

“The Track that was never there”

Track notes from team 91 at the 2009 Paddy Pallin Rogaine

Coolendel. A serene green grassed riverside camping accommodation. Well, that is until 600+ rogainers and support staff descended on this remote spot. I managed to find my team mates on Saturday night and set up camp near the hash house so we didn't have far to walk to dinner. After a hearty dinner we socialised with members of the Bankstown Bushwalkers, partaking of a fine selection of “I'm not going to win this Rogaine tomorrow anyway” wines accompanied with some “I'll burn this off in the Rogaine tomorrow” chocolate coated slice.

The rogaine started with a bang, well actually, it was a whistle. We headed with the masses to the creek crossing at checkpoint 11, where rogainers were clenched arm in arm carefully stepping through the rapids. It was here we discovered that rogainers don't float very well. It was also where I discovered my camera wasn't waterproof, hence the lack of photos



The Shoalhaven near Nowra, where competitors were found days later after being swept from the rapids at Coolendel

On the other side there was a line of bums moving upwards as competitors scrambled up the side of the ridge to checkpoint 81.



Simulation of the sound a rogainers head makes contact with a low lying branch

We could especially feel it pulling us back as we walked up the road between checkpoint 59 & checkpoint 80

My excitement got the better of me as I reached out to punch the checkpoint, and I got nudded on the forehead by broken branch.. Even after my use of a colourful vocabulary, I still remembered to punch. We then headed off up into dem hills to find some more checkpoints. This was the section where we discovered what gravity was, because we were going up

and down steep tracks a lot.

Checkpoint 30 forced us to stop and take in a spectacular view over Coolendel. (I guess that's why it was named "Coolendel lookout" on the map?) Darn I wish I had a camera. Oh that's right, I did, until it drowned. We and a few other teams enjoying lunch looked down on the city of tents. We thought we could see a very suspect wombat hanging around Bobby's tent.

We met our two dinner companions we had only met last night (now we never *did* get their names) looking defeated by checkpoint 90. They were walking on a road that wasn't there (Well, not on the map). Could this road be part of a conspiracy? Did the CIA remove the track from the map to foil us? We took a bearing towards an attack point right of checkpoint 90 then turned left at the creek. We kept going when we didn't find the checkpoint as we were already thinking of the time. It was only later it dawned on us that we should of gone down the creek for a bit more of a search. I swear I heard Lucy from the Peanuts cartoon cry out "YOU BLOCKHEAD CHARLIE BROWN, IT'S 90 POINTS, WHAT WERE YOU THINKING!?!?"

We made up for it by heading straight up the peak to checkpoint 100 using some textbook navigation following an accurate compass bearing. We were expecting checkpoint next to a "larger scribbly gum" All the other scribbly gums that it was compared to must have been really small, as we didn't see it until we were right on top of it.. As we returned on a back bearing we came across another team walking on another track that "wasn't there". In the true spirit of rogaining sportspersonship, I gave them our compass bearing.



A bad day's rogaining always beats a good day at work!

I must have still been suffering from the effects of "We're not going to win this anyway" wine but I hope they did make it.

We navigated back down a "pass" (Actually, it may have been a pass that "wasn't there") and we managed to negotiate our way down close behind another team. People came from nowhere in all directions and scrambled up the 5m boulders (they were, we measured them) to checkpoint 101.

After farting around getting down the pass, we were now we were falling into rogainers trap number 999, don't lose your position on the map. Of course, we will put it down to the fact we were scrambling down the steep sandy slope like a gazelle being chased by a leopard that made us miss checkpoint 71. "Haste is the enemy of speed" they say.

Now that our entire bodies had been heated up by our adrenalin fueled exertion, it was quite pleasant to stick our feet back in the river at the crossing to checkpoint 35. This exuberance lasted about 15 seconds, when you realized how frickin' cold the water was. After a while you couldn't feel your feet.

Now it was just a short pebble walk to checkpoint 21 and home, sausage sangers and soup. It all ended with a siren instead of a whistle just to let those still out on the course how late they were. Is there anyone still left on that mountain?

James Stuart