com/us/](http://www.salomonsports.com/us/)

**Flat Attack**

[www.flatattack.com](http://www.flatattack.com)

**Simpson SportRaxx**

[www.sportraxx.com](http://www.sportraxx.com)

**GoLite**

[www.golite.com](http://www.golite.com)

**Sportz Fuel**

[www.sportzfuel.com](http://www.sportzfuel.com)

**Hot Hands**

[www.hotmax.com/hothands/](http://www.hotmax.com/hothands/)

**Squirt Lube**

[www.squirtlube.com](http://www.squirtlube.com)

**Kenda Tires**

[www.kendausa.com](http://www.kendausa.com)

**Suunto**

[www.suunto.com](http://www.suunto.com)

**Koobi**

[www.koobi.com](http://www.koobi.com)

**Tech Sox**

[www.techsox.com](http://www.techsox.com)

**Larabar**

[www.larabar.com](http://www.larabar.com)

**Tri All 3 Sports**

[www.triall3sports.com](http://www.triall3sports.com)

**Merrell**

[www.merrell.com](http://www.merrell.com)

**Zanfel**

[www.zanfel.com](http://www.zanfel.com)

**MyTopo**

[www.mytopo.com](http://www.mytopo.com)

**ZeroGoo**

[www.zerogoo.com](http://www.zerogoo.com)

**Numa Sport Optics**

[www.numatactical.com](http://www.numatactical.com)

**LFS Gloves**

[www.lfsinc.com](http://www.lfsinc.com)

[www.USARAnationals.com](http://www.USARAnationals.com)

# race director profile

## Ronny Angell

**AWM:** How long have you been putting on adventure races?

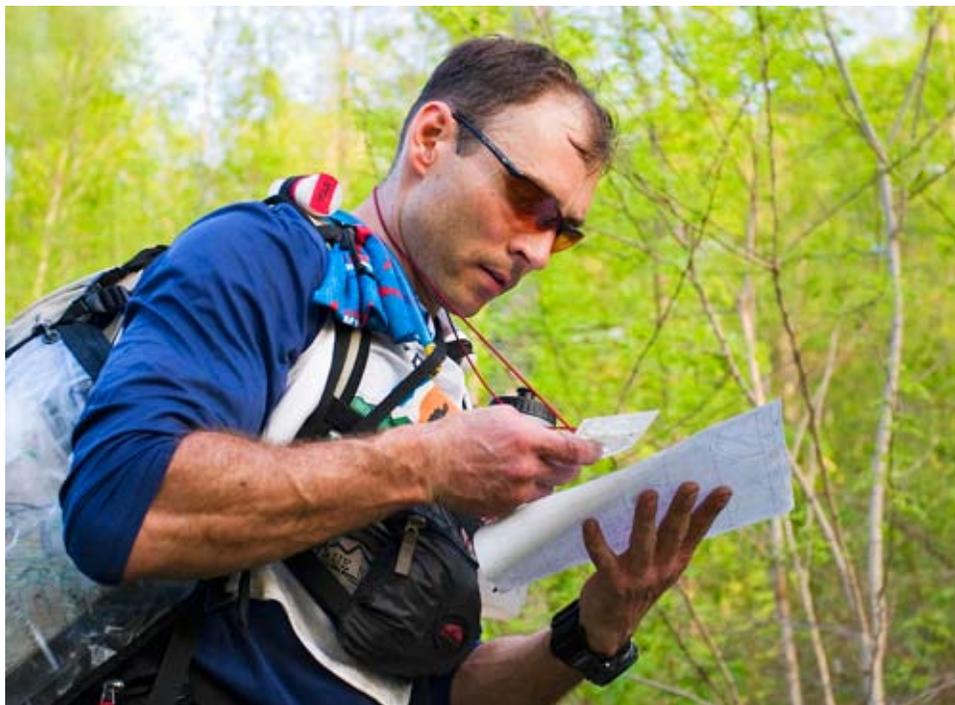
The first race Odyssey put on with me at the helm was in April 2005, the Odyssey One Day Adventure Race in Big Island, VA. Since then, we have organized 65 events in the past three years. Odyssey's long tradition of putting on great events and experienced staff has produced over 175 events in the past 10 years.

**AWM:** What made you want to start hosting your own events?

I was lucky enough to get started with a great company, Odyssey Adventure Racing, and became good friends with Odyssey Co-Founder and mastermind, Joy Marr, back in 1999. I started volunteering, learning and working my way up through the ranks to become staff. I was able to see what it took to organize events. In the fall of 2004, Don Mann asked if I was interested in taking over Odyssey Adventure Racing. Wow, it was a dream come true, to be able to put on events that I loved and that had changed my life. It has been a great adventure since day one.

**AWM:** What is your favorite event that you host and why?

That is a tough one. On race day, they are all my favorite. I love the energy on race day. I would have to say the Endorphin Fix. During this event, you really get to see the highs and lows of the teams while they are racing through two nights without or with very little sleep. I



get to watch the strategies unfold. The E Fix usually has some great whitewater, be it paddling or swimming or both and spectacular rope sections. We usually take teams through some very challenging and very gorgeous scenery, so it makes it nice when I pre-run and drive around the course.

**AWM:** What in your opinion makes your event (s) unique?

We at Odyssey design the courses with the racer's safety first and foremost, while we are trying to piece the most scenic and unique areas together. Somehow, they end up causing a lot of elevation gain and loss. Then we pre-run the course to make sure it is doable and challenging for all level of teams. On race day, you will see we are well organized, giving the racers a sense of relief and allowing them to focus on the race course. We have built a reputation of our checkpoints being where we say they are, so teams are

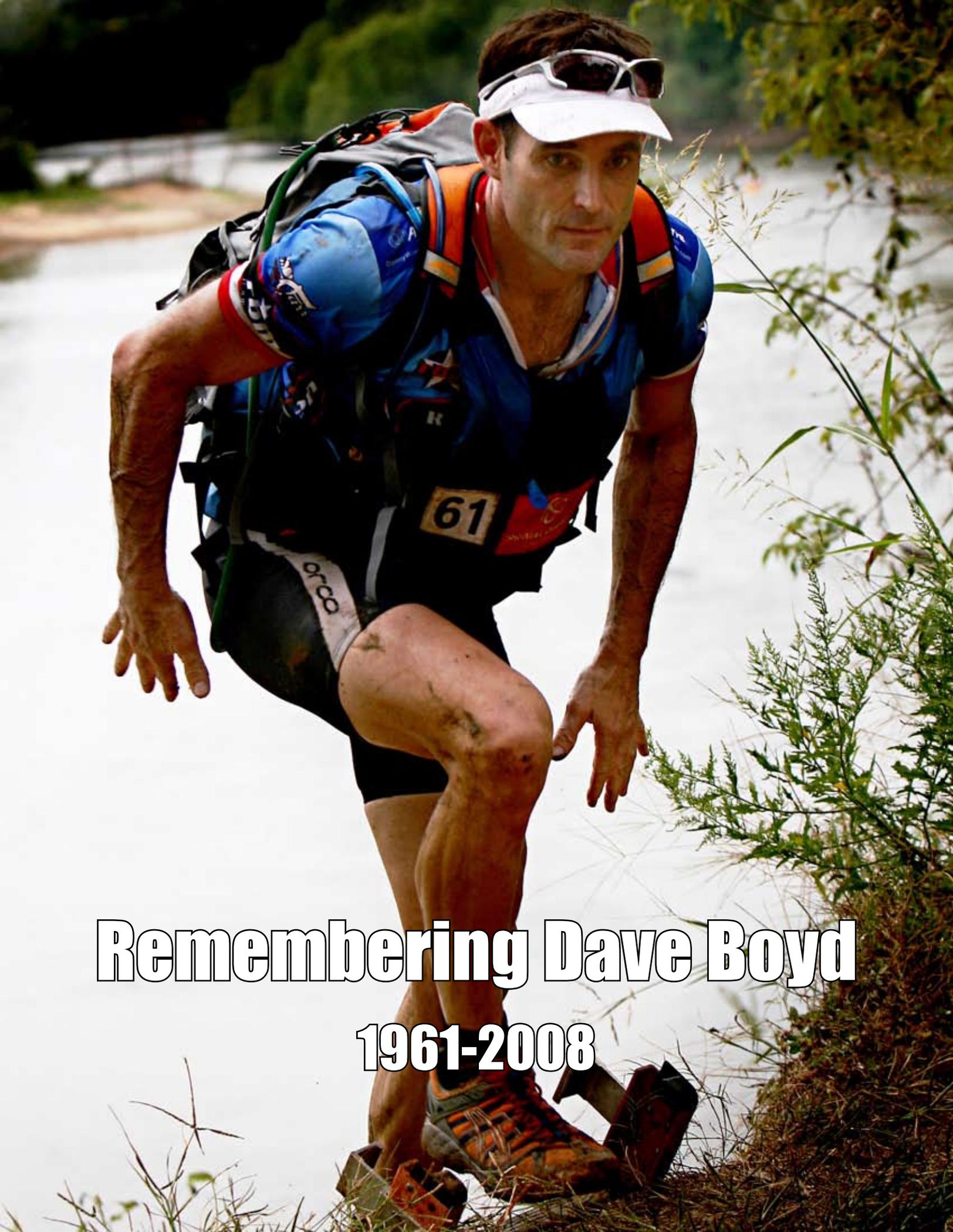
not wandering around in the woods looking for points that are not there. Another key is the great volunteers we are able to attract to our events. The racers always comment on how good our volunteers are.

**AWM:** Do you still participate in adventure races? What was the last adventure race you participated in? What was your first adventure race that you participated in? How well did you do?

I do still participate in adventure races. Not as often as I would like, but I will try to get one or two in a year. I love expedition length races, but with a family I'm not able to train as much as I would like to be successful, so I will stick to the 24-hour events. One of the last adventure races I did was the Untamed Virginia 30-hour with my fiancé. We had a great time; she "ROCKED" like the rock star she is. The first adventure race I ever

*Continued on page 44*

*Photos courtesy of Will Ramos*



**Remembering Dave Boyd**

**1961-2008**

*We mourn the loss of a great competitor and good friend, Dave Boyd or as his friends all knew him, Dr. Dave. In September, Dr. Dave sustained fatal injuries from a fall while descending his third 14er of the day in Colorado.*

*I have heard many words used to describe Dr. Dave such as generous, encouraging & super human, all of which are appropriate. Dave was a fierce competitor and I truly believe that he did not know the meaning of the word can't. Once Dave had a goal in his sights it was just a matter of time before that goal was attained. For example in the past few years Dave won 2 Adventure Race State Championships, 3 Mountain Bike State Championships, 2 Cyclo Cross State Championships, 5 Adventure Race National Championships, the Trans Rockies and doubled gold buckled at the Leadville 100. I could write pages about Dave, but thought it would be more appropriate to have his friends share some of their favorite "Dr. Dave moments."*

Once while racing with Dr. Dave in the Ozark mountains we came to this steep downhill jeep track section of the course. The team took off and within 100 yards I was passing Dave & Justin who are much faster mountain bikers than me. Being the ultimate competitor Dave tried to pedal faster to keep me from passing him but all he could do was spin because we were going so fast. As I passed them I yelled "sometimes it's good to be the fat guy." Dave just laughed and replied "I guess so" as I pulled away. It was the one and only time I passed Dr. Dave on a bicycle and we had a good laugh about it later. God Bless You Dave.

**Troy Farrar**



My sister in law wanted to make our team some nice meals to eat during the Leadville 100. So my wife asked Dave what our team would like. Dave's response, "sandwiches and bars....that's how we roll." **Shaun Bain**

Dave the silent giver. It seemed hard not to know when Dave spent the weekend racing mountain bikes. Every Tuesday, just a little after training started, Dave would show up and slip his prizes into the Van. It was Dave's intention that the prizes be used for prizes in other races or given to young racers that were in school or just getting started in life. This year at one adventure race I looked up and saw the racer in front of me with a backpack on that had "BOYD" written on the back. I just wondered how many people were out there racing that Dave had helped get there, including me. **Rick Sanders**

Dave, Patti and I were racing in Smithville, Texas. We were on the last nav section and we over shot our drainage and were looking for

the CP in a really deep, nasty, overgrown, scum filled drainage. Of course we thought the RD would put it in something like this, so we kept looking. We were in chest high scum water with logs/trees and junk all over the place. We were going through this and came upon a sign that said "Caution Alligators". I asked Dave if we should get out and his reply was .." No...we have not found the CP yet, and besides, we will probably not bother the alligators too much."

**Bob Talamini**

My fondest memories of Dave Boyd were of his kind, giving nature. I remember the USARA Adventure Race Nationals in 2003 were being held in California. It was a long way to travel. At that time in my single life, while raising my two boys I didn't have a lot of money. Dave really wanted me to race with team MOAT, but I had to decline the offer. Not only could I not afford the travel expense, but I was having trouble with my youngest son, Daniel, and needed to be at home for him. Instead of accepting "No" for an answer, Dave found a way for me to go by



buying my plane ticket and a ticket for Daniel so I could take him with me. Dave also bought a ticket for Daniel's friend so he would not be bored while we were racing. Dave brought an RV, and our friend Elena for our support crew (and to help keep an eye on Daniel while I was racing). I felt indebted to Dave, but he quickly assured me that I would never owe him a dime, and truly made me feel like I didn't.

His kindness and generosity were always over the top!

**Kathy Duryea Hudson**

Dave took the whole team on a trip to Moab, Utah, and one of our numerous adventures included canyoneering through Cheesebox canyon. The whole hike took us about 12 hours and we could not have asked for a better day. Dave, being

the super human he was, decided the guides were moving a little to slow for his voracious appetite of speed and took the lead with the guides' blessing. Dave navigated through these slot canyons and climbed through the dark abyss when suddenly I heard this extreme laughter coming from afar which sounded like Dave's known chuckle. When I reached Dave, I found that he was facing me with his rear end stuck in between some rocks of a narrow opening and he was smiling at me with his huge grin. I have never heard Dave laugh as much as he did that day. I came up to him to assess the situation, and we agreed he got himself between a rock and a hard place. After about three minutes of contorting his body about he was finally freed! Dave and I both decided it might be wise to wait for the guides on this one. Come to find out we had to belly crawl under the rocks and slip into some freezing water. This story sticks out in mind because I will never forget how much joy Dave got out being stuck in what some might consider unimaginable. He approached life with a child-like enthusiasm, and we are very blessed to have many fond memories and adventures with a true superhero. **Justin Burger**

I had only known Dave for a few months when he asked me if I wanted to do a seven day race in Canada??? Holy cow!!! Are you kidding???? To do a 7 day race, you gotta train, and you gotta train Dave Boyd style. (Although we started 6 months out.) In 20 weeks we had racked up 16 races, including 4 cyclo cross races, 6 dirty du's, 2 adventure races and 4 mountain bike races. Little did I know that Dave was working on getting a

little extra time off for our trip to Canada. Our 7 day race turned into a 2 month training/racing excursion that Dave so-named "Dave and Patti's Excellent Adventure." all aboard the brand new MOAT mobile named Big Bertha. During this two month "Summer Adventure" we hiked up Wheeler Peak in New Mexico, paced a teammate in a 100 mile ultra run in Tahoe, kayaked the San Francisco Bay, competed in a 50 mile mountain bike race in Vail, competed in my first 24 hour adventure race in Beaver Creek, rappelled off sketchy coal mine caves, biked/kayaked/hiked Moab, Durango, Taos, Banff, and Lake Tahoe and climbed five 14er's in Colorado before finally competing in the Trans Rockies 7-day mountain bike race. We cooled down with some fly fishing in Montana and paced another teammate in the Leadville 100 ultra run on the way home. Well, as you can tell...that 7day race turned into a 2 month journey that changed my life forever. LoveyaDaveBoyd!!

**Patti Plagmann**

It was a weekend of adventure race training at the lake house, perfect weather for a MOAT gathering. The training involved anything that could help an athlete...pad-

dling, bike riding, running/hiking up a mountain with little girls on the shoulders....and blitzkrieg ping pong. Dave had the uncanny ability to be good at anything. Even ping pong. It was evident as he took on: Jason and Justin, Justin and Nathan, Nathan and Jason....SOLO.

Now a simple one on two wasn't any kind of race training, so teams were made, and a game was started. Super Dave wasn't content with having just one ball in play. The game ended up having 6 balls played all at once. With Dave creating a super serve, with 6 balls being battered to the opponent's side. The game was crazy, with good teamwork on both sides. Reflexes were tested, and the game got more interesting when newcomer to the Chinese Ping Pong scene, but long time adventure racer, Leslie arrived. We played for hours, and Dave was crowned MVP those two nights. He will always be known as the AR king....but most would never even know his super secret talent, Chinese Ping Pong KING!

