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NOV 30 XPD WORLD CHAMPS RACE REPORT – BY  
posted by peter KARINA VITIRITTI

Our shop Ambassador Karina recently took on the best adventure races in the world at the XPD Adventure World Champs in NSW a few weeks ago. See her race report below.....

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Sat: 10.00am to 4.00pm  
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Location

194 Bulleen Road,  
Bulleen, Victoria, AUS, 3105  
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XPD World Champs Race Report – by Karina Vitiritti

XPD in Australia 2016 was the World Champs in Adventure Racing, it wasn't a matter of if we were racing, it was only a matter of who from our team was going to line up on



the start line. Dynamite Adventure – Belgravia Leisure were never going to miss a World Champs opportunity in our Country, racing over similar terrain to Victoria, in a similar climate and of course we wanted to see how a team of mates who were joined together from our kids sport and the wonderful Warrandyte community we live in, would stack up against the professionals, the international teams who travel the world racing.

I often get asked how do you prepare for a race like this and the obvious answer is train, train, train which we do and we do plenty of. The part which is learn't from experience is the mental training and the teamwork required to execute a positive, fun and successful race. My attitude once we were in the car travelling to NSW turned to the mental attitude that myself and the team would bring to the race, as once you hit that start line you can't control the training that you may or may not have done, you can't control the course and you certainly can't control mother nature, it is all about your attitude and working together to get through the adventure. Our team was made up Gus (my adopted big brother by choice, also from Warrandyte who I have raced with for 3 years and train with weekly), Tim (young gun from Gippsland Victoria, this was his 1st Expedition race, but has raced in our team for over 1 year) and Liam (Experienced Expedition Racer from Qld).



This adventure would take us on an adventure for 630km in the Shoalhaven region in NSW, the region is known for its stunning beaches, bays, coastline, rivers, caves and amazing National Parks which are the home to many rock formations. A race like this is purposely designed to be challenging and test the teams every step of the way, therefore a ride will always include plenty of hike a bike, a trek will always include

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26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	1	2	3	4	5	6

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obstacles and challenges like water crossings, rock climbing, coasteering and general bush bashing and the kayaking will always include portages, changing tides, rapids and swell. All 4 teammates must stay within 100m of each other at all times finding many checkpoints along the way, navigating with only maps and a compass.

Navigation is obviously a massive part of this race but other vital aspects are sleep management, food intake, injury prevention/management, communication and a positive attitude, these elements will play a big role in how the team is working as one and ultimately how fast they are moving forward in the right direction.

A race like this is massive, there were 14 different legs in total and we covered 115km Trekking/Running, 320km Mountain Biking, 5km Ca@ving and 185km Kayaking/Packrafting. Some of the more memorable parts of the race were:



Hike a bike decent along the side of a cliff, had many teams in a conga line. Passing one bike at a time up and down over massive rocks, whilst navigating through narrowly spaced trees all while on the side of a cliff with a drop that would end your race if you fell down and destroy your bike. Teamwork was a must, this hike would have been challenging without the bike

Three of the Four treks were coastal along the NSW beaches, these coasteering legs delivered lots of sand running, several tidal river mouth crossings, rock scrambling and some amazing rainforest walking tracks. Hitting all of these treks in the late afternoon, we were powered along by the sunset.

The Budawang Range trek was a critical leg of the race for us, trekking is usually our slowest leg and the navigation was challenging, so the goal was to keep moving forward at a rapid pace in the right direction. Gus decided to strip off down to his jocks and gaitors for this leg which definitely took the focus off the dry rocky long climb in hot conditions that we were about to scramble up. Once up the climb and on the flatlands, we were surrounded by spectacular cliffs and spoilt with ferns, rainforests and sand caves everywhere.

Caving was the mystery discipline, this involved squishing our bodies through wombat size tunnels to collect checkpoints underground with limited air. Many laughs and jokes were shared whilst squishing our bodies in various directions, its fair to say the Caving was much more difficult than any of us had imagine. The hardest part of this leg was definitely finding the cave entrances with a map that looked like it was from the early 1900's.

The sketchy loose rock decent down into the Bungonia Slot Canyon was challenging, especially on limited sleep at night. Lucky we had our helmets on as a medium sized

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rock was dislodged by myself at one point and made a quick decent down into the Canyon only just missing one of our team mates. Sleeping on the sand under the stars at the bottom on the Canyon was a definite highlight, it would have been nice to take it all in for more than 10 seconds but sleep was the priority. Navigating along the Creek through the Canyon was amazing, what started with sand and pebbles, quickly turned into massive rocks in various formations, these boulder ended up being the size of elephants. Lots of rockclimbing and teamwork to navigate the best and safest way through these massive boulders which eventually opened up into a creek bed with trees and smaller rocks which took us all the way down to the Shoalhaven and the start of a whitewater rafting fun.

Whitewater rafting down the Shoalhaven River would have been a hoot if the water level was higher. This top section of rapids included walking, floating, going forwards, backwards and plenty of luck picking the right lines. Our carbon paddles were given the ultimate test.

Kayaking down the Shoalhaven was probably our most challenging leg, we had been paddling all day, it was dark, we were tired, cold and really wanted to be out of these bath tub like boats. The sleep monsters had definitely set in, with Gus seeing an artist trail on the cliffs above that I believe wasn't real and myself struggling with the freezing conditions the priority was to push on to the TA which had warm showers and a tent. Tim took charge of motivation, he had a tough gig keeping Gus awake and getting me to keep paddling as I had the chill shakes.

The last 18km trek to the finish we all surprisingly felt great. We opted for a relaxed approach, enjoyed the scenery, had a few laughs, talked to the locals and our Aussie race mates who had come down the Mollymook to cheer us on. Crossing the line there was a sense of relief and happiness, we were stoked to come 28th in the world and finish strong.

Teamwork and a positive attitude was vital to our teams success, the camaraderie between Dynamite Adventure is amazing. Egos need to be put aside, respect and trust are a must, knowing your strengths and limitations and when to seek input all drives a team to making good choices and ultimately going safely in the right direction. At times our team was tested and our teamwork wasn't always flawless, yes there was tension, but it was managed and we moved forward as a team. This teamwork isn't built overnight, 3 of us have raced and trained together for many years, our personalities click, we respect each others skills and enjoy each others company. We are like a family out there and most of the time can read each without too much communication, the boys throw me the tow line and push me along often without me asking, things just happen.



In summary we had a fantastic race, 28th in the world and the 5th Aussie team in the premier mixed category, this result was better than we expected. Our navigation had us going in the right direction most of the time, with only a couple of errors which we didn't lose much time for, we only had minor feet and body fatigue issues and we had no mechanicals on the bike or gear issues. Experience in one of these races is the key, we raced smart by not going out too hard and although we worked the transitions as fast as we could we also took the time required to make sure we were in the best shape possible to tackle the next leg. Knowing your teammates and working together definitely came into play, at times the pace was dropped off while one of us was in a world of hurt, we understand that these hurt locker moments come and go and it is important to work as a team to get through them one by one. Everyone has these moments, it is a part of Adventure Racing and ultimately why we do this crazy sport is for the fun times but also to push our bodies to the extreme.

\*Congratulations from all of us at Topgear Cycles to Karina and the Team, amazing effort shown to just get to the finish line!

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