



Mountain Designs Wild Women

Mountain Designs Wild Women is an All Women's Adventure Racing Team based in Queensland Australia. The major team sponsor is Mountain Designs and our team of strong and experienced adventure racing women also represent Noosa based training group www.triadventure.com.au

Tuesday, 13 June 2017

Mountain Designs Wild Women conquer Geoquest AR Sawtell 2017



For this blog rather than provide a description of Geoquest from start to finish, I thought why not write about some of the challenges we faced along the way, as well as of the highs for an all-women's team completing an adventure race in less than ideal conditions. As this blog is also our way of trying to inspire and encourage more women to get into this amazing sport, I will also provide a bit of an insight as to what worked and what did not during the event.

Challenge - East Coast Low approaches Sawtell what impact will this have on the event?

Teams were faced with the reality that the event could be cancelled at any minute. At the event briefing the full course was modified, which meant that two river paddles were cancelled along with the connecting MTB leg due to potential flood risk. The event was going ahead, we were confident we had the right gear and equipment and were very mindful of the fact that team work will play a key role in this event!

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In the garage packing our gear.....awaiting the final news on the paddle course.

Challenge - Despite a massive swell building the full ocean paddle was still on the cards.

We had spent months and months preparing for an ocean paddle and had purchased the perfect ski for this event – an **EPIC V8 Double from Kayak Noosa**, however we were certainly not confident that we would handle the ‘alternate Leg 1 course’ which was a paddle out through Coffs Harbour around Kortis Islet and back. Looking out at the swell was petrifying, so we were honestly relieved that the course was shortened to three laps around the harbour, and confident we could handle the dumping beach break as long as we were patient and alert.



We are not sure that we are ready to paddle out of the harbour....it looks so scary out there!

High – Girls survive the paddle!

Just as we were about to start the paddle we lost vision of the yacht we were to paddle around, we thought the event was about to be canned, but seconds later the rain eased, and we heard the countdown 10, 9, 8.....3,2, 1 and then the horn! Alina and I made it out straight away, Gina and Cass were right behind us, but had to wait out a big set off high rollers, once out we stuck together as a team and paddled the swells cautiously yet confidently. Soon we were in a thunderstorm, we did not see lightning but heard the thunder, but we made our three laps and were heading in. All our training in Noosa of 'not catching waves' on big easterly swells had paid off.....we cruised into the beach, without mishap to the delight of our nervous support crew Erica and Tom who had been witnessing carnage in front of their eyes! For the record we finished 3 laps of the paddle and are super stoked that we did, we also realise that some teams who finished ahead of us did not complete 3 laps, however understand and respect reasons for the decision to allow teams to continue on the course without penalty.



Look at Erica in the middle....perfectly dressed for the occasion! Waterproof waders on and helped many teams get out!



Kim & Alina on the left, Cass & Gina on the right finish 3 laps.....pretty perfect beach landing in these conditions!

Challenge – Water Crossings & No crew at TA 2

This coastal trek – Leg 2 had a few inlets to cross so we linked arms and worked as a team during these crossings. However our biggest challenge here was trying to get around the rocks at Korora Beach....we saw the waves coming but made a run for it....Gina was leading....suddenly I was swept off my feet and was being sucked out by the wave.....I had to dig my hands into the sand to prevent being sucked out....phew....that was lucky!

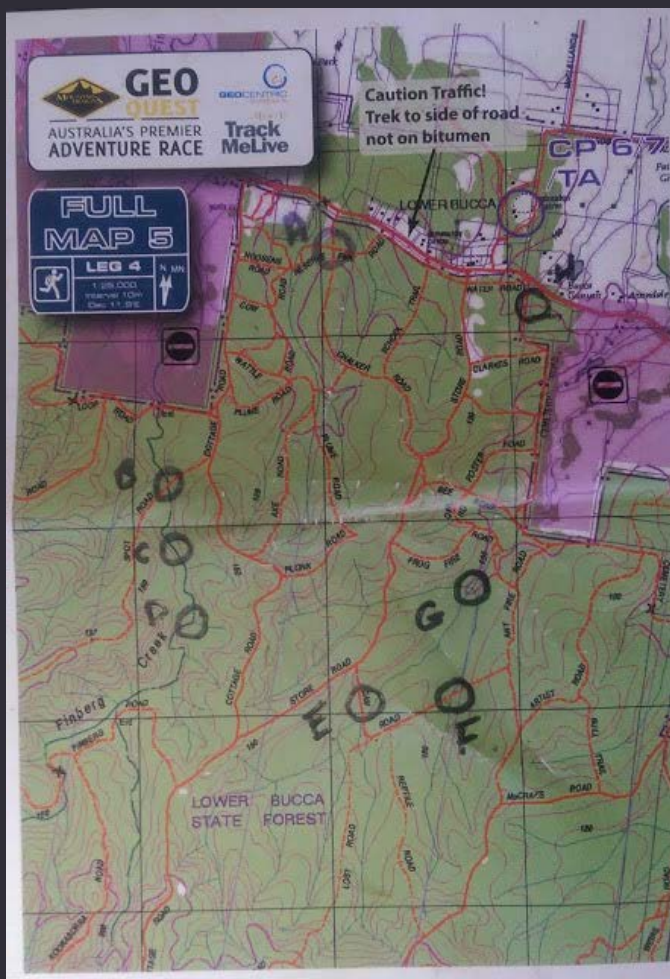
Unfortunately we overestimated our time for this leg and as a result it meant our crew had not arrived....no drama.....we just took shelter behind the toilet block out of the wind and waited for the crew to arrive....