**Wink**

Someone I recently informed of Dave's passing thanked me and then stated that they did not know him that well but they will miss

him. I told them, "even if you met Dave only once you knew him." During a really cold early February race a few years back I was doing my best to compete against Dave, which wasn't good enough. I was falling into the early stages of hypothermia while paddling and zoned out. Dave shows up yelling at me; which I could barely hear. He clipped a bungee to my sevlor and paddled me to help. He threw me into a car to get warmed up. Oh, and of course, he jumped back into his Sevy to go on and win the race. Then he gave me his prize for winning, a Sunnto watch, which I wear for every workout. I will never forget you. Thanks Dave!! **Marshall Herrin**

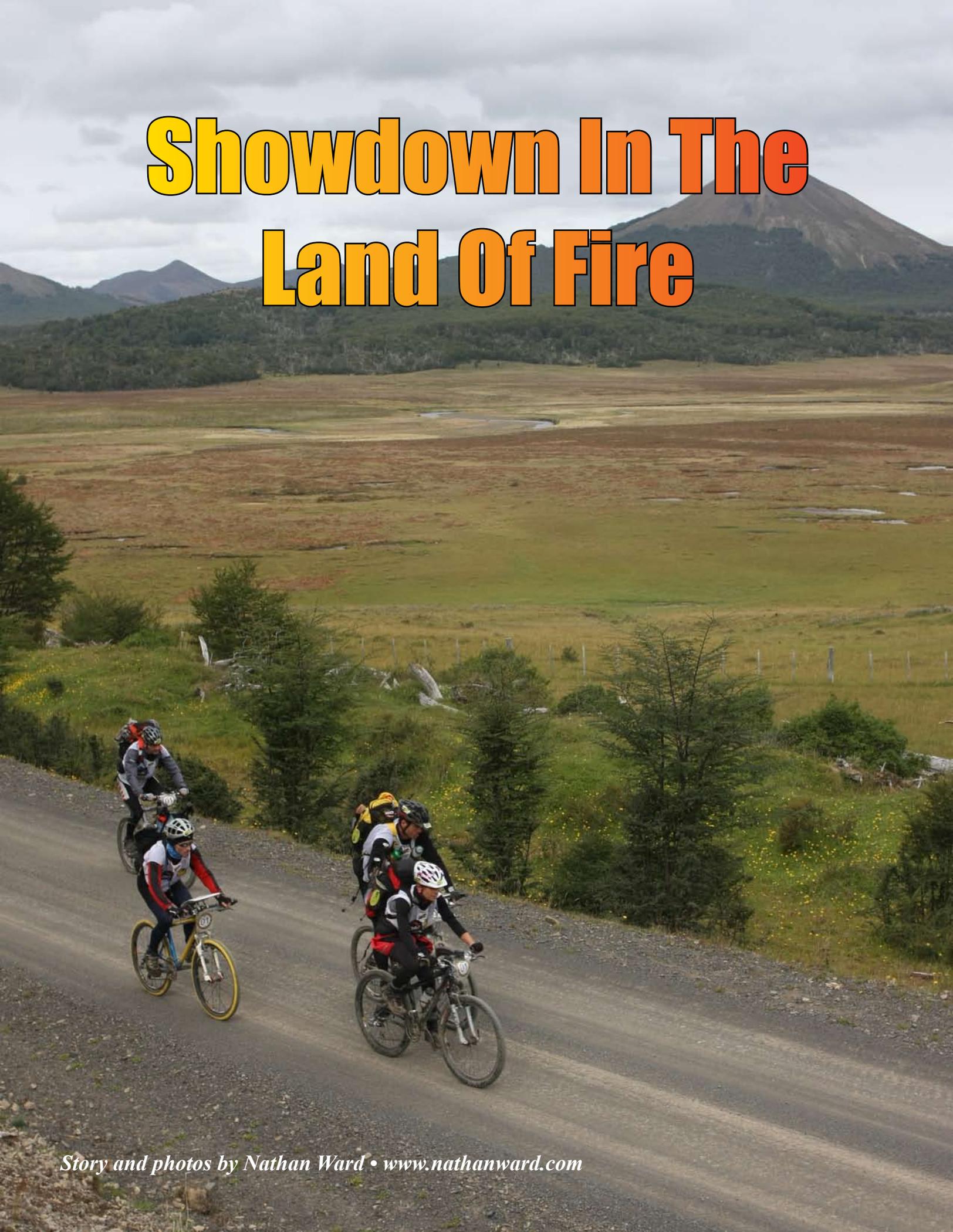
One of my favorite things about racing with Dave was that it wasn't always about the race. If we had a spare minute before or after the race, we would add a bike, hike or some climbing. We spent 5 nonstop days racing in Australia. The team followed it up the next day with a 3 hour hike along the beautiful coast of Tasmania. Once on the way back from Utah, the RV got a flat tire. We called AAA but had to wait several hours for them to arrive. Dave and I decided to take a little bike ride down some country roads. During our ride we found a bridge that crossed over a creek about 100 feet below. We headed back to the RV and grabbed our climbing gear & teammates, spending the next hour practicing rappelling off the bridge.

My second favorite thing about racing with Dave was that he was a master at making due with any

*Continued on page 35*



# Showdown In The Land Of Fire



**Deep in the virgin woods and waterways of southern Chile, the 2008 Patagonia Expedition Race led racers to the edge of their abilities and few survived to the end. Top North American finisher, Littleton Bike & Fitness rose to the challenge to place near the top of one of the world's hardest races.**

Thick rain saturated the alpine tundra of the Darwin Mountains and slid down the hillsides, swelling the thin valley stream into a raging torrent that groaned and swirled as it topped the riverbanks and turned downed trees into deadly strainers. Groggy from a week of constant racing, Team Littleton Bike & Fitness (LBF) came upon the raging river and looked at it with disbelief.

To continue the race, they had to cross to the other side and continue trekking over the mountains, through Death Pass to the Beagle Channel. Testing the power of the deep water, they linked arms and waded into the river, only to have the current nearly sweep them downstream.



Little did they know that one racer, Bruno Rey from the race leading Authentic-Nutrition.com team, had been swept into the river just hours earlier. He went under and was trapped beneath the water. Only the fast action and strong arms of his teammates pulled him to safety.

“The shear power and force that river was wielding was amazing. No human let alone a bunch of tired, sleep-deprived adventure racers should have been there.

If you had gone in the water you would have been dead...” remembers LBF captain, David Stiles.

They retreated to the shore, searched the riverbank for another way to cross and finally decided it was too dangerous. Stiles explained what happened next, “... we pulled out our sat phone and tried to call for a chopper to lift us over the river, but the thing [phone] didn't work. So, now we are sitting in the middle of nowhere with no safety net and this river we still had to cross.” The race had suddenly turned from fun and games to a matter of survival.

With the river raging, LBF decided to wait until dawn to see if the river would subside enough to cross. It didn't and the next morning they chose the only option left, a rain-slick tree angled high over the water. They'd decided the day before that the log was too dangerous but they edged out on it now, one by one, inching their way over the river with no room for error.

Team member Jenny Johnson re-





calls the crossing, “There were huge consequences below the tree [if they slipped into the water] – huge strainers and recirculating holes.” If one of them had fallen off, there would have been little chance to save them. When the last team member reached the other side, they hugged with relief then put it behind them and got back to racing.

Team LBF, from New Hampshire and Ontario, went on to finish the race in 4th place, the top placing North American team and one of the few to complete a course that knocked out all but the strongest competitors.

### **The Wilds of Patagonia Beckon**

The Patagonia Expedition Race (PER) defines the concept of an “expedition” race, rather than simply an adventure race. The PER traditionally covers around 373 miles (600 km) of Patagonian wilderness and the 2008 race was no exception – the course crossed the island of Tierra del Fuego (TDF), the Almirantazgo Sound, the Darwin Mountains, the Beagle Chan-

nel and finally to Isla Navarino, the southernmost settlement on Earth, not far from Cape Horn.

The route is truly epic, as Johnson remembered “The stages are ridiculously long and the terrain the most rugged I’ve experienced. I’ve never felt or been that far away from the comforts of civilization.”

The race started in the picturesque downtown streets of Punta Arenas, Chile. When the starter’s gun

sounded, teams pedaled to the sea and ferried to the fabled isle of Tierra del Fuego. Once on TDF, the race started in earnest with 78 miles (126km) of rolling dirt roads through ranches and past herds of guanaco, big-eared, long-necked furry beasts. The day shone happily on racers with the absence of the persistent Patagonian winds and rain.

Teams formed into pace lines and quickly spread out along the biking route, the first team coming into CP1 three hours before the last. Going into the first trek, the Spanish-Brazilian team, Medilast Sport Lleida – Sky, led the way. Team LBF entered the transition zone just 30 minutes later and headed into the dark and the first trek.

### **Wild Pumas in the Land of Fire?**

In the middle of the night, just before CP2, things got interesting for Team LBF. “I heard a loud thump and saw a big log roll down to the ground like it had just been thrown. A pair of green eyes lit up



about 15 meters away. As my light moved across it, the shape was unmistakable - it was a very large cat with its hair raised it walked slowly back and forth as we picked up logs and raised our packs over our heads to look as big as possible," remembered Stiles. Was it one of the first puma sightings in TDF or just a rabid guanaco? No one will ever know, but it was definitely too early in the race to be hallucinating.

At CP2, locals scoffed at the puma sighting, even though the big cats are common on the Patagonian mainland. None have been known to have crossed the water to TDF yet. Stiles retorted, "I would say the locals are wrong or their house cats are a lot bigger than ours."

After just two stages, the scene was set for the rest of the race as the stronger teams had already separated themselves from the rest. The teams in contention were Team LBF, the Spanish-Brazilian team, the French-American Authentic-Nutrition.com team, Team Toureg Turk and the fast moving Canarias – Andalucia Spiuk Ten-



erife team from Spain.

### **Beat Me with Wilderness – Karukinka Splits the Race**

A muddy mountain bike ride led teams to the edge of the void, a massive 68 mile (110 km) trek from Rio Grande through the trackless wilderness of Karukinka, a protected area administered by the Wilderness Conservation Society ([www.karukinkanatural.cl](http://www.karukinkanatural.cl)). It was here that the race was decided for most teams.

Over the next three days, there

were no signs of the racers who were deep in the wilderness battling their way through a maze of blown down trees, beaver dams, deep bogs and trackless forests. There were no trails to follow, no roads to point the way, no inhabitants to stop and ask directions. It's one of the most pure areas of TDF and few people have ever visited this part of the island. Some of the teams must have felt it was just a green wet void, because they never made it out the other side.

Of the 11 teams that entered the woods, only five made it out to continue the race. Team Authentic-Nutrition emerged from the woods first, followed by the Spanish-Brazilian team, Team Toureg Turk, Team LBF and finally the Spanish. They all looked the worse for wear from the experience – soaked, rotting feet polka-dotted with blisters and floating toenails. Being constantly wet from hiking in the bogs, the racers' feet looked like the weak link in their bodies.

As night fell with no sign of the





other teams, the race organizer's report stated, "The current status of the remaining teams is unknown. They are completely alone, in the middle of nowhere in the island of Tierra del Fuego."

Navigating such long untracked distances tested the navigation abilities of all teams. Stiles remembers the challenge, "We were so remote and had so little contact

with anything other than nature that it made the sections seem endless. With no trails for trekking and sat photo maps with no contours, the nav was scary at some points. This wasn't like a U.S. race where if you made the wrong turn, you ended up at some random house or road. If you got turned around and lost your bearings [in the PER] you would be a goner."

Two teams got lost and turned back. The other 4 teams finally made it out of the woods, but far too late to make the time cutoff and were eliminated.

### **Out of the Woods and Into the Mountains**

Meanwhile, on the sharp end of the race, the Spanish-Brazilian team raced back into the lead with a quick mountain bike leg to transition into the next trek. After such a short break, the treks must have seemed endless at this point. After 5 days of racing, just 5 hours separated the remaining teams as they put their packs back on and trekked into the northern tip of the Darwin Mountains. At this point, any of the teams could still have run the race.

Far from the chaotic challenges of Karukinka, the mountains must have provided relief as the landscape opened up into steep mountain valleys, high passes and huge views of the main bulk of the Darwins to the south. They were headed into a part of Chile where the mountains and sea collide in a jumble of fjords and ragged peaks.

Every team made short work of the mountainous trek, except for the unfortunate elimination of the fast Spanish-Brazilian team that entered this leg in the lead. One team member twisted an ankle badly and it grew steadily worse until they were unable to go on. They finished the stage, but were out of the race. Then there were only four teams left. The race was taking its toll.

### **The Winds of Patagonia Blew the Kayaking Away**

After sleeping quietly for days, the infamous winds of Patagonia woke and blew the race into a wave-rid-dled frenzy as teams reached La Pacioncia and the Almirantazgo Sound. Denied by fast and frequent sets of big waves, racers sat on the shore resting, eating and waiting for the seas to calm. They never did.

Thirty knot winds and rain lead organizers to call the kayaking section off and the Chilean Navy ferried racers across the water where racers laced up their shoes and started on yet another massive wilderness trek.

Undoubtedly, racers looked at the map and their eyes caught on the eerily-named Death Pass which they needed to cross before reaching the Beagle Channel and the next kayaking section. Little known to them at the beginning, the real challenge would actually lie in crossing the swollen mountain stream deep in the mountains. Fortunately, all four teams made it through safely and disaster was averted.

However, the severity of the obstacle again underscores the challenge of the Patagonia Expedition Race and serves as a warning to fu-



ture racers. Don't take the course lightly – this is some of the most demanding terrain on the planet. Please don't ignore the word "expedition" when training to race in Chile.

After pulling their captain from the frigid waters and drying him out around a fire, the Authentic-Nutrition team dropped the hammer on their competitors, finishing 7 hours before the next team arrived at CP8. Team Toureg Turk came in next, followed soon by the Spanish.

Team LBF adopted a different tactic, sleeping 4 hours a night on two consecutive nights while trekking through the Darwin Moun-

tains. Their plan was to conserve energy for the last stages of the race, which still included an open ocean paddle on the Beagle Channel, another mountain bike leg and a final trek to a mountain top finish outside the town of Puerto Williams on Isla Navarino. Despite their plan to hammer at the end and move up a place, fate didn't go their way.

### Never Ending Winds End the Race Early

The persistent Patagonian winds that made the earlier kayak leg impassible never let up and grounded helicopters in the region. Unfortunately, all the kayak paddles for the next section of the race were inside one of the grounded helicopters. Despite two days of waiting, and calm seas on the last day, it's impossible to kayak without paddles.

The winds weren't likely to let up and the ten days slotted for the race were almost up so sadly the race organizers had to call the race finished early on the shores of the Beagle Channel. Sadly, it was a quiet and anticlimactic ending to





such an epic race.

### **Sailing Through the Drake Passage and the Strait of Magellan**

After calling the race early, the organizers sweetened the ending by chartering *The Victory*, an antique sailing schooner to transport racers south through the Beagle Channel to Isla Navarino where they boarded a ship for the journey back.

As the boat motored back overnight to Punta Arenas, they must have looked out with awe at the terrain they'd crossed over the last ten days. Steep remote peaks jutted from the rolling black sea. Glaciers toppled from unclimbed mountains as storm clouds raced across the sky. The big ship bucked and heaved through the Drake Passage before turning back into the calm waters of the Strait of Magellan.

Looking back on the race, Johnson mused "It was an unforgettable experience. Absolutely beautiful and wild."

In its essence, the pure Patagonian

wilderness lies at the heart of the PER and makes it a special experience. Regardless of the route and the logistical difficulties of the area, the event offers access to some of the most remote and untouched wilderness in one of the most beautiful places in the world – Chilean Patagonia.

### **Preparing for the Race**

After watching the 2008 PER, here are some suggestions if you race in 2009.

- First of all, don't take the name lightly – this is an expedition race where you may not be able to get external support, even if you need it. Be prepared to take care of yourself completely.
- Make sure your navigator is an expert. The maps the PER supplies are basic and the terrain goes through challenging mountainous, treed, glaciated, boggy terrain where it's easy to get lost. If you do get lost, you cannot count on running into any signs of civilization as there are very few

roads, houses or even trails in this area.

- Bring your own satellite phone – Iridium. One team used a race-provided phone and found that it didn't work when they needed it.

