



Ecomotion Pro – 440km Adventure Race

(McCain Adventure Addicts: Graham “Tweet” Bird, Tatum “Hobbit” Prins, James “Jambo” Lea-Cox and Andre “G-man” Gie **Seconding specialist:** Jeanette “Bubbles” Walder)

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Before we start we would like to send a huge thanks to the organization of the Ecomotion Pro. The Race director, Siad and his team did a fantastic job and organised a top class race. A special thanks to Marina at the Ecomotion office who handle all the English speaking teams. Her help was invaluable. Finally a big thanks to our two Brazilian support crew; Victor and Airton, who made our lives simple with there 10 seater van and infectious enthusiasm.

The race report is broken down into four different reports written by each of the team members:

Graham Bird's Report:



Brazil is one of those exotic places that every adventurous person dreams about visiting. So as an Adventure Racer, when you find out about an Adventure Race happening in Brazil, you add it to your wish list of races to do!!





After our disastrous race at the Adventure Racing World Championships in Scotland in May this year, we were looking for a race we could do that would suit us and restore our confidence. With Ecomotion having received rave reviews from the international teams that had competed in previous races and the awesome coverage we saw of the previous year's race, it seemed the ideal race. And by all accounts it would be a warmer race than Scotland!!

With an entry secured, we then set about getting a team organized for the race. With Sakkie Meyer, our trusty workhorse, having moved to New Zealand, myself and Jeannette needed to start the rebuilding process once again. After some good recommendations we approached James Lea-Cox who has been doing Adventure racing for the past 4 years to become a member of the team. We also approached Tatum Prins, who after her strong showing at the ARWC in Scotland, we felt would add a wealth of 500km+ experience to the team and would add an interesting dynamic with two girls in the team. However, unfortunately three weeks before the start Jeannette Walder was hospitalized with an ear infection forcing her to withdraw from the team. We then looked to Knysna based Adventure, Andre Gie to replace Jeannette.

Unlike the two previous international races we had competed in, the Kit list was fairly basic and simply and required a very minimal amount of purchasing or borrowing. It made a nice change.

After relatively painless flights, with all kit still intact, we arrived in Rio de Janeiro late Wednesday,





17th October. After spending the night close to the famous Copacabana beach and wondering around the beach on the Thursday morning, we were collected by the organization for the 200km trip to the race venue. The trip wound its way through rural farm land before arriving at the beach town of Armação dos Búzios. This town could have come right out of a beach resort postcard and our hotel overlooked the beach!! It was an amazing venue for the race headquarters.

Friday morning we headed to the registration tent and completed the necessary forms and kit checks. The whole process took about 1 hour. What a refreshing change. The organisers checked the climbing kit and first aid kits thoroughly and did not seem that interested in the rest, rather relying on our judgement and experience to carry/pack what we needed based on the kit list they had published. The rest of Friday and Saturday was spent sorting out food and lazing around.

As part of the entry fee the organisers provided each international team with a support crew. Our crew of Victor Ponce and his mate

Airton arrived together with their 10 seat transporter on Saturday afternoon. Saturday afternoon also saw a welcome lunch and t-shirt exchange.

Finally after much anticipation, we headed to the race briefing on Saturday night. An extravagant event with lots of speeches by sponsors etc. Finally we received our race books and pre plotted maps. We then spent a few hours reviewing the course and marking the maps in preparation for the technical briefing that was held on Sunday morning. Sunday afternoon we all head back to Rio de Janeiro for the start.

The start was due to take place at 21h00 at a beach below the famous Sugarloaf hill. Unfortunately the locals caused a scene and the start was delayed. Finally after a few hours of uncertainty as to what was going to happen, we finally headed to a new start beach a few hundred metres from the original beach. Again an extravagant event. The organisers had two massive hot air balloons erected on the beach with the 110 kayaks for the 55 teams laid out. Finally at 23h05 on Sunday, 21 October, with two helicopters circling overhead the race was started!!

