

RACE REPORT

After a 2 year forced break Fully Rad adventure racing was finally back. On the weekend 11&12 December a rescheduled Wildside Adventure Race was held in the Camden Haven area of Australia's east coast, south of Port Macquarie. With the threat of covid lockdowns looming and state borders open just in time, 42 teams from across NSW and Queensland toed the start line in the small coastal town of Dunbogan.

Wildside 2021 was final race of the A1 Australian Adventure Racing Series with top 36hr teams vying for points and the title of Aus Champs on the line. With the support of Port Macquarie Hastings Council, Hammer Nutrition, Amp Human and The Brork Life, alongside local scout groups and Marine Rescue it was time for adventure.

The journey ahead for teams was a mix of trekking, swimming, paddling, mountain biking, rafting and abseiling covering distances of between 40km and 144km's. The course had very little elevation but a variety of terrain including beaches, forests and estuary lakes, creeks and mangroves. What made this race unique was not only the mix of wet and dry routes but the decision points for teams – decisions regarding checkpoint collection, routes and equipment. The 36hr teams started at 0600 on the Saturday morning and the 8hr and 20hr teams started at midday, all with the goal of returning to the finish line in Dunbogan within time and as a team.



The race started with the first decision point. A rogaine trek leg across Dunbogan and Laurieton townships taking in the forests at the foot of North Brother mountain and the coastal mangroves, sand dunes and beaches of Dunbogan. Which checkpoints in what order and how wet to get influenced decision making. Each start saw teams heading in different directions. Some opting for a dry route while others jumping straight in and getting wet. In the 36hr race it was Rogue Adventure, Tiger Adventure and Team Proximity that made the right calls finishing in just over 100minutes. The 20hr race McSquared and It's a Bromance Thing nailed the leg and Team GB, RPM Multisport and Relentless Tiger were the top 8hr teams.



Leg 2 was a straight forward paddle across Camden Haven inlet, up Sting Ray Creek, towards the Queens Lake Sailing Club. With easy navigation on this leg the only battle teams had was the tide. At one point it was as if teams were stationary as they paddled against the run out tide.



The next leg was 'that' leg. Every race has one. This leg was a 14km trek/raft leg. Teams left the transition on foot knowing they had one major water crossing and the option of paddling across the lake or traversing the scrub before heading up a deep creek line towards the exit checkpoint. The additional catch was teams had to carry whatever equipment they used with them for the duration of the leg. Instructions were deliberately non-committal as it was up to the teams to decide what equipment they wanted to use based on their strengths and strategy. The 'choice' factor challenged teams with many struggling pre-race to decide how to manage the on water legs. The end result was a range of craft with packrafts all the way down to swimming with dry bags in use. Hindsight is a brilliant teacher. The teams that used pack rafts and opted for a heavy carry, fared better than those who opted for a light load and a bush bash. The quickest 36hr team was Rogue Adventure in 2hrs 10min, the quickest 20hr team was Snails Pace in 2hrs 32min and in the 8hr it was Jerky vs Biltong in 2hrs 9min.



Arriving at the next TA, still wet from the paddle and trek, teams headed out on their mountain bikes. This ride leg included fire trails and an old piece of single track with the added feature of an abseil off a beach side cliff face. It was the abseil that made this leg, presenting teams with a stunning coastal view as they roped 10m down an exposed cliff face to the beach below. After the ropes the 8hr teams rode towards the finish back in Dunbogan. The 20hr and 36hr teams were

only midway through their Wildside journey and continued their ride down into the Crowdy Bay National Park and Johns River State Forest.



First across the line in the 8hr race was team of 2 Jerky vs Biltong in a time of 6hrs and 12min. Second and third was a sprint finish with Team GB, the old guard, narrowly beating RPM Multisport, young bucks, to the line. The first 4 person team the all-girl team Yeah the Girls.



Leg 5 for 20hr and 36hr teams saw them ride down into the National Park and to the edge of the State Forest. This was the 'business end' of the race with a challenging foot rogaine and bike leg to come. Arriving at TA5 teams were greeted with another decision point. The forest was a maze of tracks and trails and within were a series of checkpoints they had to collect – in any order. The lead teams hit this leg late in the afternoon and the back markers deep in the night. As always a rogaine in the daylight is much easier than at night. The top teams finishing just on sunset and later teams well into the night. After the rogaine teams were back on their mountain bikes to explore more of the forest before heading back to the lake for a final paddle. There were some tough checkpoints on this leg and teams with the best navigators (and a bit of luck) stood out. In the 36hr race team of 2 Alpine Quest were the quickest on this leg, completing the ride and rogaine in 7hrs and 6min. It's a Bromance Thing and River Runners were the fastest of the 20hr teams.



The final leg of the race was a short paddle up the Camden Haven inlet to finish back at the start, in Dunbogan. This paddle leg started with a 1.5km portage – not the best way to finish a race. Some teams planned ahead and brought trolleys while others just toughed it out. Tide definitely played a factor with the paddle and in the 36hr race Tiger Adventure and Tigeroos nailed the leg finishing in under 90min. In the 20hr course the all-girl teams of Whine Later (T4) and Karaka (T2) were the best placed paddlers in 100mins.



First across the line in the 36hr, A1 race, in a cracking hot time and proving local knowledge is a definite advantage, was Rogue Adventure in 18hr and 33min. This was the third time they have won Wildside and sets them up as the team to beat in 2022. Second place went to Tiger Adventure in 20hrs 8min and third was Gold Coast Tiger in 20hrs 14min. The first team of 2 was Alpine Quest in 20hrs 39min.



First across the line in the 20hr race was team of 2 It's a Bromance Thing in 15hrs 23min. The first team of 4 was McSquared in 16hrs 43min.



From early Sunday morning through to lunchtime teams crossed the finish line. With a high number of first time racers this year, mixing with the old guard, teams arrived with stories of lost checkpoints, wrong turns, sleep monsters and navigation wins. The stand out for all teams was the location and variety of legs with all enjoying the mix of terrain, decision points and stunning backdrops. The real

winner out of this year's Wildside Adventure Race was the sport of adventure racing. After the turbulence of the last 2 years it was great to have people back outside and exploring. The surge in entries and newcomers bodes well for the years ahead. As the final pieces of gear are cleaned and stored, plans are well under way for Wildside 2022 as it heads back into the mountains with a challenging course through the Barrington region of the north coast. Entries are open now – wildsideadventurerace.com.au.

Wildside 2021 was proudly presented by Fully Rad Adventures and supported by Port Macquarie Hastings Council, Hammer Nutrition, Amp Human and The Brork Life. Shout out to the Camden Haven region community who embraced the event and our incredible event team. Special mention to the Camden Haven Sea Scouts, Wauchope Scouts and Camden Haven Marine Rescue. In particular the Wauchope Scouts who raised the bar on how to take care of teams at a TA. Cheers to Sam Dalton from edge experience who ran the ropes and Mick Maher from Beach to brother Trail Festival who loaned us gear. Lastly, thank you to all the racers that came and tackled the course. Well done to you all for pushing way past your comfort zone – you can now call yourselves – adventure racers.