### **2009 Patagonia Expedition Race**

The 2009 Race will be held in central Chilean Patagonia near the famous Patagonian Ice Cap and will head south to the southern end of Chile. The race organizers promise savage wilderness, vast wetlands, wild rivers, ocean paddling and unexplored valleys. It's sure to be epic. [www.patagonianexpeditionrace.com](http://www.patagonianexpeditionrace.com)

---

*Born on the tumbleweed plains of Colorado, Nathan Ward is a professional writer and photographer specializing in adventure, environmental issues and humanitarian work. Recent projects have seen him mountain bike touring in Tibet, designing handicraft tours in Lhasa, motorcycling across Nepal and catching huge fish in Mongolia. See his work at [www.nathanward.com](http://www.nathanward.com).*

# AXIS GEAR

## \$55 JERSEY SPECIAL



FULL CUSTOM

**\$55.25** US

SEMI CUSTOM

**\$50.99** US

UNLIMITED COLOURS  
MINIMUM ORDER OF 6 JERSEYS  
MADE FROM US KNIT FABRIC & SEWN IN CANADA

\* PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE SETUP. US PRICE BASED ON .85% EXCHANGE RATE \*

TOLL FREE: 1-866-537-5197

PHONE: 416-537-9229

WWW.AXISGEAR.CA

INFO@AXISGEAR.CA

**NEW  
PRICE**

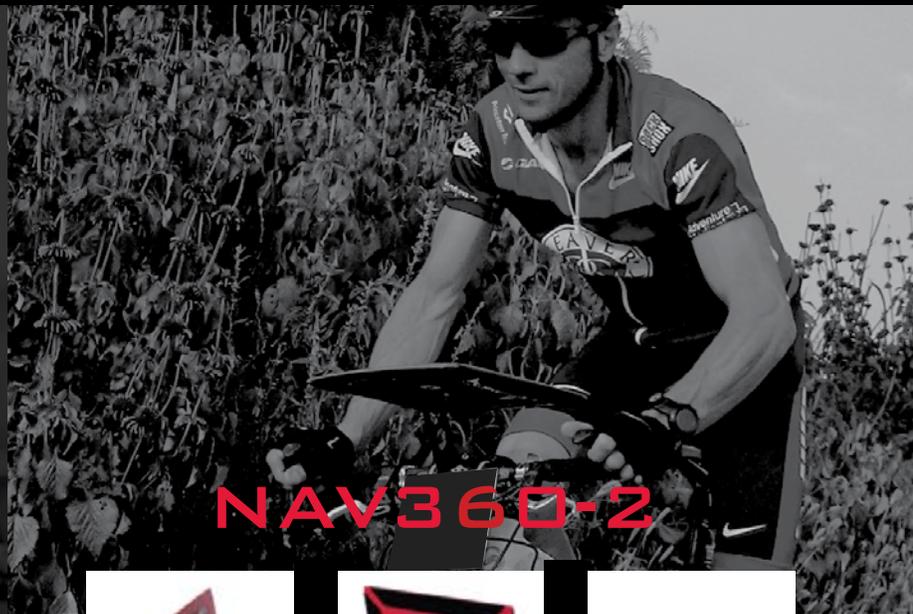
**ONLY**

**\$75**

CDN

plus shipping

9x9 Nav 360-2 Regular \$99.99 CDN



**NAV360-2**



**- Ian Adamson:** seven time adventure race world champion

"Mud, rain, snow, dust and fast technical mountain bike descents are no match for this beautifully designed and engineered board."



# Out Of The Office And Into The Wild

**Corporate Team From Across the U.S. Compete In The BG US Challenge And Beyond**

**by Andrea Dahlke**

Now in its fourth year, the BG US Challenge continues to bridge the gap between the corporate world of water-coolers and board meetings and the white-water rapid and midnight trail run excitement of adventure racing. Held Oct. 16 – 18 in Lake Placid, New York\*, this three-day stage race brought together teams from companies across the United States to tackle more than 60 miles of mountainous upstate New York terrain and an immeasurable landscape of interpersonal communication, strategy and engineering feats.

The US Challenge is one of ten Intelligent Sport® World Series events staged annually across the globe in places like Asia, Europe, North America, Australia and South America. Each course is based on the unique Intelligent Sport® formula, which brings adventure racing to the business world to build high performance company teams. This year, in addition to mountain

biking, trail running and triathlon stages, the US Challenge incorporated engineering tasks, orienteering, code and puzzle solving.

Teams were comprised of four people plus one optional substitute and were all-male, female, or co-ed. They ranged from the only all-woman team to compete (BG Americas & Global LNG) to the all-male Grassroot Soccer team (African based not-for-profit raising AIDS awareness) led by Eco-Challenge veteran Danny Moy to the co-ed St. Jude team of adult childhood cancer survivors\*\*.

On Oct. 16, the race kicked off against the backdrop of Olympic landmarks from the 1932 and 1980 Winter Games. Energy, technology, non-profit, engineering, healthcare, marketing and government sectors were all accounted for in the rank and file of brightly colored jump suits. A chilly breeze swept across the field as teams anxiously awaited the firing of the starting

gun. None of the competitors knew exactly what this race had in store for them. As team captain of the US Air Force Headquarters, Major David Ashley noted, “The best laid plan can’t be cast in stone... The winning teams recognize when a plan won’t work anymore and change on the fly.”

The first stage was a wilderness race with what at first glance appeared to be simple instructions: split your team in two and utilize the course map to locate playing cards distributed throughout the woods. The objective – the team matching the most pairs in the fastest time would win the stage. The catch – teams were required to coordinate precise navigation and timing in order to obtain a matched set within a mere 60 seconds of one another. As course director Paul Vernon made clear to the crowd, “It’s a simple concept, but requires a huge amount of strategy...just like in the real business world.” One

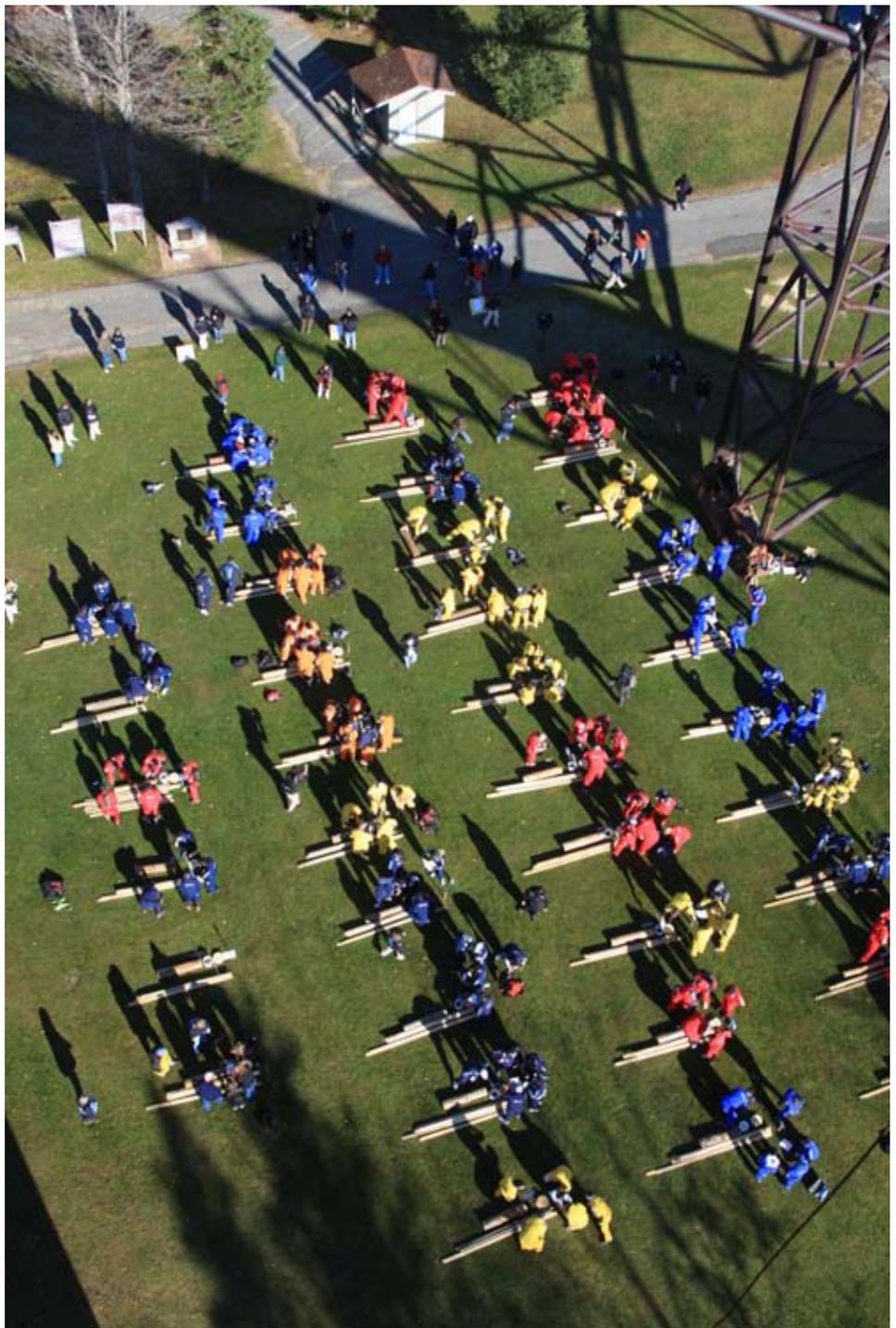
mistake or slip-up in team communication could waste valuable time and points. Wrong decisions and hasty strategies sent even the most athletic teams to the bottom of the standings by stage end.

Day One continued with a mountain bike navigation stage and finished with one of the Challenge's famous stages—a night navigation course where the points can only be found by solving a series of complex puzzles.

A bitterly cold Day Two kicked off with an engineering stage requiring teams to construct a mechanism capable of moving a one-meter log over a minimum distance under its own momentum using only the materials provided (hint – there were no power tools!). For two hours the field beneath the Mackenzie Interval Ski Jumping Complex was drowned in a sea of chatter, shouts of orders and diligent sawing, measuring, and cursing after sawing the wrong measurements.

The final leg of the race was the most arduous. While on the surface it appeared to be an almost off-road triathlon, like all things Intelligent Sport® it had a twist: Throughout the race course, teams were met with a series of mental puzzles that had to be solved correctly or the team would be placed in a penalty box for a specified amount of time (ranging from four to eight minutes). Suddenly it was not enough to be the fastest – you had to be the smartest too.

Tension loomed as the teams took their marks and learned of a new twist that had been added to the stage: the first three teams to cross the finish line would automatically



qualify for the World Series Final in December regardless of where they stood in the overall rankings. Teams who had thought they were out of the running found a new reserve of energy and resolve. They pushed through the fatigue as they ran up hill after hill, biked harsh terrain and answered complex riddles. At the boat dock a bottleneck of teams caused canoes to flip over left and right in downright frigid

waters, yet they pressed on. The finish was a nail biter as teams with a clear path to the finish line found themselves confined in the last 'Brain Cell' watching other teams pass them by and cross the ribbon.

Top ten teams of the 2008 BG US Challenge: Boy Scouts of America, US Air Force, Hewlett-Packard,

*Continued on page 28*

www.thecoastalchallenge.com

# COSTA RICA

As the jungle trail got darker, we found a strange urgency welling up inside us: jungle motivation - that compelling need to get away from areas where you can't see things, but things can see you.

Jen Garretson, TCC competitor 2005



The Coastal  
Challenge  
Rain Forest Run

January 31st - February 6th, 2009

*Continued from page 27*

Grassroot Soccer Reality Stars, Motorola, URS, Volvo Construction Equipment, Infocision, Go Outside and Trendtech Marketing.

These teams qualified to compete in the apex of corporate adventure races: The Intelligent Sport World Series Final, was held on the Eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus Dec 11-14, 2008. During this four-day stage race, these U.S. organizations competed against teams from companies across globe that qualified by competing in other Intelligent Sport World Series events.

This year's US Challenge is over, but for these ten teams the adventure has just begun. For more information on the Intelligent Sport World Series Final, go to: <http://www.challengerworld.com> or to learn more about the 2009 US Challenge go to: <http://www.uschallenge.com>.

---

*\*The US Challenge has been held in Asheville, NC, Roanoke, VA and the Pocono Mountains, PA.*

*\*\*Teams raised more than \$500,000 for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital—the US Challenge's charity beneficiary.*

# 2008 Czech Adventure Race

by Jan Smolík



The 2008 Czech Adventure Race (or CZAR) took place August 26-31 in the Orlicke Mountains located in the northeast region of the Czech Republic. The headquarters for the race were located on the side of Pastviny Lake. It became clear that Pastviny, meaning ‘grassland’, is not exactly the center of civilization. The race was mostly located in the mountains. However, there was almost 3000 feet difference between the lowest and highest points.

The Czech Republic lies in central Europe between Russia and Germany. It has a moderate climate with both mild summers and winters. The country is mostly hilly with very little flat terrain and lacking overly high mountains. The highest peak in the Czech Republic is 5,256 feet. The country is densely populated and one is never more than five kilometers from the nearest village.

The same people keep coming to the CZAR event. Omjakon from Finland arrived for their third year while Camracers from England and Twister from Estonia for their second. Many Czech teams have participated in all five editions of

the CZAR. Everyone is glad to see their old friends, but all of us wish to also see new faces. There were only four entirely new teams this year (including two international teams).

The last to arrive to the race headquarters was the Ukrainian team who arrived just in time for the captain’s briefing. However, there were only three of them that made it into the country. One of their members did not receive a visa for the European Union. Fortunately, nothing is impossible in the world of adventure racing. The race director, Tomas Vanek, called his friend Jan Kotyk whose team had to cancel their participation a few days before the race. Kotyk was ecstatic and as it turned out, he had a Ukrainian grandmother (so the team was truly Ukrainian).

The morning before the start of the race was pleasant and sunny. “It was a typical pre-race atmosphere,” commented Tomas from Ekonom Praha. “I had contracted stomach and a fast pulse.” The racers continued to work on making final team and individual gear decisions. Just a few minutes before ten o’clock,

the organizers managed to get all of the racers into a fenced area so the race could begin.

The starting line was especially tricky for photographers. Most of them gathered at one exit in the fence, which looked like the most probable starting line, but most of the herd fled through another hole. The first stage involved orienteering around the lake. Teams could either run or swim or use any swimming aid they were willing to carry with them. Many teams chose air mattresses as this had proven to be the best choice last year. However, this year’s event had more running and less swimming so it was probably best not to carry anything.

After this quick stage, teams had to take their skates and move towards Zemska Brana. Teams could use their skates on their way there, but it was not easy. The asphalt was not very good, and the second part of the route was a trail in the forest. Most teams decided to skate at least the first part. The Fins proved to be the toughest, refusing to remove their skates even on the narrow trail with many roots. Tomas from Ekonom Praha confirmed seeing the marks

*Photos courtesy of Jiri Struk*

of their wheels in the dirt. A few meters before Zemska Brana, teams had to climb down small cliffs. Two members of the Finish team jumped down with their skates on while the other two stepped down in their socks.

The third skating leg was fast paced. It was about twenty miles in length. The first part was mostly flat with only minor uphill and downhill. However, the second half included a climb to Serlich with 1200 feet of elevation gain.

This stage proved to be a major problem for the Greek team. During the opening ceremony, they declared that this was going to be a first race ever for a Greek team. As beginners to adventure racing, the team did not even have all of the equipment and had to borrow some from the race organizers (including a pair of skates). The CP marshals at the end of the skating stage began to get concerned when there were no signs of the Greek team two hours after the last team completed the skating leg. The marshals stopped and asked passing cars, but no one has seen any skaters on the road with the exception of one driver who remembered seeing some people walking wearing yellow jerseys.

The marshals took a car and indeed found the Greek team walking. After five miles of futile attempts at skating, the team had decided to walk instead. This along with previous and following stages, made their walking leg to measure more than 60 miles. This was more than other teams had to walk during the entire race. Their heroic effort ended in the morning of the following day, when they were still walking about 8 hours behind the last team.



The team withdrew, but after getting some sleep, they visited some parts of the course on their bikes and tried some of the special tasks. They will definitely be more than ready for their next race!

The next thirty miles was a trekking leg, which was broken up by a ropes section. With 50 obstacles that were twenty feet high and two-300 foot long rope bridges, it took

52 minutes for the fastest team (Euroteam) to complete. The slowest team spent exactly two hours above the ground.

The location of the next checkpoint was interesting in that it was on the roof of a bunker from the Second World War. It was part of military fortification that was built around most of Czechoslovak border. However, it was never used; and

this was given to Germany as a part of the Munich treaty in 1938. It was not be the last time the teams visited such a bunker during the race.

The first team to return from the trekking stage to TA A (race HQ) was Omjakon, closely followed by Sportovky.cz. While Omjakon set out again quickly from the TA, Sportovky.cz opted for a dinner in a nearby pub. Sometimes, good food and some rest can do more good than a quick transition.

The next stage was comprised of 60 miles of biking and it was already dark when the first teams set out. The first checkpoint was another military fortress. This time, teams had to go inside and they had a half-mile underground orienteering section. In utter darkness, the kind you only get inside caves, teams had to locate several checkpoints. It was a bit scary to walk through the cold concrete corridors slightly dented by the time. From this CP, teams headed to TA B.