The race was made up of 13 legs, covering a distance of 444km. It started with a double kayak paddle across the Rio de Janeiro bay and out one of the rivers that flowed into the bay. We then spent the next four days mountain biking and trekking over the state of Rio de Janeiro before ending back on the coast for the final 26km paddle to the finish on the beach in front of the hotel in Armação dos Búzios. The race was always interesting and the legs were not too long. Navigation was tricky, especially in the mountain forests where finding the right trail proved tough. We got to see our seconds regularly which made the nutrient and foot care so much easier. Unfortunately we can't seem to get accurate time splits, so can't give a breakdown of the time we spent on each leg. (see breakdown of the legs below).

Leg 1	Paddle	48km
Leg 2	MTB	45km
Leg 3	Trek	35km
Leg 4	MTB	69km
Leg 5	Trek / Rope	9km – Cancelled
Leg 6	Trek	23km
Leg 7	Trek	32km
Leg 8	Horse ride	17km
Leg 9	MTB	51km
Leg 10	Trek	27km
Leg 11	Trek / raft / trek	23km
Leg 12	Special event	17km
Leg 13	MTB	23km
Leg 14	Paddle	26km

After a poor start in the kayaks, followed by a disastrous first trek where we got caught in a race storm and mist on top of the mountains, we were lying 32nd on the Tuesday morning after only 30 hours of racing. We then began to find our rhythm and started to climb up the rankings. Good navigation on the next major trekking leg saw us get back to twelfth position and in very close contact with eleventh. We spent the remaining legs in a close tussle



with them, before the race was stopped at the third last leg. The top six teams had completed the special event which involved pushing a cart along the railway line for 17km, before the railway department stopped the organisation using the railway track. We had the option of continuing and having 4 hours added to our time or stopping for 4 hours before continuing with the final two legs of the race. We slept and headed out recharged for the 23km MTB and 26km paddle to the finish.

We crossed the finish line at 0h37 on the Friday morning after 97h31 of racing. After the time adjustments we finished in 12th position, 2 mins behind 11th!!

The race has many memorable moments that we will cherish for many years. The team worked well together and combined to form a strong team. I did not have one of my strongest races and thanks must go to my team mates who helped me through the difficult stages. Also big thanks to Jeannette, who together with Victor and Airton were brilliant in supporting us and keep us well fed and happy throughout the race.

Bring on 2008 Ecomotion!!

Tatum Prin's Report



So here I sit on my comfy couch in Cape Town, a cup of coffee, a rusk and finally some time to reflect on what was one of the most spectacular races I've done.

ECOMOTION PRO 2007 - Rio de Janeiro

Snow Patrol (eyes open) is playing in the background (the theme song) and its making my whole body tingle with goose bumps and excitement as it takes me back to Brazil...

When I close my eyes I can picture sugarloaf hill, the 2 hot air balloons on the beach, bright orange flames, helicopters buzzing above us, over 200 competitors all talking at once, hugging, wishing each other luck, flashing lights, camera crew, photographers, seconds

carrying huge big lit torches, an atmosphere and energy that was just so overwhelming. One that I will never forget.

The start was crazy as we jumped onto our bath-tub like boats and made our way very slowly through the main shipping lines, dodging boats everywhere. When you looked around there seemed to be millions of little boats with people frantically paddling, flashing strobes and glow sticks. For a split second I turned around and saw their famous landmark “The statue of Christ” looking down on the whole of Rio with all the night lights sparkling below. That’s when it really hit home and I realized where we were and that we were setting off on another adventure!

The paddle was long and tedious, the boats were not made for speed or comfort and a lot of the teams took strain. One of the highlights of the whole race was when we hit the mangrove swamps and there wasn’t enough water to paddle. We hopped out and instantly sunk to our knees in mud, it was glorious! We had to go on all fours to distribute our body weight so we didn’t sink and push the boats to deeper water. It was a great relief to be out of the boat and a huge amount of fun. This made me laugh a lot!