High – Nailing the Foot O Leg 4

We arrived at the TA pretty wet and soggy looking forward to a run to warm up a bit. Our support crew had some really amazing hot soup for us here and it was so so yummy. We had to mark up our maps so pretty glad we had kept them dry to this point. Our plan to drop CP C & D worked well opting for a longer run and less creek travel. Although some of the marked trails did not exist and other unmarked trails did, team work and good navigation choices helped.



Great set up in TA by the support crew.....loved the soup!



The Trek Map marked up.



Cass and Kim both on the maps the whole way!

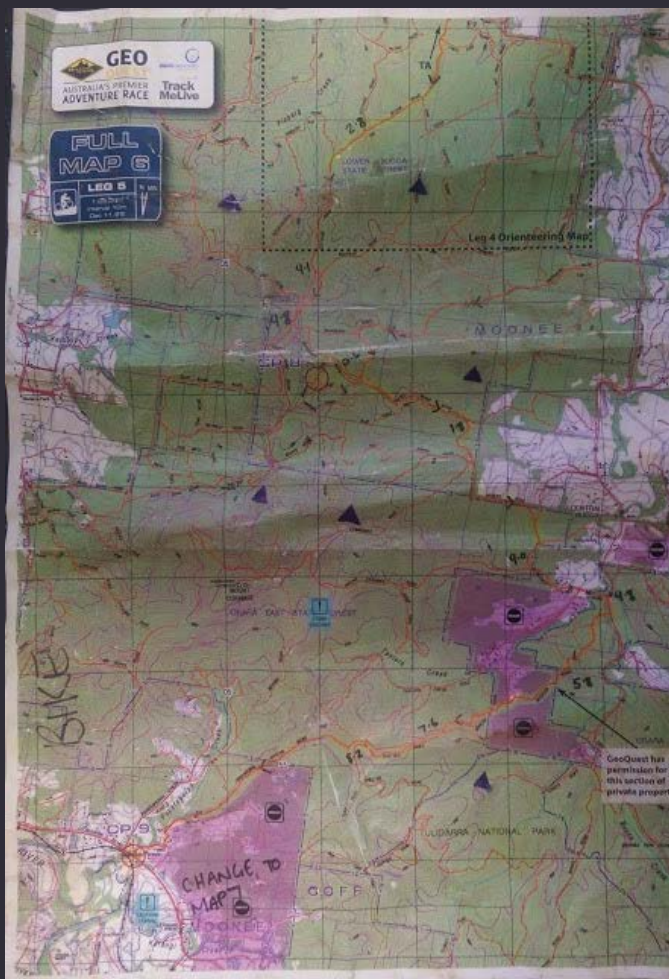
Challenge – locating CP8 on Bike Leg 5

We had made some use of the tow rope to keep the team together on the previous bike leg, so the system worked

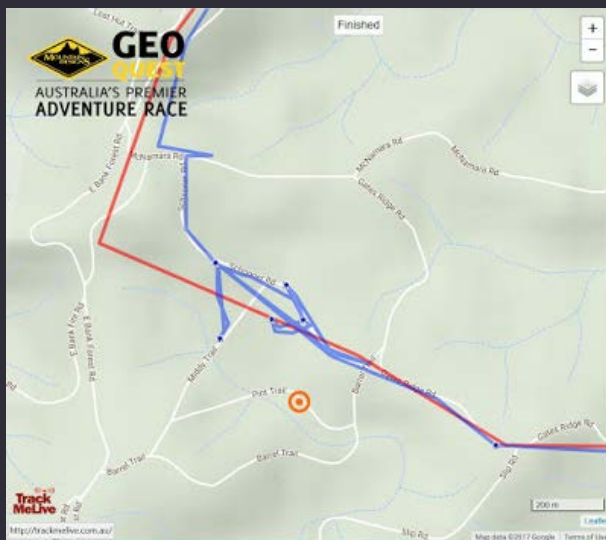
well on this leg too. We had a steep climb up past Bucca lookout on our way to CP8. We certain we had taken the correct route down Schooner Road to find the track to CP8, but were a bit confused when the track marked on the map did not seem to exist. We rode to the next junction looking for an alternate track route, but it did not exist, so headed to where we though the track should be and started a bush bash. But wait.....this was stupid the description was track creek junction, so there must be a track. So we were prepared to head back up past the highpoint and take another route to the CP. Then we looked down a trail that we had previously discounted as it was too high and thought we may as well give it a go! We did and found the CP – this was definitely a low point as if we had just not been navigators and not been looking at times / distances etc we may have just turned anyway.....oh well time to move on now! It was getting dark so on go the AY UP lights!