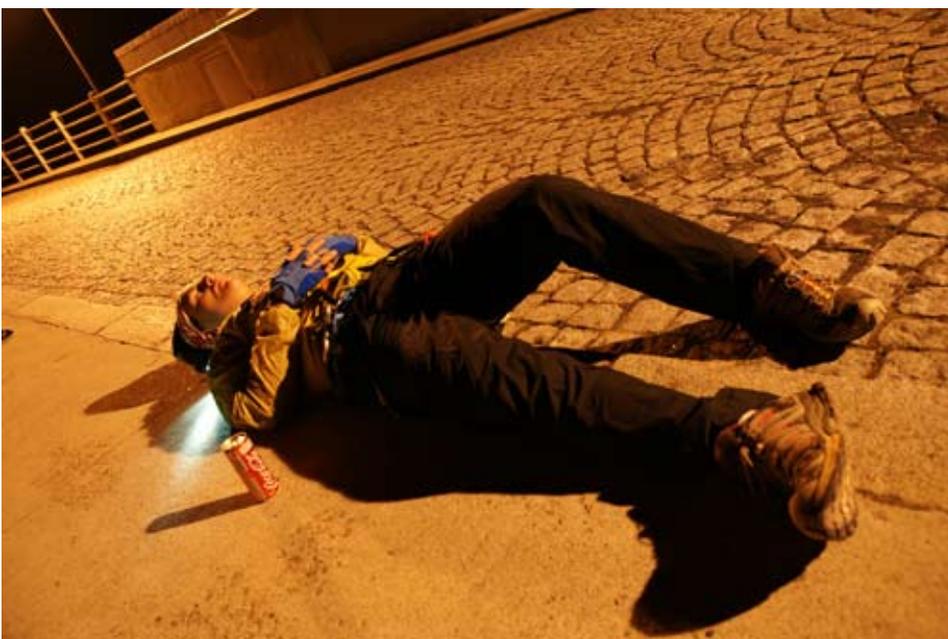
Seven out of the original nineteen teams did not survive first night. Five completely withdrew and the



other two continued unranked. Sportovky.cz made a navigational mistake during the night and were overtaken by Czech teams Tilak and Internet Billboard.

The sixth section of the race had the racers skating again. This time it was a flat, asphalt biking track (something rarely seen in the Czech Republic). “Those 25 miles were sort of a reward for us,” commented Eva from Team XStream. “I very much enjoyed it.”

After the skating leg, teams set out for section seven, another 30 miles on foot. This section was nicknamed the ‘castle trek’ as teams visited three medieval castles on the go. The whole race was a huge trip through history. At the first castle (or more precisely ruins of it), there was another special task called castle cross. Teams had to walk on the castle walls and climb to the trees where there were some more rope-ways. Racers got to know this castle better than they could have ever imagined.



Another surprising part of the castle trek was that four checkpoints were not marked on the standard map but on a special orienteering map. Navigators had to quickly switch to a completely different scale and then back again. During this part of the race, Omjakon was still in the lead with Tilak and Internet Billboard fighting for second place. Both teams seemed quite happy with this and neither of them tried to catch up with the Finish team.

After returning from the castle trek, teams set out on their mountain



bikes. This time, it was a mere 45 miles, but the navigation was very challenging. The map was not very precise in details and finding the right track leading to the top of the hill proved to be difficult. Some teams had to push their bikes through the dense forest as they had difficulties finding the route.

After returning to TA A, all of the remaining teams felt a sudden re-

lief that the race was almost over. Eight miles of paddling is not such a difficult thing. "My enjoyment after the end of biking leg was almost bigger than after we actually finished," commented Eva from Team XStream. The only remaining special task was an abseiling of the 120-foot high dam on the lake. This was at the start of the canoeing section and it took most teams almost an hour to accomplish it.

Omjakon finished first with a secure lead over the next two teams. An altimeter in one of their watches showed that they had altogether climbed over 27,000 feet. Internet Billboard and Tilak were still in close proximity to one another heading towards the canoeing section. However, Internet Billboard left the abseil section first and Tilak would have to settle for third place.

There was no real fight for fourth, fifth or sixth place. Team XStream crossed the finish line in fourth place (seven hours after the third place team) followed by Team Ekonom Praha in fifth and Team Euroteam in sixth. The only real finish was between a Ukrainian team and Team Hradec Kralove. But, the Ukrainians proved to be excellent on the ropes setting a course record of only 24 minutes (as opposed to one hour for most other teams). The last ranked team to finish was Team Rekre arriving more than 30 hours behind the winners. They tend to take the race as a recreational venture. It was the fifth time they have participated in the CZAR and the first time they finished the full course. Only nine out of nineteen teams that started the race finished the full race while three others finished unranked.

## Pua Sawicki

**Location:** Mililani, HI (This is home and where I was born and raised, but we also live on the road during the season in a 40' Fifth Wheel traveling from race to race).

**Sports:** Mountain Biking

**Age:** 28

**Occupation:** Professional Cyclist/Entrepreneur

**Athletic Background:** Since I was a little girl I was always an athlete. I played soccer, softball and volleyball and after graduating high school I received a cross-country running scholarship at Chaminade University of Honolulu. It was during those college years that I was introduced to triathlon and after one race with a borrowed purple bike and pink helmet, my parents bought me my own bike, I was hooked and never put the bike down since. I continued running, competing in triathlon and road racing until I graduated from college in 2002 and decided to pick up and move to California. It was there that I met my husband, Ron, and got completely taken with mountain biking. And the rest is history.

**Athletic Goals:** A World Cup Gold medal and to race in the 2012 Olympics.

**Athletic Highlights:** 4 Time National Mountain Bike Champion, 2007 Everest Award Female Mountain Biker of the Year.

**Favorite Workout:** That would have to be either a really long day on the road bike in Colorado riding over the different passes, Mt. Evans or a really long day on the dirt in Park City, Utah riding all the single track and climbs that I want.

**What Inspires or Motivates You?** In life, challenge motivates me. I love taking on anything that seems impossible or things that people say I cannot do.

**Favorite Fuel:** This one is easy, that would be InFinit Nutrition. They are a fairly new company and it is completely customized.

**Favorite Indulgence:** Definitely dark chocolate!

**Typical Workout:** A typical workout would be putting on my Suunto Heart Rate strap with my Suunto T6 and spending 3-5 hours out on the trails while targeting a heart rate that my coach calls for.



# where are they now?



## Terri Schneider

**AWM:** What was your proudest achievement during your racing career?

I don't necessarily reference being "proud" of what I've accomplished, more so, I tend to consider what I learned, how reflective I am of an event or moment, or what is offered me or others in my life from my racing. That said there are far too many moments to list! I will note that any event that stretches me physically, intellectually and emotionally beyond where I was prior is an event that will tend to stick in the forefront of my thoughts. In the last few years I'd say that would include Racing the Planet, Sahara Desert and Western States 100. I resonate with a continual reinvention of self through sport. If I can keep tapping into that – even though it changes up as I get older - I'll remain quite satisfied.

**AWM:** What are you doing now that you are retired from competitive racing?

I never retired! (not sure what that means exactly) Just wandered off the beaten path a bit. The last several years I've done quite a bit of ultrarunning - mostly 100 milers, 7 day running stage races in Egypt, China and Costa Rica and some fun running adventures (my favorite spot – Yosemite). I've also climbed peaks in several different cool places including Russia, Mexico, Tanzania, Argentina, and Alaska. I finished my masters degree in Sport Psychology (my masters thesis is on Risk Taking in Adventure Racing – you can find a published copy of it on my website). I wrote a couple books (one is coming out in November) and continue to develop my business doing endurance sports coaching, motivational speaking and writing. This year I did some climbing in Ecuador, explored the Amazon jungle a bit and participated in an exciting adventure to Antarctica.

**AWM:** When did you compete in your first AR?

1995 Eco Challenge in Utah. THE first adventure race in North America. It was epic and I went on to do all of the Eco Challenge events except one. At that point in my life I was racing triathlon professionally and doing quite well (mostly Ironman events). But I knew as I dragged my sorry ass to the finish line in Utah that I would come back again and again. I was hooked and it was impossible to ignore. Nothing in my life to that point had been that deeply challenging on so many levels. I knew I had so much to learn and I liked that feeling of being a "beginner" again. Before we even finished the race (one of few teams who did) I knew I'd be back. I didn't want it to end and had 'reentry' problems when I came home.

**AWM:** Excluding yourself...name your all-time dream team for expedition AR (1 girl/3 guys).

It would be tough for me to exclude from this list any of the amazing people I've gotten to know over the years of racing – they all have significant valor to add to any team. In many ways "back in the day" expedition racing was a big crazy family who'd get together a couple times a year for a big crazy party.

But! - if you're looking for a team that would do ANYTHING to "win" and definitely wouldn't mind gettin REAL down and dirty – I'd say George Bush, Karl Rove, Dick Cheney and Sarah Palin. Palin would of course wear her lipstick the whole race... (very old AR joke dating pack to BC Eco).

*Continued from page 17*

tough situation a race would throw our way. He was so smart and could think very fast on his feet. I once watched him turn a broken bike into a single speed in minutes. At the Primal Quest Race this year, our support crew dropped shoes at an unsupported transition area. The guys on our team all wore the same shoes and our support crew accidentally grabbed one size 13 shoe and a one size ten shoe for Dave. He didn't think twice before taking out his knife and cutting the end off the size ten shoe. He hiked for 20+ hours with one open-toed shoe and I didn't hear him complain once.

**Leslie Reuter**

During a paddle, only two hours into the race, something very un-

usual happened. Dave kept everyone calm as he came to my aid. I was paddling in the front of the canoe; Leslie sat behind me followed by Shaun and Dave. Everyone was focused and paddled away as we approached a creek. I noticed a trot line caught in the trees but did not pay much attention to the line. Before I knew it we made a left turn and the hook from the trot line caught my left thigh. Everyone in the boat was unaware that I had a hook caught in my leg so they kept paddling. I started cursing like a sailor and frantically yelled, "Stop, stop, stop"! Leslie realized what had happened and told both Shaun and Dave. Dave, as calm as ever, walked over Shaun & Leslie and removed the hook from my leg. Dave reassured me everything was going to be okay which gave me a sense of relief. We went on to win

the race. **Carlos Ibarra**

We were racing in the Terra Firma in 1998 in Smithville, Texas. We had started a hike and bike section up Fat Chucks (a very steep hill) in the dark when some yahoo passed us half way to the top. One, we were in second place with few teams still in contention for the race and two, this guy was riding his Cannondale with a Lefty fork and a girl, Jennifer Berry, riding on his handlebars. I looked at Bob, and he looked back at me as if to say, "give me a break." We watched in amazement as Dave Boyd pumped Jen all the way to the top of the climb on his handlebars. Dave was a monster on any course, and that night, we were just left as ghosts in the dark. Long Live Dave! **Wooch Graff**



# Adventure World magazine



**Bringing the  
Adventure  
To You...  
Every Month!**

[www.adventureworldmagazine.com](http://www.adventureworldmagazine.com)

"THE PERFECTLY BALANCED COMBINATION OF TWO OPPOSING CONCEPTS - CUSHIONING AND AGILITY - IS THE MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEM TO SOLVE IN TRAIL RUNNING SHOE DESIGN. THIS IS OUR MOST BALANCED ACHIEVEMENT THUS FAR."

- CHRISTOPHE AUBONNET  
PRODUCT MANAGER - SALOMON TRAIL RUNNING FOOTWEAR.

[SALOMONRUNNING.COM](http://SALOMONRUNNING.COM)



XT WINGS

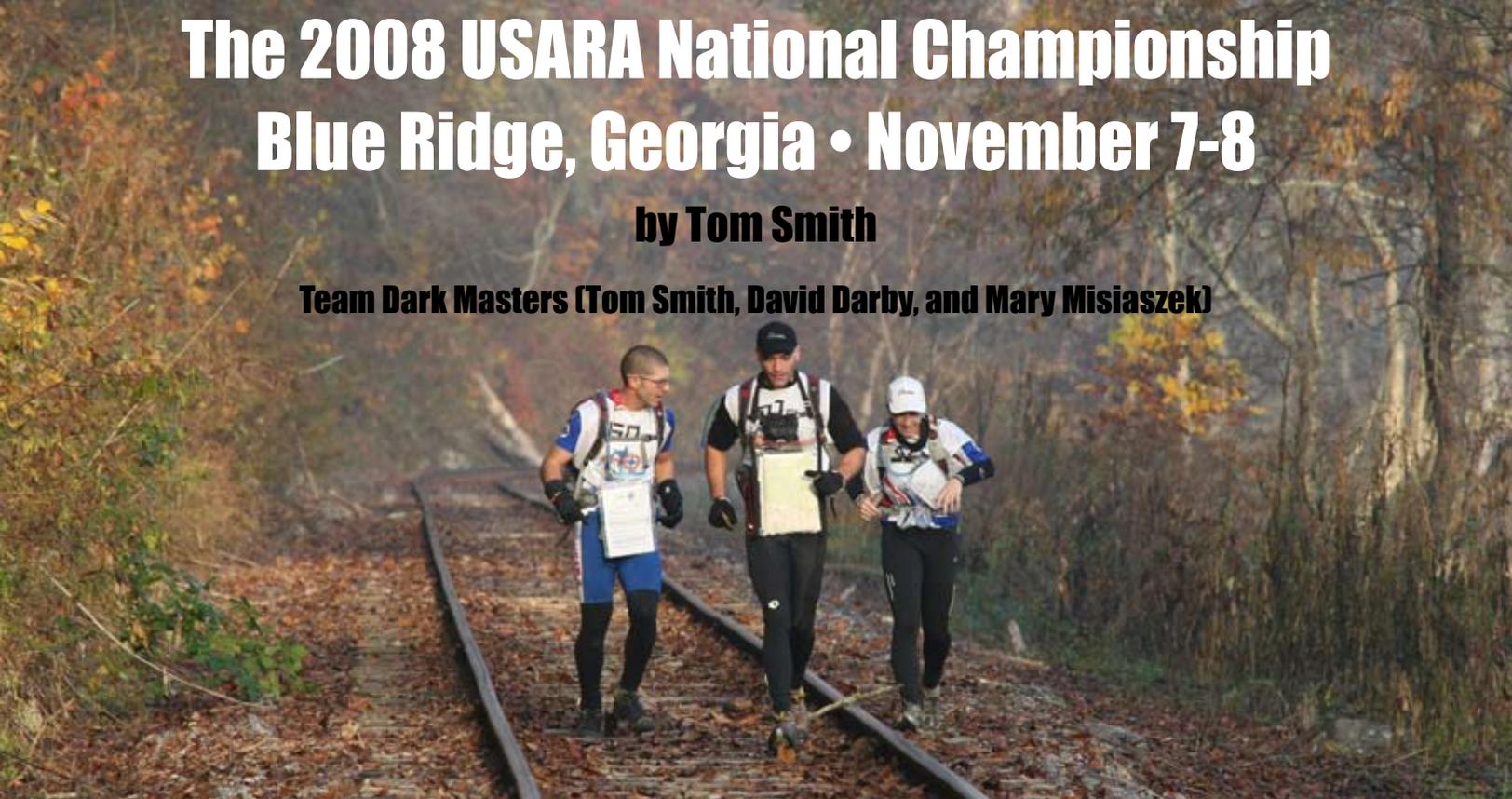


**SALOMON** 

# The 2008 USARA National Championship Blue Ridge, Georgia • November 7-8

by Tom Smith

Team Dark Masters (Tom Smith, David Darby, and Mary Misiaszek)



## 5:45 a.m.

I was wrong.

When we were told to be on the town green over an hour before sunrise I thought we were in for another nasty yellow bus ride to the start of an adventure race. Instead we loaded up on a comfortable, warm and cushy train! We rolled down the tracks in style for 30 minutes; napping and getting ready to kick off what would prove to be a long and eventful 30 hours.

82 teams lined up on a dirt road along the Ocoee River for the start of the 2008 USARA National Championship. We would be doing a 2-3 mile orienteering prologue, three lettered points, to separate the teams a bit before starting a 25K paddle. I knew we would start this 30-hour race at 100-yard dash pace. I was just getting myself psyched up for this when I noticed all the surrounding teams were holding punch cards. I had the prologue card but not the main race card. David had the maps but hadn't

seen the punch card in the envelope. Panic time. We sweet-talked a race official into giving us a new one. I later learned another team had missed the train looking for theirs and had to run to the start!

## 7:00 a.m.

### 00:00 elapsed time

When the gun went off Team Dark Horse and our buddies on Team Wicked Pissah took off like the entire thing was going to be decided in a sprint to Check Point-C. I was dropped like an ugly date at the prom.

We were moving at 5K pace over rough terrain, when we hit CP-C. Gasping for oxygen I handed the punch card to Mary. She ran in to punch it but was swamped by a crowd of guys who just ran her over. I ran in, grabbed the card and the punch and we got out of there. I took a broadside of invective from other teams but didn't look back. Ladies first... no?

There was a mess of new roads and torn up terrain for a new golf course so we took a few minutes to locate CP-B, then found A and crossed the river to the start of the paddle. It was cold, slippery, 40 yards wide and about knee deep.

## 7:35 a.m.

### 00:35

We were in the top 20 and we punched out of CP-1 quickly and paddled out of there down the Ocoee River. Placement wasn't terribly important at this point in the race but it's always better to be in the front with this many teams. Traffic jams, like at CP-C, can really slow you down.

Georgia has been experiencing a severe drought for a few years and it really showed. There wasn't much water to float the canoe. We banged and crashed our way down river, leaving a lot of canoe on the river bottom. With the number of teams on the river and the conditions so poor we invariably whacked a few of our fellow racers along the way.