The next leg was a great bike leg with enough climbing and pushing of the bike to last a life time. It was unbelievable! Initially it was a nice undulating track, and then it hit a single track that just went up and up and up.

Imagine pushing your bike up Platteklip Gorge but with no switch backs, it just went straight up. Then add the 100% humidity to that, mosquitoes and you’ve got yourself our second leg of the race. The only consolation was that “what goes up must come down” and the down hill certainly made up for it!



Every trekking leg was absolutely breath taking, with views of massive granite rock and mountains, rain forests as far the eye could see and big frogs that I am sure were on steroids, we were in utter amazement at where the course was taking us. Each trekking leg held its own special kind of beauty, during and after each leg it was a topic of conversation at what we had just seen. Our first trekking leg proved to be the most challenging. Many teams found themselves stuck on the mountain not being able to find the trail as we had a huge storm with torrential downpour; the visibility was almost non existent with the cloud and rain engulfing us. We



tried our hardest to find the trail but eventually succumbed to bivvy bags and body warmth. A whole lot of shivering, rain and no shelter. It was a long hard night. We lost a lot of

time but the 2 options we had were both rotten and at the time that was the best one. I have to laugh (I'm really sorry James) but as we were lying huddled together poor James was going through a very unpleasant stomach problem which leaves me with an image of him looking like a drowned rat with a very pained expression, his bivvy bag tangled around his legs and James heading to the nearest bush.....this happened at least 3 times. It was hysterical.. for us...not him.. •

Horse riding – ummmm – if any of you horse ride you will know that you can't learn to horse ride in 2 hours. This leg was a definite highlight, with all of us petrified of horses and our horses taking off at any opportunity to catch the team ahead of us. I was terrified and I know for certain I wasn't the only one. We decided that trotting was definitely the most uncomfortable thing ever, especially if you are suffering from a bit of chafe. You should have heard the boys squeal! Very entertaining! A particular memory is of Tweet hanging on for dear life, jiggling all over the place and screaming at the top of his lungs, “ why would anyone want to ride these beasts?” You had to be there but for me that was



so funny I almost fell off my horse. Being sleep deprived, tired and slightly hysterical on the horse it didn't take much to get me over the edge but by the end we all seemed to actually enjoy ourselves. I might even try it again. :-)

I could go on and on about this race, the Check points we went to and in what order and where we were lying, all the details of the race but I'm almost positive one of the guys will write about that. I'm really proud of our team, I think we did brilliantly. We were a team that helped, motivated and supported each other through out the whole race. As teams do! We worked extremely well together and had massive amounts of laughs along the way. Thank you Tweet, Jambo (James & Rambo) and Gie-man, you guys were simply awesome and I will certainly treasure all our fantastic times, including our henna tattoos, caprianhas and Brazilian babe watching!

Thank you to our incredible seconds! Bubbles - you were amazing with all your energy and good food made with so much love! What would we have done without you??? Thank you Dave, Victor and Airton (our two Brazilian seconds) who were just the greatest people. I loved getting a high five and a fist punch every time we arrived and left transition. You guys rocked with the constant rain, no showers and town streets as transitions. **THANK YOU**



So many things come to mind when I look back on the race but its impossible to write it all down, I'll be here all day and you'll be reading this as a bed time story for the next week.

BUT.....one very last thing I have to say is why I do AR. So many people ask and I usually just reply "because I love it." They think we are a crazy breed of adventure fitness freaks. We are a bit but I do it for more than that. I do it for the feeling I get at the start of a race, for the feeling at the finish, the new friends made, the old friends friendship, to be part of something that is so enormous and full of life, for the incredible places we see, for the pure adventure, to be dirty, to explore, to experience, for the passion and lastly I do it because it makes me feel ALIVE!