Ay UP Lights on and ready to roll!



Our planned course to CP 8



Our movements looking for CP8

High – Great Support Crew

We arrived at Boambee (CP12 TA) to the sounds of Mummy....Mummy.....is that you Mummy! It was pouring with rain, we were covered in mud after a slip and slide down off Little Boambee but Alina was so excited to see her two little boys (Archie & Jackson) out there on the course to share the experience. We were treated to shelter, hot food, washed off shoes, and dry socks....sometimes it's the little things that count! Erica and Tom had an awesome set up and we were so thankful for their support.

Challenge – Finding CP 17

Although this trek did not have the some of the Geoquest classic legs features of bush bashing along steep ridgelines or clambering along wet slippery creek beds, it did have the classic ‘tracks marked’ may not be as they appear! We had moved extremely well to CP 13, 14, 15 and also located CP 16 after a bit of persistence paid off hiking up a creek line for what seemed much longer than what showed on the map, great stuff Alina! On the way to 17 the marked track was quite indistinct and soon we were climbing....not right! So we headed straight back and found our trail. It was bucketing down with rain so we were running to keep warm. We all managed to cross the skill tester plank bridge without falling – yay – and then ended up on a big trail. It seemed strange but correct bearing so we continued. We were headed for CP17 Bridge – all seemed good until we crossed the creek before the ‘marked bridge’ and started climbing! This was not meant to happen....we were somewhat bamboozled and tried to make sense of it. For some reason because we had been running we thought we must be somewhere else – and thought oh, maybe it was back at the skill tester bridge, so we ran back (about 1.5k) and had a look....nothing.....gave another team some help re CP 16 and confirmed we were where we thought! So once again we headed along the trail to 17 as before but much more slowly checking every twist / turn / contour and ended up at the same creek, and the same trail that went up a hill not to a bridge.....so we had a scout around in the creek, Alina found a waterfall but no bridge. We had to keep moving at this point and finding this CP was our trail home, so we just had to think laterally and go well this track might just be wrong but take us where we want.....and it did! We soon found the bridge and the CP.....why did we not think that earlier???? The descent off this range was challenging too and Cass helped Gina with her footing while I relaxed my thinking on following the trail as it was not as it appeared but was generally headed in the right direction so pretty stoked when we hit the bitumen heading to CP18/TA.



This is what we did from CP 16 to 17

Challenge - Archery on a cold dark wet morning!

A bit of fun trying to hold a bow straight when you are shivering....but we all had a go and after missing the board many times we eventually got the hang of it! Don't pull back too far, and aim for the ground – bullseye!

Challenge – Crossing the raging Bonnyville Creek to reach the Finish.

We opted to run the Bundegaree Coastal walk track all the way to Bundagen Headland and then hit the beach, Gina was amazing walking at a rate that we had to run to keep up, so we ran walked all the way to the crossing! Wow the map was right...there seemed to be dangerous currents and the water was rushing out.....this crossing looked pretty scary! But when you get there in a race and you know others ahead must have done it, I suppose it

does give you some confidence. We could see people on the other side, so headed to the sandbar, linged arms and waded in. Soon we lost footing and wer all swimming, trying to stick together....we stood up a bit and then we were swimming again.....liked drowned rats we emerged onto the bank pretty excited to see Tom and the kids!



Mountain Designs Wild Women approach the final creek crossing.



The team links up and stays together for as long as we can.