Photos by Scott Fredrickson



Actually, there were so many boats simply stuck in the few passable locations that we began employing a “bump and run” navigation style. Glance off the grounded canoes and hope for deeper water on either side. I think this endeared us to our fellow racers.

We settled into a good rhythm suited for a 4-hour paddle. I was up front providing the engine with the double bladed paddle and David was reading the river and manning the stern with the single blade. Mary made a seat out of the packs and alternately paddled and handed out Clif Blocks. We portaged a dam and made one pit stop to empty water from the boat (speed doubled). There was a lot of jumping from the boat to drag it through the shallow spots. This created a nice routine: paddle, hit something, jump from the boat, drag it, jump back in, shiver until you dry... repeat.

**11:30 a.m.**

**04:30**

We hit the end of the paddle unexpectedly. It certainly didn't match the maps but there was a Golite flag and everyone was getting out. We

quickly unloaded the canoe and David threw the boat on his head and took off up a steep single track. I put both our packs on and Mary grabbed the paddles. It took us a while to catch David, who was running uphill with the canoe solo. It was embarrassing enough to get dropped on the prologue. I was determined not to be outrun by a guy carrying a canoe on his head.

After a 3/4-mile run we dropped the canoe at CP-2, punched the card and inserted our electronic “dipper” into the...uhhh...not quite. It was gone. Essentially the race had two passports. One was a standard punch card that we need to punch at each CP. The other was an electronic “dipper” that had to be inserted into a box that recorded the time you passed through. I had been wearing the dipper on my wrist per the instructions but it had self jettisoned somewhere along the way. We quickly decided it was not worth going back for. We had no idea where it had been lost. We still had the punch card and each CP had a manual punch. We would take the penalty and race on.

We ran out of CP-2 headed for the

bikes. There was no clear path to the bike drop so we improvised using a series of dirt roads and trails that did not connect. We crossed a couple of roads and bushwhacked downhill to the river trail and ran along the river. Somewhere in there I blew out my right ankle. Full crunch, ankle bone to the ground, ripping blow out. Nice. I popped two Aleve to keep the swelling and pain at manageable levels and we ran on.

We continued on at a slightly reduced pace, crossed the river and arrived at the power station (CP-3) where we dropped the bikes the day before. Team Wicked Pissah was already there and a picnic ensued. We had two flavors of Ensure as well as Chef Boyardee, shot blocks, Slim Jims and Power Bars. Mmmm... good!

**12:30 p.m.**

**05:30**

We jumped the bikes as a 6 pack, popped some wheelies and headed out of town, tires squealing, gravel flying everywhere... well, that's what it would look like in the movie anyway. Actually we all started out in the wrong gear on the steep driveway exit and a genuine clown circus occurred as we all tried to emergency downshift. There was a lot of wobbling and expletives and gear mashing. Not pretty.

I knew this was going to get ugly quickly but it was much worse than I thought. We headed uphill and onto some single track at sprint pace. I was into Zone 6 almost instantly. My heart was pounding, legs were burning and I was just barely hanging on the back end. I thought I was going to fire a lung onto the trail any second.

**1:30 p.m.**

**06:30**

We carried on at this pace right through CP-4 and headed for CP-5. It had been raining and the trails were muddy and slick. I was just thinking about how I was going to keep this pace up for 24 more hours, and maybe puking a bit when I heard a sound like a gunshot up front. What a relief! Hopefully a teammate had received a non-fatal wound that would slow the pace a bit.

It was an incredible “BANG!” and our gang threw on the brakes to get a look at the damage. David’s rear tire has exploded. It’s design load had been exceeded: David, a wet pack, 2 cans of Chef Boyardee, a 6 pack of Ensure and a Hunts pudding cup 4 pack broke this brave soldier.

I have never seen or heard anything like it. NORAD went to Defcon 3 and Homeland Security raised the country to Threat Level Orange. Every bear, cougar and squirrel in the National Forest had crapped itself and gone into hiding. The tube was a shredded mass of rubber and 8 inches of the sidewall and bead had blown off the tire. This was bad. We tell Mike M, Mike K and Tamela to keep going. They think we are probably all done with this race. Oddly enough Team Dark Horse is not really that worried.

We’ve been lost in South American jungles, bitten by bullet ants, frozen in Africa, chased by dingos and baked in the Australian outback. Between the three of us we have over 2000 kilometers under our belts...just this year. We’re not done. Not even close.

**3:00 p.m.**

**08:00**

We start pushing the bikes. We need to move forward until a solution

presents itself. We ask each team that goes by if they have a tire. No one does. We get a lot of advice on how to fix a torn sidewall. “Use a dollar”, “use a tire boot”, “use a Gu pack”. Nice ideas but not going to fix this problem. Some teams hint that a blown tire is unusual and probably a personal failure on our part. Our self-esteem is flagging, doubt creeps in. Maybe a blown tire is a sign of moral turpitude ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral\\_turpitude](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral_turpitude)). We try cutting up the blown tube to create a

tape the tire around the rim. We inflate gingerly. It holds!

David suggests we put this wheel on Mary’s bike since she’s half his weight (maybe even a third). This idea is rejected without further discussion. Miss Mary has a sense of pride that will not abide riding the exploded duct tape wheel. When her bike was stolen in Africa she rode a rusty Huffy for 6 days. She has never fully recovered from the indignity.



bigger patch. Doesn’t work. Without a bead the tire won’t stay on the rim when you inflate the new tube. We keep pushing.

Eventually I remember Team Bones used a water bottle to fix a badly blown tire in Costa Rica two years ago (thanks again Roy!). David thinks he has a design that may work. He pulls out a Poland Springs water bottle and I give him a knife. He cuts off the top and bottom, smoothes the edges, slices it down the side and wraps it around the tube. We duct tape it together. We put the tube in and remount the tire. Then we duct

We are on our way again... briefly. The tire squashes sideways and rubs the frame. It isn’t going to hold long. We push some more, considerably easier with an inflated tire. We are still brainstorming when David has another stroke of genius. We will rebuild it all on his front wheel. This will take weight off the blown tire. We stand on the roadside begging for more duct tape from the other teams. Nobody carries more than 18” of the stuff. Tom from Team Werewolves has wrapped his on a Sears’s credit card. He leaves us the whole thing. As an added bonus Team Dark Horse now has all new Kenmore applianc-

es! Thanks Tom!

**4:30 p.m.**

**09:30**

The front wheel trick works. David rides it like a unicycle and we are on our way again... for about 5 minutes. Then the left crank arm falls off David's bike. He rides it one legged. We start asking teams for a #8 Allen wrench (we don't have one that big). We get the crank arm back on... it comes loose again. We kill David and bury him and his p.o.s. bike in a shallow grave by the river... OK not really.

By this point we have another problem. The trail is running between a cliff face on the right and a river on the left, David needs to evacuate some processed Chef Boyardee soon or he is going to explode. There is nowhere to go, we are surrounded by the race pack at this point. He gives up and just finds a sapling to hide behind. He looks like a bear hiding behind a flagpole. I am too polite to say anything.

I push both bikes up the trail and manage to flag down a racer with a #8 Allen wrench. Mary points out that won't help anymore because the crank arm is gone. I run back down the trail and find the crank. David is just coming up; he looks really pleased. He doesn't even ask what I'm doing. We mount up and wobble on.

A few miles later we find what I have been waiting for. There is a team on the side of the road and one of them is in a foil space blanket. Nothing say's "all done" like a big foil blanket. The girl is dry heaving and Dan Barr is calling for evac. This requires some diplomatic skill.



"You guys all OK, need anything?"

They have plenty of food and everyone is generally good. They will need help soon since they are no longer moving. Dan is pretty sure race HQ got his call.

"Dropping out, huh?"

This is a prelude to the question I would really like to ask.

"That's too bad... can we have your tire?"

You never want to see a team in this situation but attrition is a fact of adventure racing. I've been there. They gave us the tire without hesitation. That's what makes AR great: everyone competes, yet people will give you the tire off their bike if they can help you move on. So here's my shout out to Team MDJ. Thanks for the tire...you guys rock.

**5:30 p.m.**

**10:30**

We were back in the race. More or less in last place, but curiously well rested. We knocked out CP- 5 quickly and took a moment to strategize.

The race was Rogaine format. There were 30 checkpoints and we had 30 hours to get to the finish line. None of the remaining points were mandatory. We knew we could not get all 25 points in the 20 hours we had left. The sooner you identify the hard points the more likely you were to get more points. We decided to bypass CP's 6 & 7. It was unclear how to get them and they were definitely uphill. We headed for CP-8, the start of the foot orienteering section.

- [The Physics of Mud](#)

- It is commonly known that Newton discovered gravity with the help of an apple. Only slightly less known is that a mountain biker discovered centrifugal force. Mud likes to adhere to knobby tires and builds up at low speed on the ascent. It is held in place by the "sticky force". As the bike accelerates on the descent the bond between mud and tire is overcome by centrifugal force. The mud is thrown clear where it is attracted by "ocular magnetism". The trajectory of mud can be expressed as a straight line drawn from the wheel to your eye.

**7:00 p.m.**

## 12:00

We arrive at CP-8 and talk to the race staff. It is now full dark and the scene is surreal. Many team have dropped bikes here and headed out on the orienteering section. Both sides of the trail are littered with bikes with blinking red taillights in every conceivable pattern. It is cold, dark and raining periodically. We switch shoes to hit CP's 9-12. David discovers that only a few teams have come back from this section. Hmm. We reverse the shoe switch. It is not worth the time to hit 9,10,11 since we can hit 8 and 13 from right where we are standing and get 12 off the road we ride out on. We check with Ron, the RD (who happens to be there), to see if this is legal. He agrees that it is and we saddle up and go.

David picks the right place in the road for us to drop the bikes and we bushwhack up a ridgeline for 20 minutes and get CP-12 and come back down. The only thing that would have improved this crafty bit of racing would have been bringing the punch card with us. We discover that early enough to avoid a complete double round trip. Somewhere in this trek I

hear from my right hamstring. It is unhappy and humming like a guitar string. I drop some electrolytes on it and that seems to calm things down. We are down 5 CP's but we are now in the front of the race again. Ultimately we would like to have cleared the course but given our time in tire limbo this seems like the best strategy to maximize the remaining race.

### • The Terrain

• We are in North Georgia hill country and the terrain is brutal. It is classic adventure racing terrain, meant to crush anyone who hasn't shown up prepared. It is doing a fine job so far. There is no flat. You are either going up or you are going down. Steeply in both directions. This means long, painful climbs on the bike up forest roads and trails – one after another. You rapidly overheat on the climbs and instantly freeze on the down hills. Want to know why teams drop out of these events as the night grows colder? Try this: head over to the YMCA. Stand in the sauna for 30 minutes, then run through the showers and out into the parking lot for 10 minutes. Do this in December, preferably at 3:00 a.m. Let me know how many cycles you last for. I bet

it's not 30 hours.

We ride for CP-14 through Watson's Gap and pass by Patrick Harper and John Hartley enjoying a campfire next to Tonto, the coolest sports van on the road (there's a whole bull skull, horns and all, mounted to the front!). They offer us a beer, which is tempting but would probably result in a great night and a DNF.

## 11:00 p.m.

### 16:00

When we arrive at CP-14/18, another bike drop to a Foot-O, a group of volunteers has a nice fire going and we take a moment to warm ourselves up. It has been raining off and on and we are soaked again. The temperature is in the high 30's and it doesn't take long before we start shaking even with the fire. We need to get moving.

CP's 15,16,17 are another Foot-O section arranged in a big triangle. We skip CP-16, it's the farthest out and probably a bushwhack. We hit CP-15 along a stream at a little waterfall and then start a long climb to CP-17. I chose to leave my bike shoes on because they have a high wrap cuff and stiff soles. I am hoping this will stabilize my mushy, throbbing ankle. We see Team EMS coming down and high five Jen Shultis, hopefully headed for the lead. This trek begins to turn into a stumble and devolves from there into a wander. David locates the CP easily (up a side trail, hidden in a bush) but we are coming unglued. Mary seems oddly perky.

“What's cookin' Mary?”

“I've taken 3 Foosh (caffeine+mints) and 4 Excedrin (caffeine+painkillers) in the last 5 hours.”

Wow. Mary has taken enough uppers





to keep Seabiscuit in the race. At a 115 pounds Mary's blood caffeine content is close to 50/50. She could be dead and we wouldn't know it for days. David wanders off the trail into a bush while I marvel at Mary's drug tolerance.

"Hey girl, how 'bout hooking us up?"

Mary pulls out her Foosh stash and David and I both pop one. David almost immediately spits his back out.

"Oh my God, this thing tastes horrible! How do you get this down?"

He puts it back in. He spits it out. This goes on for quite a while. Frankly I find it disgusting but I am already feeling the warm glow of the caffeine high kicking in. For the first time in hours I can feel my fingers and I have the mental acuity to focus on something besides placing one foot in front of the other. Disgust turns to amusement. We have been rooting around in the mud for 20 hours. I can only imagine what microbes are going in with each Foosh exchange.

He eventually gets the mint down and

10 minutes later is demanding a giant Sudoku puzzle to test his alertness. He swears he would kill it. It's clear the mint is working. Any remaining doubt is shed when the staff at CP-14/18 asks us how we are doing and David screams at them "We're doing GREAT!" Chemistry works.

As we are packing up, we see Team Wicked Pissah. They are having a great race but the weather and mud are getting to them. They look strong and we tell them to keep moving. That fire can really suck you in. Teams are dropping out at a pretty good clip as the night gets colder, fatigue sets in and food runs out.

Suffering is relative. We're a Masters Team. Between us we have 4 marriages, 4 children, a half dozen careers and 134 years. Nobody on Team Dark Horse thinks we are suffering. We're not broke, posting bail, or being served with papers. On the other hand, to paraphrase Cormac McCarthy, if this isn't suffering it will do until the suffering gets here.

**1:00 a.m.**

**18:00**

We punch out of CP-18 and start a

long climb to CP-19. There have been a lot of long climbs but this one goes on forever. We hit the top and drop the bikes to run up the trail on the ridge and get the CP. We move on to CP-20, which briefly throws us off. We come out in a field with no obvious exit. Mary remembers the RD talking about a trail that won't look like a trail, just downed trees and dirt piles. This is it and David confirms that it continues further downhill. We cannot ride it. We push and stumble down this steep, unused and clearly unloved old trail to CP-20.

We push through to CP-23, skipping 21 and 22. Again, the way in and out of these two points is not entirely clear. We can hit these from CP-24 if we want to but for now we want to make sure we are on schedule. The penalty for going over the 30 hours is 1 CP per minute. This turned out to be more than just a theoretical possibility but actually happened to Team Werewolves. They were 21 minutes late (the exact amount of time they lost giving us duct tape) and finished with 1 CP. Sorry Tom! (But thanks again for the new washer/dryer).

**4:00 a.m.**

**21:00**

When we arrive at CP-24 there is a large group of volunteers sitting around a roaring fire. They are in party mode and we join in. We are only the third team to arrive at this point and that convinces us to re-evaluate our plan for CP's 21 and 22. David does a quick calculation and figures that we have roughly 4 hours to spare. If we hustle out of CP-24 we should be able to grab 21 and 22 and be back in 3 hours.

It's a long drop into the valley and while we are searching for CP-21 we hook up with Scott, Melissa and Pete

from Team ATP. This turns almost immediately into a bike race, albeit a fun and cooperative bike race. Melissa spots CP-21 along a creek off the trail (a great spot, it was tough for many teams). We all bolt out of there on the bikes and head for CP-22. While this trail is fairly overgrown everyone stays seated and we are soon bushwhacking up a re-entrant onto a road and out to pick up CP-22. The pace went instantly to “time trial” as we all come about and head back to CP-24.

While I did spend most of the time through this section hanging on the back and hypoxic the thought had occurred to me that we had come downhill quite a bit on the way to 21 and 22. Since 24 was in a high gap that could only mean somewhere up ahead was a big hill. This proved to be painfully true as our 6-pack strung out on an 800’ climb that switched back and forth steeply for 2 miles up the gap. I wisely sought to save my waning strength for the push to the finish line and was spit out the back instantly. It is even possible that in the dark moments of my solo climb to the gap I might have...um...walked a bit.

Back at CP-24 the fire was still going and the sun was just coming up. We had knocked off the CP 21 and 22 loop in 2 1/2 hours. As always the light of day brings a renewed spirit and we didn’t get sucked into the fire. I purposely stayed 20 feet away. Cold and miserable was how I was and it was how I was going to stay for 5 more hours.

• **The Weather**

• The day had started sunny and cold but that ended early. As the canoe section wore on it clouded over and by the time we hit the bikes it was al-



2008 Champions - DART-nuun

ready raining. It stayed overcast and raining off and on for the remainder of the day into the night. There is no way to stay dry. A Gore-Tex layer can help but you will soak it through from the inside eventually. The temperatures began dropping at night but the sky also began to clear. You cannot really dress for the conditions, you would need a closet full of clothes. Ultimately you dress to move. If you cannot move for some reason hypo-

thermia is riding right behind you. Being continuously wet while riding a bike for the better part of 25 hours brings on a host of issues. The word “chafing” cannot really encompass the universe of what occurs.