James Lea-Cox's Report



When Graham "Tweet" Bird first asked me if I was keen to race the Ecomotion in Brazil with the McCain Adventure Addicts I was quite hesitant. Firstly, my longest races had been just over 200km and McCain did not want to just finish, they wanted to finish in the top 15. Seeing that 7 of the world's top ten AR teams would be in attendance this would be a tall order and something to have sleepless nights over. After a few hours

of deliberation and a review of my life assurance policy, I phoned Tweet back and said yes.

And so the McCain Adventure Addicts team saw themselves at OR trying to convince the check-in lady that our bike boxes were not all that heavy. Soon enough we were landing in Sao Paulo before catching a connecting flight to Rio De Janeiro. The skies over Rio were overcast but yet the sensation of being in a totally way out place was wholly evident. Particularly after our taxi ride with a budding Aryton Senna. Our first stop was Copacabana where we stayed in the local backpackers. This is where I first met our 4th team member Andre Gie. The lad looked strong! I needed a Capriinha to sooth the nerves.

A final bus drive had us in Búzios and race headquarters. The town of Búzios was fascinating. Tiny cobbled roads with numerous restaurants and shops dotted the coast line interspersed with various hotels and guest houses. The Addicts had a few days before the race started and for once, or so I have heard, the race registration and gear checking was a painless exercise compared to other international races. What with sightseeing and shopping our pre-race time was very relaxed. A stark contrast to other races I have done. Finally, all the relaxing

culminated in a race opening lunch where we got to stare in awe at the likes of the international teams Buff, Bjurfors, Merrell, Orion Health and Sole. These teams looked insanely strong and I started to really wonder whether we would be able to compete against such gods of AR. That evening the race organization presented the opening ceremony. This was a visual and audible roller coaster of race images, graphics, deep throbbing music and Brazilian party spirit. We came away from the ceremony, maps and route book in tow, feeling incredibly motivated and excited for the 444km that lay ahead. This was South America's premier event and by the look of things it was going to be an experience unlike any other.

Our race started at the foot of the Sugarloaf in Rio De Janeiro Bay at 11 pm on Sunday night together with ceremonious hot air balloons and fighter helicopters. The excitement was high as teams jostled for position along the beach. I was very apprehensive at this point as the first leg was a ~50km ocean and river paddle in boats comparable to Epics, just worse. We finished the paddle in 10 hours and the last few kilometers nearly killed me. I had heat stroke, was dehydrated, probably crushed a few vertebrae and was not exactly feeling





confident that I would be able to finish 400 more kilometers. Once on the bikes, however, I slowly recovered enough to haul my bike up vertical climbs in searing heat and jungle humidity. I even resorted to converting my cycling kit to my own version of a Borat suit to cool down.

The first hike was to be the toughest. We had an ascent that did not really stop. And then the mist curled in followed by its close associate, a mountain downpour. After losing the vague trail and struggling to comprehend a cliff in 5 meter visibility, we took a decision to bivvy until dawn. In the rain. And it was cold. I can categorically state that those 5 hours were amongst my worst in the mountains. I came close to losing a tooth from shivering and I even had some third world dysentery to contend with.

The rest of the race enjoyed wet weather. I say enjoyed because at least you can make a plan to prevent yourself from getting wet and freezing to death. If the rest of the race had been a heat and humidity fest like day 1 we

may have been regular visitors to the medic tent in search of a drip or two.

Subsequent race legs involved tough hiking legs that generally followed the principle of “up and over” and seriously mud drenched bike sections. I actually started to prefer going up, as by halfway the wet weather had seriously affected my feet. Going down hill was painful. Uphill on the other hand actually felt good. Still, my feet were duct taped to the max. The hiking legs involved some technical navigation and for once I was glad to follow Tweet and Andre who expertly navigated us through winding forest trails finally popping us out at small mountain towns and the promise of seeing Bubbles and our local seconds. Luckily we were able to get off our feet on occasion for a horse riding and then a rafting section.