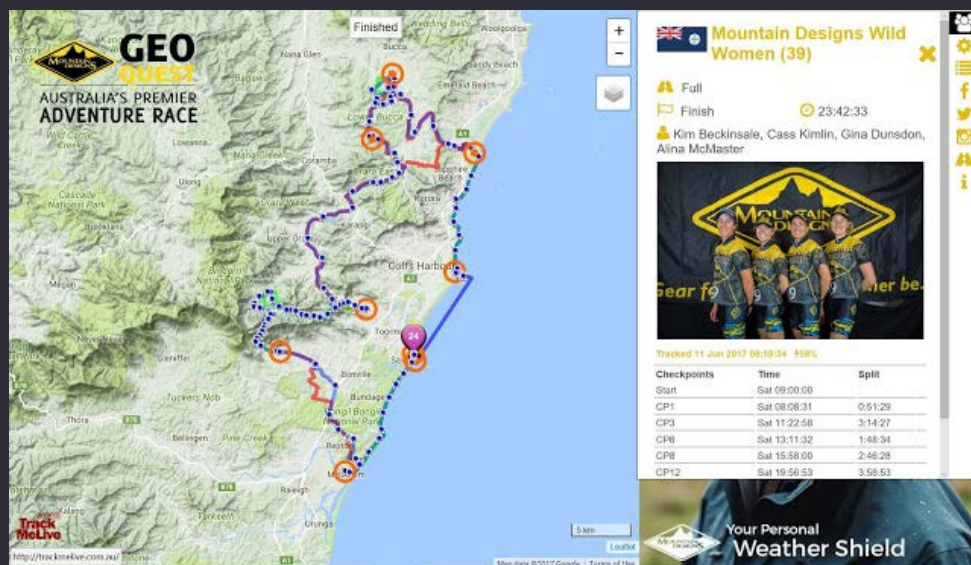
Time to start swimming!

High – Getting to the Line of Geoquest AR

The finish was now a reality for team Mountain Designs Wild Women.....so joined by Alina's family for the final jog up to the Sawtell Surf Club we were greeted by our other amazing support crew Erica and our Tri Adventure friends - the Cowgirls and Cowboys and their crew!



Mountain Designs Wild Women at the Finish Line



Mountain Designs Wild Women - 12th Overall - 1st Women's Team - Full Course

We Mountain Designs Wild Women Kim Beckinsale, Cass Kimlin, Gina Dunsdon and Alina Mc Master are grateful for all the support we have received from our major sponsor **Mountain Designs**, not only for their support of an all-women's team, but also for their passion and foresight in sponsoring Geoquest since its inception in 2002 and providing some of the best gear for taking us to places we'd rather be.



Mountain Designs Wild Women at the presentations

If you are reading this please check out the latest Mountain Designs blog and where possible try to support Mountain Designs when considering equipment and gear for your next adventure.

<http://www.mountainsdesigns.com/blog/news/a-wet-and-wild-2017-mountain-designs-geoquest>

I would also personally like to thank Andrew from AYUP lighting systems for his continued support. The product

is amazing and the fact that we can keep going all through the night in the pouring rain whether it be riding, hiking or paddling is something that the average person would not believe even possible! Ay Up lighting systems have supported me since 2007 when I was lucky to be a part of the winning Geoquest Team, and always look after my team mates as well as well as the Tri Adventure group! If you are looking for a good set of lights for your next adventure – you should definitely check these out. <https://ayup-lights.com/>

So for all the **girls** out there, who might be considering Geoquest here are a few tips:-

1. Start with the GEO HALF and try to develop your skills across all disciplines.
2. Get some skills instruction in the disciplines you are least experienced, if possible in an all-women's environment. Tri Adventure have some upcoming 'Wild Women Skills Clinics' – 16th July, 12th August, 2nd September. Contact us at [Tri Adventure](#) for more information about these upcoming clinics.
3. Enter some smaller events first, such as the [Wild Women Adventure Race](#) where you get to test out your skills in an all-women's environment over a course created by women for women. Alternatively there are smaller upcoming events such as the Northern Rivers Raid and the MOJO Raid, so check out the [Qld Rogaine Association](#) for more details. Then there is also the iconic [Hells Bells and Fairy Bells](#) Adventure Race located in the Sunshine Coast Area.

Why not also have a go at some single discipline events in your local area, such as foot rogaines, orienteering, trail running, mountain biking and paddling as these provide you with some great training and preparation for adventure racing as well.

4. Remember that for most of us Adventure Racing is a lifestyle sport where we test ourselves physically and mentally against what nature and 'man' aka race director throws at us. So always expect the unexpected – maps that are not perfect, conditions that are not perfect, and situations that are not perfect and just deal with it.....trust me, this will help you cope in other situations in your life that you are faced with and is better than what any doctor or therapist can prescribe! It is not a sport about doing what the masses do, it is about doing something that you think makes you a healthy, fit, strong and happy!
5. Most of all, if you want to get into Adventure Racing and Geoquest in particular you want to be out there doing these adventures with like-minded people that you know, trust and like to be around, and everything will just seem easy.....maybe not at the timebut after you finish you will reap the rewards of adventure racing!

Written by Kim Beckinsale June 2017

Posted by [Mountain Designs Wild Women](#) at 17:55

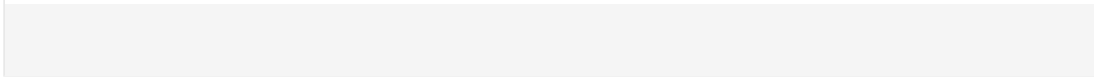


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