**6:30 a.m.**

**23:30**

David had been solidly dead on for

*Continued on page 49*

Continued from page 15



Photos courtesy of Will Ramos

did was the Odyssey One Day in June of 1999. I did it as a soloist and didn't have a clue what I was getting into. I was running around like a chicken with his head cut off still in my street clothes when the race started. I knew what ever I did I was going to finish. There were 72 teams and only 10 of us finished. I came in 9th overall and 3rd in the soloist division. That race changed my life and got me hooked on the greatest sport in the world.

**AWM:** If you could participate in one of your adventure races, which one would you choose and why?

It would have to be this year's Endorphin Fix. We added an extra day making it a three-day race. This will have the expedition length feel to it that I love. The race is going to have whitewater rafting, whitewater swim, flat and moving water canoeing, rappelling and ascending, long treks, epic mountain bike

rides and a challenging orienteering course. Who wouldn't want to do this adventure race! I get fired up thinking about! I need to go out and train! Good thing I only have one question left.

**AWM:** What about another race in North America? The world? And why?

The Primal Quest would be a race in North America I would be interested in. I did Tahoe and Utah and really enjoyed the sufferfest, I mean experience. I'm sure it will be a great race with Don Mann and the present and former Odyssey Staff organizing it. Don knows pain and how to inflict it in numerous ways. There are a few races around the world that spark my interest. One of the reasons that adventure racing appealed to me was being able to race in beautiful parts of the world that other people don't normally get to see. The Patagonia Expedition would be on the top of the list, with the XPD in Australia being second. A couple of our instructors at our Adventure Racing Academy did that race this year and said it was a really challenging event.

---

*For more information about Odyssey Adventure Racing visit [www.OARevents.com](http://www.OARevents.com) or contact them at [info@OARevents.com](mailto:info@OARevents.com) • 540-444-4422*

**ARGEAR.com**

Go Lighter, Faster, Stronger!



**WORLD'S BEST  
ADVENTURE  
GEAR!™**

ARGEAR.com carries the best and largest selection of adventure specific gear in the world.

**SAVE \$\$\$**

**AWM readers Save 10%  
at ARGear through  
February & March 2008.  
Use coupon code 203080  
\*Excludes kayaks & trainers.**



ARGEAR and ARGEAR.com  
are trademarks  
of Apex Adventure Sports Lc.

## Adventure Racing Navigation

### Part 5: Taking a Bearing from a Map

by Mark Manning

Welcome to the fifth in the monthly series of navigation articles from AR Navigation Supplies, Inc.

This month we are going to discuss taking a bearing from points on a map and following that bearing in the field. These are two very simple procedures in theory but sometimes more complicated in practice. In last month's article we discussed the various components of the racing compass and some of the features and benefits including the declination adjustment, direction of travel arrow and the azimuth ring. Now it's time to start using these features.

We are going to start the discussion by taking a bearing from the map between two very distinct objects. I'm going to choose two mountain peaks as they are easy to spot but this exercise could easily be any two features including trail intersections and buildings.

The following picture shows the two features that we are interested in, the top of Montara Knob and the top of North Peak (Fig. 1).

The very first step for taking a bearing from the map is to ensure that your map is correctly aligned with North using a compass that has the declination set for the region.

For more information on Magnetic Declination see the April 2008 edition of AWM. In this case our magnetic declination is 15 degrees East and if you look closely you'll see this setting on the compass we're using. One very important point to note when working with a map and compass is to ensure that there are no metal or magnetic objects nearby. This includes bolts in park picnic tables, and the engine under the hood of your car. Any metal object could interfere with the magnetic needle of the compass so

have a good look around and under where you have placed the map as working on the hood of a car at the start of a race will probably cause you to get a little off track. To align the map, follow the steps below:

1. Set Azimuth ring on the compass to align the North marking with the direction of travel arrow.
2. Set the edge of the compass along the North-South edge of the map or a grid line if you have set your declination to the grid.
3. Hold the compass in place and turn the map so as the Red North end of the Magnetic Needle is perfectly aligned with the Orienteering arrow on the bottom of the vial. Fig 2.

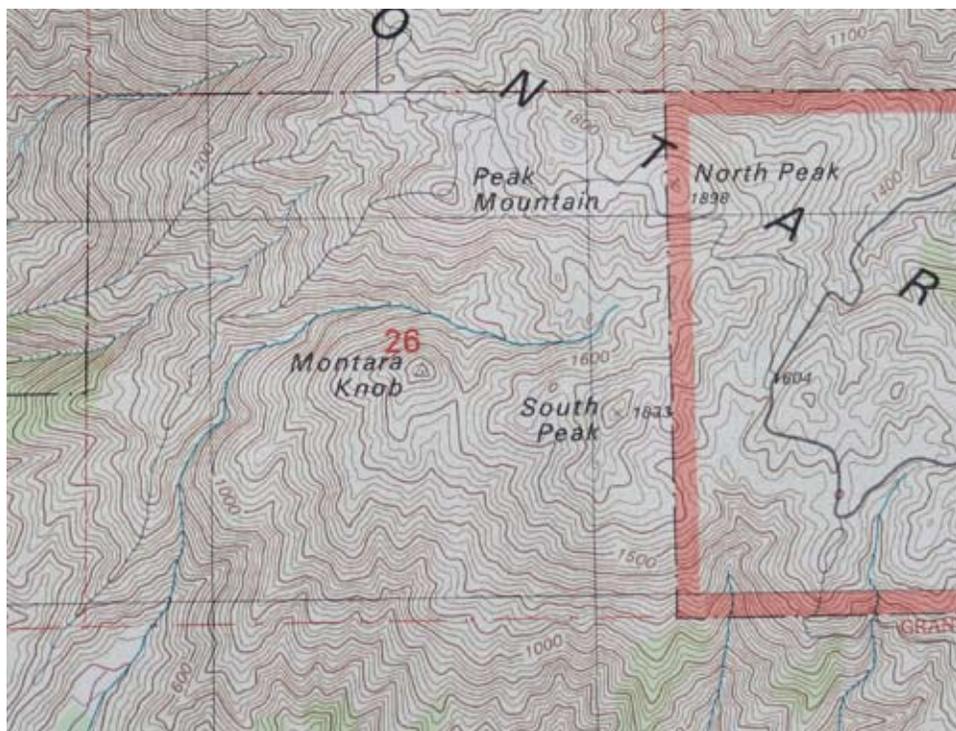
This has now aligned the map perfectly with North allowing you to easily match the terrain around you with the features on the map.

To take the bearing between the two points of interest we now need to pick up the compass without moving the map. It's good to have a teammate hold the map down while you are doing this to prevent it from moving away from the North alignment. If the map does move you'll just have to reset it.

4. Align the edge of the compass between the two points of interest. In our case we're taking a bearing between from Montara Knob to North Peak. Ensure that the direction of travel arrow is pointing to your destination (Fig 3).

5. Turn the Azimuth Ring so as the Red North end of the Magnetic Needle is aligned with the Orienteering Arrow printed on the vial (Fig 4).

6. Now read the bearing from the numbers on the Azimuth Ring where they intersect with the direc-



tion of travel arrow. In this case the bearing is 56 degrees from Montara Knob to North Peak.

**Figure 2**



Now if we needed to travel between Montara Knob and North Peak the simple thing to do is follow the bearing indicated by the compass. In this case that may not be the most efficient route but the same procedure would apply to any 2 map points, features or waypoints you choose.

**Figure 3**



Assuming we're standing on the top of Montara Knob, pick up the compass and hold it flat in your hand in front of your body, with the direction of travel arrow pointing away from you. Turn your body so as the Red North end of the Magnetic Needle is aligned with the Orienteering Arrow marked on the bottom of the vial. The direction of travel arrow will now be point-

ing directly at North Peak and a bearing of 56 degrees from North. If it is a clear day and your view is unobstructed you should be able to see your destination, but this is rarely the case in adventure racing. More often than not you'll have obstacles in your way. The simple solution to navigating around obstacles is to look for landmarks directly in your path between you and the destination. Pick a landmark that is easy to identify like a large tree or rock outcropping and then make your way to it. Once you get there pick another landmark directly between you and the destination that is directly on the bearing that the compass is indicating. Using this technique you can make your way from your starting point to the destination even though you may not be able to see the destination when you started due to darkness, fog or other obstacles.

**Figure 4**



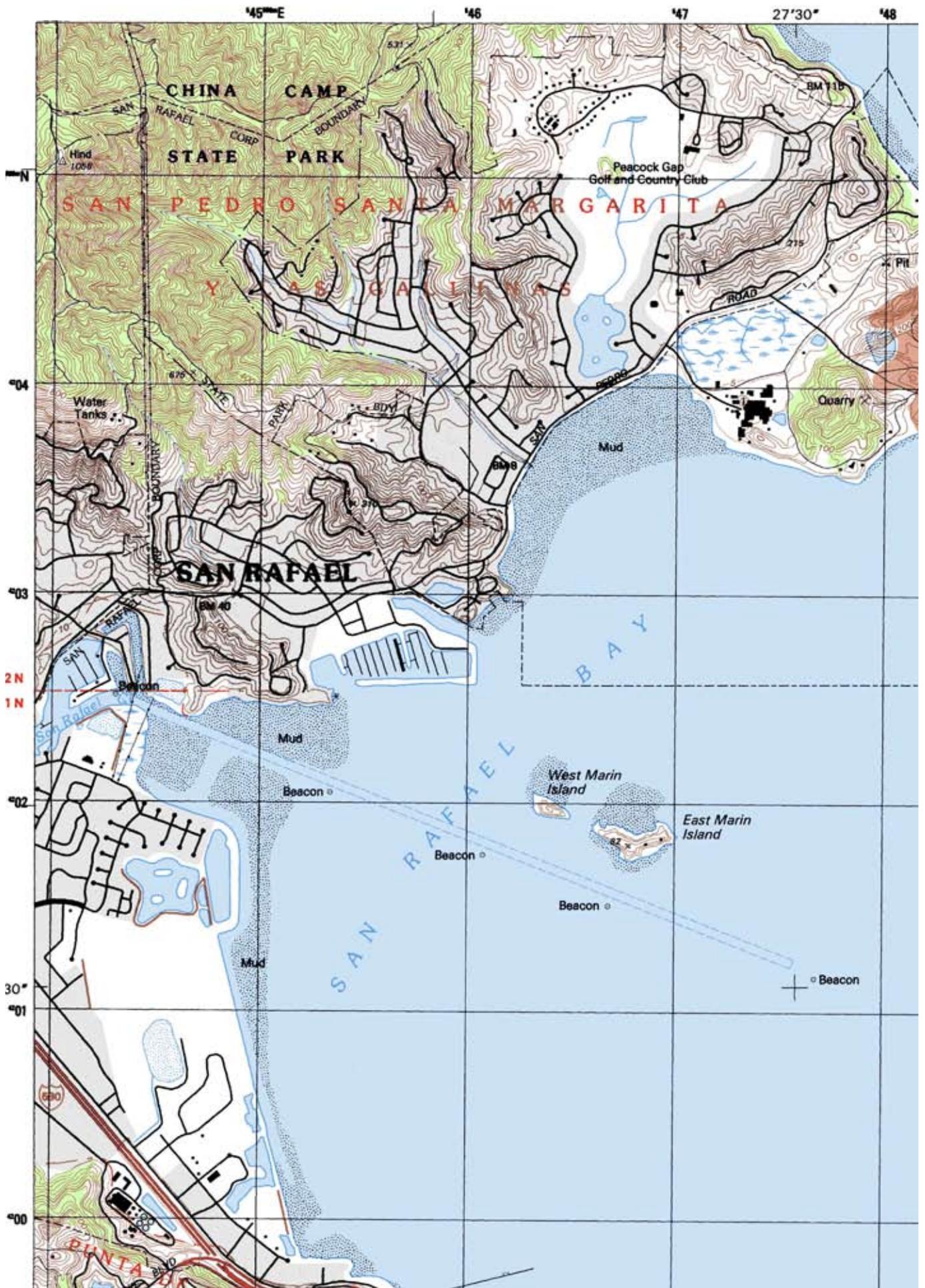
Using interim landmarks is the fastest and most efficient way to follow a bearing but sometimes this trick is not an option due to thick forest or very open flat terrain. In this case it is very important to follow the compass bearing very carefully and in cases of very accurate navigation step by step, making sure that if you come across an obstacle you step around it and get back on track as soon as possible. This careful step-by-step navigation can be slow and time consuming but it will get you to your destination. For me, the most difficult place to do this was the swamps of Florida at night. Not only do you have very few distinct terrain features but you also have water, bushes, stumps and trees to deal with as well as the red-eyed alliga-

tors. Any of these distractions will throw you off course if you're not careful as anyone at the USARA Nationals in 2005 will remember.

More information on navigation can be found at [www.ARNavSupplies.com](http://www.ARNavSupplies.com)  
Mark Manning, AR Navigation Supplies, Inc. 2008.

# Round 5

# AWM Navigation Challenge



# Adventure World Magazine Navigation Challenge: Round 5

Try your navigation skills from the comfort of our own home with this online navigation contest. Answer all of the CP questions in order by following the instructions below. E-Mail your answers to [info@adventureworldmagazine.com](mailto:info@adventureworldmagazine.com). True North and Grid North are assumed to be identical on this 1:24K map.

This month your team is in San Rafael, CA for the fifth round of the Adventure World Magazine Navigation Challenge, brought to you by [www.ARNavSupplies.com](http://www.ARNavSupplies.com) and the Basic Roamer AR.

| Checkpoint | Instruction  | Question   |
|------------|--|--|
| Start      | Pick up your Kayaks in the San Rafael Marina.  | Give the UTM of the Beacon in the Marina?  |
| CP 1       | Paddle out of the Marina following the channel to the Eastern most Beacon.   | What is the distance in miles from the Marina Beacon to the Eastern most Beacon? |
| CP 2       | Find the high point on East Marin Island.  | What is the bearing from CP1 to the high point on East Marin Island?             |
| CP 3       | Paddle to West Marin Island.   | What is the elevation of the high point of West Marin Island?                    |
| CP 4       | From the high point on East Marin Island plot a bearing of 266 degrees. From the high point of West Marin Island plot a bearing of 236.5 degrees | What is the UTM of the object at the intersection of these 2 bearings?           |
| CP 5       | From CP 4 Paddle directly back to the San Rafael Marina.   | What is the bearing from CP 4 to the Beacon in the San Rafael Marina?            |
| CP 6       | Travel South on the road From the Marina travel via road to UTM 0544280 4203850.   | What man made objects are at this location?                                      |
| CP 7       | Travel via trail to UTM 0544020 4205060.   | What is the distance between CP6 and CP7?  |
| CP 8       | From CP 7 Follow a bearing of 79 degrees for 1.1 miles.  | What is the elevation of the trailhead at this location?                         |
| CP 9       | Bushwhack to the small hill in the middle of the Peacock Gap Golf and Country Club.  | How many contour lines are crossed on the flattest route from CP 8 to CP 9?      |
| CP 10      | Find the Pit on UTM Easting line 0548.   | What is the bearing from CP 9 to the Pit?  |
| Finish     | Email your answers to:<br><a href="mailto:info@adventureworldmagazine.com">info@adventureworldmagazine.com</a>                                   |  |

*Continued from page 43*

every checkpoint we had visited so far. We had spent a minute or two searching routes but rarely backtracked or wandered off course. He was in the zone. CP-25 gave us some confusion. We took an old ATV trail after leaving CP-24 and began a long bike whack down to the river. Despite being a little slow it was the way to go. We forded the creek at the bottom and broke out onto a road but then got tangled up. We crossed the creek over the road twice and even hiked a ridgeline before gathering ourselves up and comparing notes. We hit it fairly quickly after that. I think we had just lost focus for a minute. Sometimes that happens after 25 hours or so.

It was a quick ride to CP-26, which we found at the entry to an old ATV trail (nice spot Mary). It wasn't so clear what to do from there. Teams were going all the way up to CP-27 and coming back, some by dropping their bikes. It was a long push and there were no trails on the map to 27 but the ATV trail continued and we decided to push the bikes up the re-entrant all the way to CP-27. This would put us up high and hopefully on a road. It did and we were on our way to CP-28 after a quick food and clothing break. The sun was shining and even though it was still chilly we wanted to shed some wet outer layers.

We missed the next trail cutoff but stayed with the road. On the map this may have seemed like the long way but it turned out to be a great choice. It was a wild switch back downhill that the team ate up. There had been a lot of grinding uphill and more than one bike whack downhill that had seemed a little unjust. We

were happy to be letting the bikes roll for a while.

CP-28 was on a paved road at a volunteer firehouse. We kept a pretty good pace on the paved road and then got pisted with what might have been the most unpleasant experience of the race. A truck went by with a load of manure or manure and garbage in the back. Team Dark Horse was under olfactory assault. The odor was indescribable. It was nauseating and it didn't go away with the truck. Every time a car went by the stench reappeared. It just settled to the ground and got stirred up by the breeze. We rode to CP-28 in a miasma of stink.

After CP-28 we headed for the railroad tracks that would take us to CP-29 and eventually back to town. The race instructions indicated that we had to stay on the tracks until we crossed under the highway bridge just out of town. That meant about 5 miles of track riding. This was truly awful. No race director should be allowed to put this in a race until they've done it. Between the three of us we have 10 Costa Rica Coast-to-Coast crossings. Railroad tracks (linea de ferrocarril) play an important role in getting across Costa Rica. Those tracks are largely abandoned; at least these were in good condition. We stayed in the saddle most of the way, passing 5 or 6 teams that chose to walk them. This was the only time I regretted bringing a hardtail to the race. The thread pattern from my seat is now permanently tattooed to my derriere. It is also the only time in the race Mary expressed some misgivings about being an adventure racer. It was loud, colorful, emotional and brief.

Mary had her grumpy pants on.

## **11:37 a.m. Finish 28:35 elapsed time**

We punched through CP-29 and passed under the bridge. We grabbed a road into town and David stayed sharp on the village streets and got us across the finish line cleanly. The townspeople and our fellow racers were out in force to cheer people across the line. It was fantastic to be done and we marched up the stairs at the town hall to turn in our punch card. We were congratulated and then carried around town on the shoulders of the town fathers, given the keys to the city and had our likenesses bronzed and placed in the village square..... Actually we were DQ'ed.

That's right. Broom Hilda, the timing gizmo lady, stuck her head out the window and said "you lost your dipper my pretties, that's an automatic DQ, heh, heh, heh, heh!!!"

What! Since when is the triumph of will over adversity brought low by little electronic gizmos? How could a "dipper" crush our valiant struggle against insurmountable odds? If Lewis and Clarke had lost their "dipper" would Thomas Jefferson had said "sorry boys I know that was a tough two years but without the dipper we can't put you in the history books, you might have hit some of the mountain ranges out of order."

This would not stand. We brought our just cause to Troy the race organizer.

"Sorry guys, it's in the race rules."

"Oh... well, I guess that makes sense then."

We wandered down the street and got a tall iced tea and a terrific turkey

wrap with spicy mustard and provolone.

**Post Script:**

Adventure races are full of “would haves”. Here’s ours. We would have finished 4th in the masters and roughly 17th overall if it wasn’t for the DQ. That’s a big “would have” because a number of teams got docked for points due to punch card and dipper mishaps. What happens is what happens, you can spend a lifetime second-guessing it.

It was a great race and well run; incredible course worthy of a National Championship and as always we met a great group of people. I can only imagine where the team will make me keep the “dipper” next time.

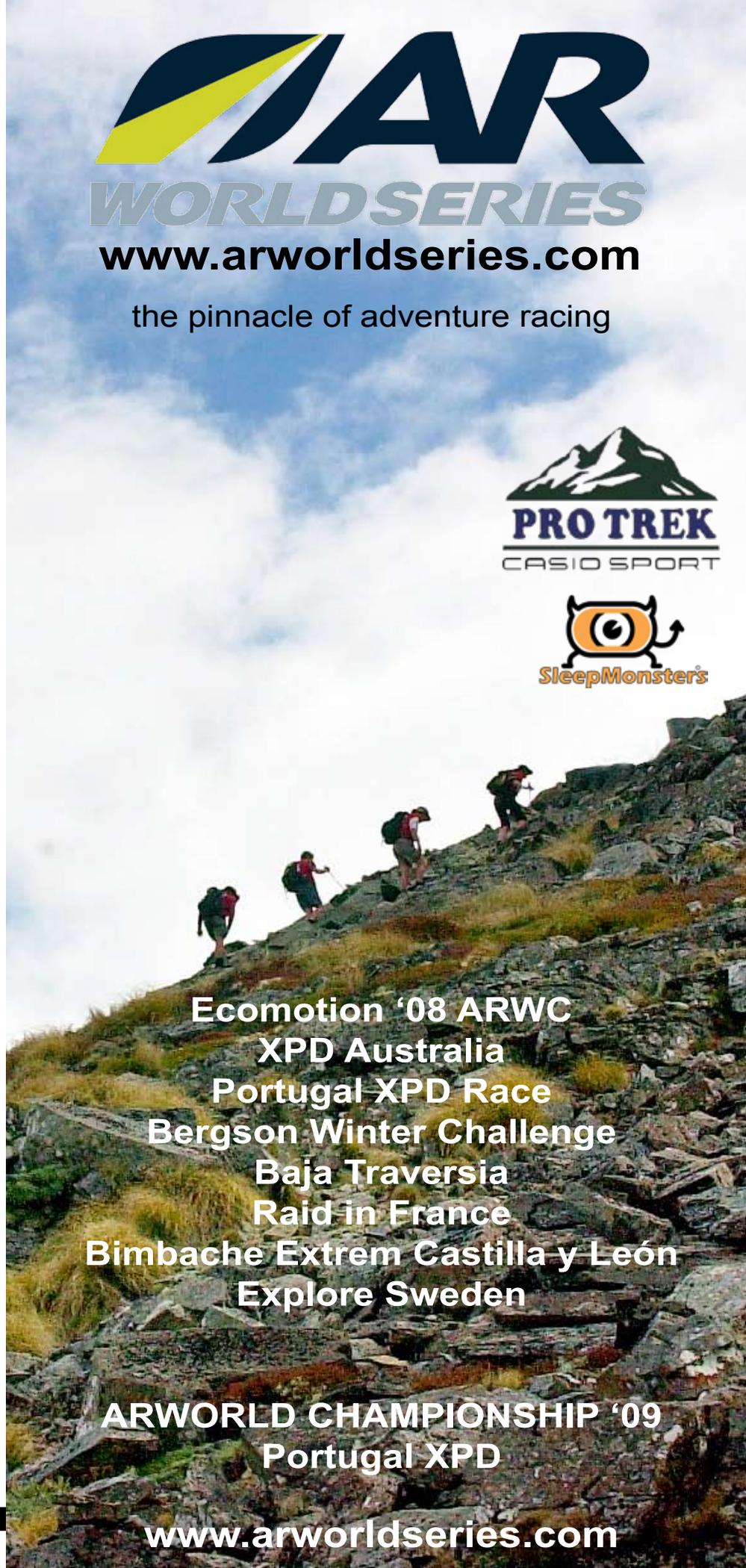
---



**WORLD SERIES**

**www.arworldseries.com**

the pinnacle of adventure racing



**Ecomotion '08 ARWC  
XPD Australia  
Portugal XPD Race  
Bergson Winter Challenge  
Baja Traversia  
Raid in France  
Bimbache Extrem Castilla y León  
Explore Sweden**

**ARWORLD CHAMPIONSHIP '09  
Portugal XPD**

**www.arworldseries.com**



# WWW.ARNNavSupplies.COM



## The Basic Roamer© AR

As the Official Navigation Tool of the USARA, the design of the Basic Roamer© AR has been carefully considered for US Adventure Racing and has over 20 major features. Originally developed for rallying in Europe this tool is now customized and available for the US Adventure Racer. Rally navigators must make split second navigation decisions at very high speed and any errors can be very costly to crew, car and team. With these challenges in mind it is easy to see how the Adventure racing navigator can benefit from the Basic Roamer© AR. [www.BasicRoamerAR.com](http://www.BasicRoamerAR.com).



## Adventure Racing Rotating Map Holder

A lightweight, rotating design with a quick release mounting bracket the rotating map holder is designed to fit almost any bike, it is built strong enough to withstand the rigors of any adventure race or bicycle orienteering event. The solid construction will not flex or flap on rough roads and will hold most flexible map covers or just the map itself <http://www.arnavsupplies.com/products.html> Positioned for easy reading it will make bike navigation much easier. Proven in many races and successfully used in 2006 USARA National Championships.

## The Adventure Racing Waterproof Pedometer

Now you don't have to guess or time your travel to the next CP, you can know exactly how far you've gone. Most pedometers fail completely when they get near water. We've developed one that actually works when wet. It even survived the full course at Primal Quest.

Check out the full line of navigation products from AR Navigation Supplies including: Waterproof Map Cases, Racing Compasses, Waterproof Pens, MYTopo Maps, Nav Practice Guides & More!



[www.ARNNavSupplies.com](http://www.ARNNavSupplies.com)

Phone: 1-408-420-3883



# Trinidad Coast 2 Coast

by Kip Koelsch

The Tropical Power Trinidad Coast2Coast has been on my list “races to do” for some time—ever since meeting race director Ryan Mendes at the Florida Coast to Coast Eco Adventure Race several years ago and race committee member Bruce Hays at our own WeCeFAR Swamp Stomp Adventure Race. This year, it finally fit the schedule and my racing goals—as I’m doing more solo and less team races and looking for interesting race locales.

Starting on Trinidad’s northeast coast at the Toco lighthouse, the race takes competitors across the scenic and less-developed north coast of the island via road bike, rugged mountain running trails and an open water kayak to finish at Williams Bay on the northwest coast. Participation is open to soloists, relay teams and, new this year, to people wanting to complete an individual leg.

While participation is not huge, it is growing and already attracts some top-notch international racers. “We are excited to have such a great field of athletes for this year’s event,” stated Ryan Mendes (Coast

to Coast Race Director). “Our number of participants is up 100% from four year’s ago when we began this event.”

Richard and Elina Ussher were back from New Zealand to defend their titles against a field of racers from the US, Mexico, Sweden, Venezuela, France, New Zealand and some of the island’s own. Richard Ussher is also the reigning champion of the Speight’s Coast to Coast in New Zealand—perhaps the world’s most famous multi-sport race.

## Day One

With a 6am race start, we were up at 4am for a light breakfast and completing our pre-race preparations—filling water bottles and hydration bladders, stuffing our small packs with snacks and double-checking our mandatory gear. Of course, the rain that we had heard intermittently throughout the night continued and had us a little worried—as the roads we’d ridden the night before were quite narrow, twisty and potholed. But, after loading our gear and bikes into our support trailer, the rain abated and we drove to the

start.

The initial transition area was a muddy, puddle-strewn beachside parking area where we scrambled to unload our bikes, set out our shoes and helmets and trot down the road to the start at the Toco lighthouse. The sky was brightening and racers stood around stretching, chatting and warming up.

At about 6:10, the race staff at the lighthouse got the okay to start the race (they were waiting for the last support crews to get well along the roads we’d be biking) and the competitors were off for a muggy, 2km run to where the bikes were located. Now, I hate those kind of starts and my legs felt typically heavy. Still, I managed to come in to the TA just behind my wife, Jessica and in time to see New Zealand’s Neal Galatly take off on his bike. I was a bit quicker than Jessica through the TA, but noticed her coming out behind me on the bike—only to hear her shout, “I have a flat!” I asked if she needed help, but admittedly didn’t wait for an answer. Instead, I took off up the short hill and hoped that someone in the TA would help her out.

*photography courtesy Eco Adventures and jtogethy*



The 40km road bike along the northeastern coast of the island was challenging. Slick, narrow, twisty, pot holed roads with sharp up and downs mixed in had some thinking it was better suited for a mountain bike (or at the very least a cyclo-cross bike). The carnage started early with a sharp, downhill left bend at the end of another downhill. As I approached, course marshals were yelling to slow down. It was all I could do to not add to the pile-up of riders on the tarmac. I managed to break slightly, put one foot down, and slide between the outside edge of the road and an on-coming car. Others did not fair

quite as well—at least one racer crashed out and Louis Reyes from Mexico continued with limited vision in one eye.

I managed to make it through the potholes, riding on the opposite side of the road, wooden plank bridges and slippery corners without incident and in decent position—only to hear that Jessica had not fared as well. In addition to the puncture right out of the TA, she had another. In addition to the punctures, she had crashed on two of the wooden plank bridges.

Even some of the experienced in-

ternationals had issues on the bike. “I have never had 3 punctures on a ride until here,” stated Neil Gellately (New Zealand).

The top 3 into the TA were Richard Ussher (NZ), Linford Blackwood (Trinidad) and Martin Flinta (Sweden). Neil Gellately (NZ) was 27th heading into the TA (3 punctured tubes). He was approximately 25 minutes behind the leaders.

From here we transitioned to the long trail running portion of the race. This is a 32km section taking the runners from Matelot to Blanchisseuse.

“It was very hot on the run,” said Martin Flinta (Sweden). “There were numerous times that we were exposed directly to the sun as we were running. We also ran along sections of beach where I would sink up to my ankles with each step. Every creek that I came to, I jumped in to cool off. Towards the end of the run, we were running on a gravel road right out in the open with the sun beating down on us. It was so hot and I had used all of the water in my pack.” He added, “It was also some of the most beautiful areas that I have ever seen!”

While the Swede managed a strong finish on the day, my run went downhill shortly after the first steep uphill. I struggled with the heat (so much for living in Florida!) and stopped at every creek to splash myself, take dip or dunk my hat—still, the next three hours were awful until I was passed by Mexican Louis Reyes who had crashed so badly on the bike. I managed to rally a little after he passed and eventually he and I ran together to the finish in Blanchisseuse.



The top finishers for Day 1 were:

### Male

Richard Ussher (NZ) 3:59:51, Martin Flinta (Sweden) 4:30:01, Clarence Tobias (Trinidad) 4:37:10 and Neil Gellately (NZ) 4:57:34\*\*\*

\*\*\*Neil went from 27th place at the bike drop to pass 23 other runners.

### Day Two

Day Two's 5am start had racers scrambling after the race to get refueled, re-hydrated, gear cleaned and sorted and to get some well-needed sleep. With Richard Ussher more than 30 minutes ahead of second place, and Elina Ussher more than 15 minutes in first, the battle—barring tire punctures or other issues—seemed to be for second and third places in the solo categories.

The second day started where the first day ended—the orange suspension bridge over the Marianne River in Blanchisseuse. Cyclists readied their lights for the pre-dawn start of the 56 km cycling leg and

race officials warned of challenging road conditions for the first 20 minutes or so of riding—narrow, twisty roads and a combination of potholes and unevenly patched pavement. Once through that section, racers were assured that the conditions improved—just in time for the climbing to begin. I wasn't worried about the dicey road conditions as I had my "sun" mounted to the handlebars—a new Ay-Up bike light that I've grown to love. But, Jessica was a little more worried after her punctures and crashes

on Day One—and her right hand was injured.

While the start was near sea-level, we eventually worked our way over climbs steeper and longer than Day One's ride—getting to the heart of Trinidad's Northern Range. The long steady climb past the Maracas lookout suited me just fine and I managed to past some racers on the way up to a race-high altitude of 1300 feet—enjoying the grind and the now wider, smoother roads. Following the climb was another steep downhill, a shorter, lower climb, and a flat, fast section through busier streets of Diego Martin to the next TA. That final flat section was the only place where I got to use my aerobars for any sustained period of time.

I came into the TA as the first masters racer only to discover that the cooler with my camelbak bladder hadn't made it to the TA—but, at least my small race pack was there. So, after changing into my running shoes, I stuffed some water bottles into my pack and started up the steep paved road that was the start





of the 8km run. Though I still felt fairly strong, I took the time to eat a food bar and re-hydrate after my strong effort on the bike.

While the Day One run from Matelot to Blanchisseuse was challenging in its length and moderately technical in places, the run on Day Two was known for the technical nature of its uphill—requiring racers to search for secure foot and hand holds—rocks, roots, tree branches—on several nearly vertical pitches. After leaving the pavement and trotting across a short, open flat area, I finally hit the real climb. The views from the top were tremendous—peering through the vegetation just inches from the trail and being able to look hundreds of feet to the crashing waves below. Though there were a few flat spots on that scenic ridge, the trail plunged from the top almost as steeply as it went up—allowing good technical downhillers to gain speed and time. As we moved from single track trail to an obvious old road, we passed abandoned US military bunkers from WWII and a government Seed Centre. The final

few kilometers made for arduous running—along a paved road exposed to the full sun—to the kayak TA at Maqueripe.

Maqueripe was the start of the 32 km paddling leg. While my run time was not stellar, I was happy with where I came in and was ready to head off in a discipline that is typically one of my strong points. Jessica was there to surprise me—having dropped out at the run TA because her whole pack wasn't there and because her hand was in

bad shape. It was nice to have her there to send me off quickly (no dawdling in the TA!).

But, it was at Maqueripe that I was confronted with one of the most challenging sections of the race. A passing storm front had set up ground swell waves running along the coast—great news for those competent enough to surf the large waves and bad news for those not quite as confident in the massive swells. Race leader Richard Ussher and Trinidad's own Robert Sharpe were among the few that used to the waves to their advantage, clocking the fastest paddle times on the day. Like other paddlers, I struggled with the swells—my body (especially my core muscles) was so fatigued that I wobbled and shook in the boat. All I kept thinking was that I needed to make it to the First Boca—the opening between the main island and some smaller islands where I knew the water would be more sheltered and the waves smaller. Once “inside” the First Boca and in slightly more sheltered water, I relaxed, got into a rhythm and started to pass kayaks—and, of course, that made me



feel better. Others struggled—even on the inside—with the pounding rain and high winds generated by a few short-lived local squalls.

Luckily, the course provided occasional shelter from waves and wind as it took racers around several small islands and then along the leeward coast from the yacht club on Cumana Bay to the kayak landing in Williams Bay. In that last stretch from the yacht club to the landing at Williams Bay, I finally managed to catch and surf a few small waves that helped speed me along and eventually catch site of the crowd at the finish line.

After paddling past the crowd, I beached my surf ski, pulled my stiff body upright and, paddle in hand, ran about 200 meters along the shore and through the finishing chute. There, I was greeted by a local drumming band, enthusiastic cheers from a large crowd, Jessica and a commemorative finisher's medal.

I was happy to be finished. And, while I didn't think I had the best long run on Day One or the best paddle, I was happy with finishing and happy to be hanging out with some great people. The post-race bash was awesome—with copious amounts of food, beer, Gatorade, good music and free post-race massage. Of course, the leaders came in a bit ahead of me, but I expect to be back in 2009 and be just a little bit closer.

### **Top 3 paddling times were:**

Robert Sharpe (Trinidad) 3:16:54  
Richard Ussher (NZ) 3:21:42  
Mike Devine (Trinidad) 3:39:53



The race results for the top finishers in each category are as follows:

**Men:** Richard Ussher (NZ) 10:34:39, Martin Flinta (Sweden) 11:41:52, and Clarence Tobias (Trinidad) 11:54:54.

**Women:** Elina Ussher (NZ) 13:24:32, Nina Ostman (Mexico) 14:28:35, and Nina Chaves (Trinidad) 15:49:08.

**Masters:** Robert Sharpe 12:55:24, Kip Koelsch (USA) 15:23:18, and Roger D'Abadie 15:34:18.

*Kip Koelsch is a two-time member of the US Canoe/Kayak Marathon Team and a two-time winner of the Florida Coast to Coast Adventure Race. Currently working as the Outdoor Program Coordinator for BayCare Wellness Centers where he teaches paddling, navigation, trail running and other outdoor fitness activities, Kip is also close to finishing his first novel.*

# gear closet

## Gear You May Have Never Heard Of!

We reviewed some of the unique & hot, new must have gear we spotted at the annual outdoor trade show.

### Nomad Portable Power Cleaner

**MSRP: \$249.99 - 18V and \$199.99 - 12V**

Best new product of the show. The built in water tank allows you to clean anything anywhere. The Power cleaner plugs right into your cars 12 volt power outlet or upgrade to the 18 volt rechargeable battery model for ultimate portability. A must have item to clean up your gear before dumping into the back of your SUV on those muddy play days.

[www.nomaddirect.com](http://www.nomaddirect.com)



### Black Crater Cord Lock Light

**MSRP: \$10**

A simple cord lock with a built in water resistant, 3 function LED light. The Cord Lock Light is a handy functional addition for just about any outdoor activity. Pop it on your jacket and have a handy light at a moments notice.

[www.blackcratergear.com](http://www.blackcratergear.com)

### Hitch Safe

**MSRP: \$69.95**

Goodbye top of the tire, hello hitch safe. Never worry about that shady character who watches you hide your keys on top of your tire before that trail run. The Hitch Safe will also hold up to 3 credit cards.

[www.hitchsafe.com](http://www.hitchsafe.com)



## Niteize S-Biner

**MSRP: \$1.99-\$3.99**

A double gated carabiner with about a million possible uses. They even have a giant plastic one that could be used to hang a bike.

[www.niteize.com](http://www.niteize.com)



## eGear Spotlight

**MSRP: \$19.95**

Weighing in at less than 2 inches, this compact spotlight actually plugs into your cars 12 volt power outlet so it is always charged and ready to go. The Spotlight last 120 minutes on a charge and provides .5 watts of LED light. Get one and never be left out in the dark again.

[www.essentialgear.com](http://www.essentialgear.com)

## Aero Tailgater Chair

**MSRP: \$79.99**

You will become the envy of all other tailgaters & campers with this super luxurious chair that even has a drink holder. One of my top picks for awesome new products. If you spend only 1 day a year outside you should own a Aero Tailgater.

[www.aerobed.com](http://www.aerobed.com)



## Davis Key Buoy

**MSRP: \$6.99**

An awesome item if you are around the water often. If you drop your keys in the water the key buoy automatically inflates and the keys float to the surface. Sure beats diving in after them or worse, ordering new keys.

[www.davisnet.com](http://www.davisnet.com)

## Fisher Space Pen

**MSRP: \$30**

If it's good enough for astronauts... This compact pen has a pressurized cartridge that writes upside down, under water, in extreme temperatures, even in space. If you plan on doing any writing while on your adventures, get one.

[www.spacepen.com](http://www.spacepen.com)



## Petzl Myo XP

**MSRP \$79.95**



### Features:

- 3 lighting levels
- Water resistant for all-weather use

*Editor's Notes: Our team members like this headlamp for training and racing. It is also a great light for backpacking, changing a tire, and any other time when a headlamp is needed to offer that high-light output.*

[www.petzl.com](http://www.petzl.com)

---

## Merrell Jungle Moc

**MSRP \$109.95**



### Features:

Built on a compression-molded footframe, the Jungle Moc GTX has a classic brown nubuck leather upper, with a closed back for more stability. Its 100% waterproof and breathable GORE-TEX® lining completely surrounds your foot, shielding it from rain or standing water. An Air Cushion® midsole protect.

*Editor's Notes: We have used these shoes while traveling from one event to the next and while traveling both domestically and internationally. They are ideal when unsure of conditions and the last thing that you want are wet feet.*

[www.merrell.com](http://www.merrell.com)

## M-Rock Camera Bags

**MSRP \$140**



*Editor's Notes: We carried the Yellowstone 511 with the Niagara and Ozark accessory bags all attached via the modular belt to Trinidad to cover the Coast to Coast. The system worked perfectly allowing complete mobility and accessibility to all equipment needed. Check out their website for more of their line of professional camera bags.*

[www.m-rock.com](http://www.m-rock.com)

## Freeplay ML-1

**MSRP \$55**

*Editor's Notes: We love this product. The self sufficient rechargeable LED lantern is great for backpacking (if you don't mind a little extra weight-10.5oz.), adventure racing (if you are coming back to the TA and light is necessary), or as an emergency light for your car. We can think of a thousand uses for this lantern and you never have to worry about rundown batteries or blown bulbs. It is very dependable and durable.*



[www.freeplayenergy.com](http://www.freeplayenergy.com)

## ZANFEL

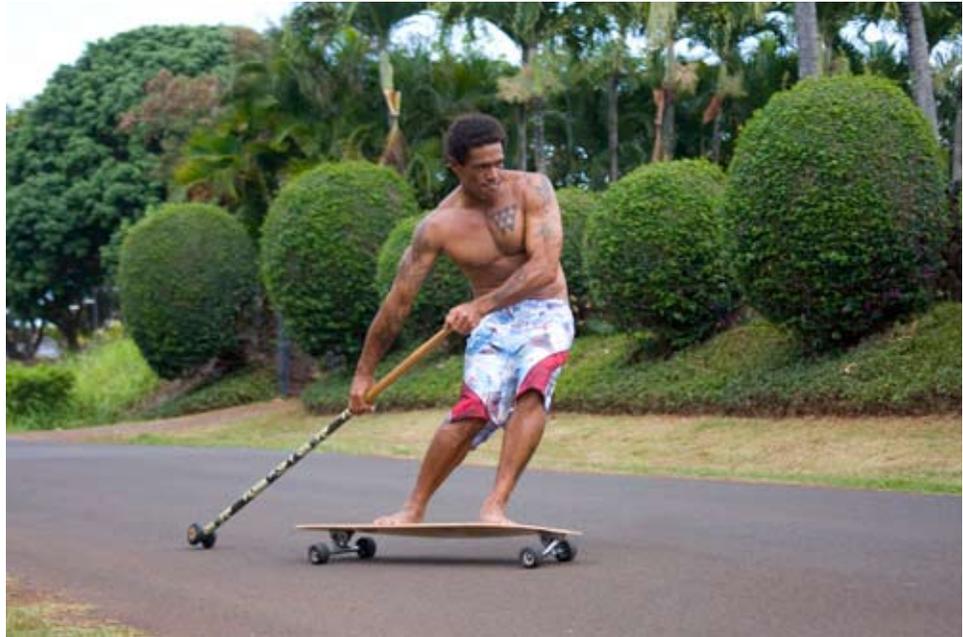
Dual-action Zanfel is the only product clinically shown to remove urushiol, the toxin found in poison ivy, oak and sumac, from the skin ANYTIME during outbreak while relieving the itching within 30 seconds.

**GOT POISON IVY?  
GET ZANFEL  
IT WORKS!**



Welcome to Zanfel.

For more information,  
visit [www.zanfel.com](http://www.zanfel.com)  
or call 1-800-401-4002.



## Kahuna Creations

### Features:

- Boards from \$139 and up with Big Sticks starting at \$89

*Editor's Notes: "Much like a stand-up paddle (SUP) used in the ocean, the Kahuna Big Stick™ is designed to enhance the longboard experience on pavement." The company offers an array of boards (and lengths) and the big stick can be chosen based on the height of the rider. We will be discussing the multiple uses of the Kahuna Creations board/stick system in a later issue on cross-training.*

[www.kahunacreations.com](http://www.kahunacreations.com)



# ON THE HORIZON

## Coming up in future issues:

### Feature Articles:

- Producing Your First Event
  - ‘Green’ Gear
  - Snowshoeing
  - Abu Dhabi
- Trail Running Special Issue
  - Cross Training Options

### Gear Reviews:

- Cold Weather Gear
- Heart Rate Monitors
- Trail Runners • And More!

If you have anything that you would like to read about or just have suggestions or comments...email us at [info@adventureworldmagazine.com](mailto:info@adventureworldmagazine.com)



# PRIMAL QUEST SPRINT SERIES

DVD for \$19.95 at [www.RaceDayFilms.net](http://www.RaceDayFilms.net)  
 Webisode at [www.RaceDayFilms.net/pqss/](http://www.RaceDayFilms.net/pqss/)



Poison Ivy and Poison Oak are no longer a challenge. Get Zanafel. It Works!



*Robyn Benincasa, adventure race champion and Zanafel user.  
 Captain Team Merrell/Zanafel*

Dual-action Zanafel. The only product clinically shown to remove urushiol, the toxin found in poison ivy, oak and sumac, from the skin anytime after breakout while relieving itching within 30 seconds.



Welcome to Zanafel.

Call 800-401-4002 or visit [www.zanafel.com](http://www.zanafel.com)

Zanafel is a product of Zanfel Laboratories, Inc. ©2008 All rights reserved. U.S. pat.#6,423,746, #7,008,963. Additional U.S. and foreign patents pending. Zanafel and the Zanafel logo are trademarks of Zanfel Laboratories, Inc., China, IA.

# it happened to me!

## The Tribe Has Spoken!

Photos and story by Jacob Thompson



With weapons leading the way, a group of heavily armed men jumped out of the brush and ambushed our campsite, interrupting an otherwise tranquil morning on the island. One guy wore a black ski mask and took cover behind a fallen palm tree, resting his automatic machine gun on the trunk, keeping a steady sight on us as the others approached.

“Get down on the ground and put your hands behind your head,” one commanded.

My initial fear was that we were being kidnapped by FARC guerillas. Sacks would be thrown over our heads and we would be sped away in a motorboat to a handoff point on the coast and then be moved from one jungle encampment to another until they had no use for us. I also suspected they might be modern day pirates known to frequent the area. I imagined they would be disappointed by the pathetic loot they had acquired from the gringos and their kayaks filled with bike parts.

In truth, we had been given ample warning about kayaking from Panama to Colombia. The negative advice streamed in from whom we came to know as the “naysayers”, absolutely convinced that we should book passage on a merchant ship or fly. Everything from deadly snakes to high seas and hostile natives were summoned to keep us from pursuing our kayak trip. “Screw the naysayers” became the adage we reached for to boost morale.

Bike tourists all face the same obstacle when approaching South America, the Darien Gap; a mountainous region that creates a break in the otherwise continuous Pan-American Highway. Everybody dreams about heroically trudging through the Darien, but the reality of wandering through a region inhabited by guerilla organizations in a country practically at civil war influences more sensible choices. And so, we bought some sea kayaks, figured out how to strap our bikes onto them and decided to

paddle through the San Blas Islands and the Kuna Yala Comarca all the way to Colombia where we planned to sell the kayaks and get back on our bikes to continue pedaling until we reach Patagonia.

One of the pistols shook frightfully as it moved across the four gringo targets lying prostrate on the ground, eagerly awaiting some explanation.

“We are the police,” said one of the guys, wearing a black tactical vest holstering his pistol. “A fisherman saw you and reported to us. What are you doing here?”

“We are American tourists traveling through. We are going to Colombia,” JJ offered. With permission, he retrieved the letter we received from the Kuna Leaders granting us passage through the comarca. They took turns looking it over, but didn’t seem impressed. They weren’t quite sure what to make of the kayaks or the idea of traveling such distances without a

motor. After multiple whispered they decided what to do.

“We will escort you back to our town, Ailigandi, where you will sort this out with the elders and the Sahila (chief).”

When we started out, being arrested by a Kuna police squad was the last thing on my mind; my fears were largely concerned with our competence as kayakers since we collectively had about zero experience.

We loaded up our kayaks beside a river that fed into the ocean. With an appropriately dramatic setting we set off just as tremendous storm hit, with thunder crashing the earth. For the first time, we squished into our kayaks fully loaded with our bikes and gear, no small miracle in of itself.

We glided down the river, getting used to maneuvering the weighted down kayaks. Little thatched huts with smoke rising out of the roof dotted the riverbanks which were



constantly crumbling into the muddy watercourse.

At the mouth of the river, trees were sunken into the silt, jutting out like teeth to weave through before entering the ocean. Our spray skirts were sun baked and ineffective at preventing rain from filling up our boats, making them even more sluggish to paddle.

We were following behind Nemesio, a Kuna Indian who had helped us acquire the appropriate permissions to travel through the Kuna Yala Territory. He had agreed to smooth things over with the local Sahila before we headed out on our own.

Unfortunately, as we were escorted by the police into a secured dock and past crowds of locals into their makeshift jail, we were on our own. The entire village had lined the island to see who had been apprehended and as we sat in the jail waiting for things to get figured out, faces blotted out the sun that entered through concrete slits serving as windows.

One of the police assured us everything was fine, but our temporary lapse in freedom was frustrating. We had spent the last few days blissfully paddling through calm tropical waters paddling from island to palm tree-clad island.

They took our passports and dutifully wrote down their contents while





various important figures from the community walked in, all wearing well aged fedoras. We were questioned by a man with skin perfectly white; he was one of the many albinos living in the comarca. He removed his sunglasses, and without any pigment, his eyes took awhile to adjust to the dark concrete building and he had to squint severely. You could just barely see the reddish tint to his pupils.

“You really should have come straight to the Sahila here. The people here are worried that thieves come to steal the eyes of the children,” he explained. “We have never had any tourists come in kayaks. It is easier for the people here to believe that you are here to steal eyes, than paddle those boats to Colombia.”

Nemesio had made it very clear, “If you go anywhere near a town, you have to go and speak with the Sahila.” Finding the Sahila was never a problem since we were always welcomed on arrival by a

huge crowd of curious local who would immediately take us to him. He could always be found in the public meeting hall lounging in a hammock smoking cigarettes and joking around with his buddies. After a formal process of questioning, he would generally offer us a hut to sleep in and see to it that we had somebody to help us with anything we needed.

We had not intended to violate Kuna protocol by camping on that island, we just ran out of daylight to paddle in and never imagined we would wake up to machine gun wielding Kunas.

In the end, for our illegal camping, we were “fined” a \$12 contribution to the community and given a guided tour of the island. We set off once again to continue on our paddling journey to Colombia. We would soon leave the protected reef zone of the San Blas Islands and encounter the true open ocean, promising swells of 3 meters and sudden storms that would make

travel impossible.

After 18 days of paddling, we arrived in Turbo, Colombia after a huge open water crossing over Bahia Turbo. We were able to sell our kayaks to a lawyer from Medellin and reassemble our bikes.

Our time traveling through the Kuna Yala Nation was unforgettable. Apart from the police incident, we were met with absolute kindness and hospitality from the Kuna, not to mention some of the best sea kayaking found in the world. If we ever go back, we will be sure not to miss the opportunity to visit with any of the Sahilas.

---

*Jacob Thompson is a freelance writer. He and his friends, Sean and Goat (along with some guest riders), are out to ride the spine of the Western Hemisphere from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. They have currently paddled from Panama to Columbia and have resumed their bike journey and are now in Ecuador. For more information about thier journey, visit their site at: [www.ridingthespine.com](http://www.ridingthespine.com).*