The rain continued, stopping only to consider its actions, and then unleashing another downpour. When the weather finally started to get to me, we arrived at the final paddling put-in. The marshals kindly informed us that we had missed the darkzone we did not know about! We insisted that we should paddle. As much as I was dreading the final 26km ocean paddle (note, at night) there was no way I was spending the night at the dock when I could paddle for a few hours and then relax in the hotel. The marshals saw sense and allowed us onto the water.

When we paddled through the backline I started to think I could die at sea! Thankfully the boats are very stable and despite the waves, which drove us mad for 5 hours, the final paddle was not all that bad. I really thought it would be worse.

The lights of the finish on Bones Beach (sounds better in Portuguese) were finally in touching distance as we hit the beach to the deep beats of the Ecomotion tune. We did not have much of an audience as it was 1am, but yet the feeling of crossing the finish line and standing on the podium was unlike any I have experienced in an adventure race. It was an incredibly emotional moment. And then the sleep monster took over and white sheets looked really inviting. I prefer finishing at night. It has the extra promise of sleep. Something that we did not have much of over the past 98 hours.

With the race over, we all enjoyed the town of Búzios yet again without 450km looming in the future.

And to crown things off? A really amazing closing ceremony with photographs of the race, video footage and the top 8 teams. Wow. And somehow it was better than the opening ceremony!

A big thank you goes out to my team mates, who throughout the heat, the rain, the cold and damn mud, always put on a massive grin. Tweet (we are trying to change this to Teet), for your expert organizational ability, team leadership and first class navigation. Never once did I feel concerned over where we were going. Tatum and the gun show? Well, I would have to echo the comments from Marcel of Team Sole, “damn that is one tough chick”. And I’m glad I won’t hear “are you eating? Drinking?” for a while. Thanks Mum! Andre or Gie-man. He wore some seriously stylish trousers for the whole race and successfully dragged us through some Amazonian-like



jungle with compass and map in hand. I think the team should buy him a 40 litre pack as his energy never seems to dry up! And finally Bubbles. I know you were super grumpy that you could not race, but I can say you did a brilliant job of supporting us in less than ideal situations. We were VERY GLAD you were there!

Andre Gie's Report



Most teams had months to prepare for Ecomotion, I had 2 weeks. Unfortunately for Bubbles she was taken down by a viral illness 2 weeks before the race, opening the door for me to join the team in Brazil.

Getting to the start was a mission involving 3 flights, a taxi trip, bus ride and a total of about 30 hours. We all eventually got to Búzios,

200km north of Rio and managed to sort out the heaps of gear we had brought along from SA.

The race briefing in Búzios the night before the start was insane. The Brazilians are loco and were cheering, dancing and partying like maniacs. It set a good vibe for the start the following evening at the foot of Sugarloaf Mountain in Rio.

The start was full on, 60 teams 2 hot air balloons and army helicopters were all set loose near midnight on the Sunday. The first leg was a 10 plus hour paddle across the shipping lanes and into a mangrove swamp. We luckily got over the worst of the mud banks with a quickly falling tide and only had a few hundred meters of mangrove mud crawling with the boats. The first PC was incorrectly placed which caused a bit of confusion, we paddled upstream just behind the other 20 or so teams that had joined us to look for the missing PC.

After reaching PC2 without too much swearing at the fat boats, it was a switch to MTB for 40 odd km. The first



20km were fast and easy, broken up by a team stop for ice cold Cokes. We quickly caught and passed a few teams on the bikes. The road turned to jeep track and then became a singletrack through gnarly jungle. The track climbed 500m descended 200m and then ascended another 800, sweaty work pushing the bikes through the jungle in 100% humidity.

A quick transition and we chased one of the Brazilian teams on foot towards a trailhead into the mountains for another 1000m ascent. A storm rolled in during the night and caught us on the top of the 2200m peak in the middle of the night in the area with no path and many cliffs. Team McCain made the tough call to spend 5-6 hours sitting the night out shivering behind a bush getting some sleep while more than 15 teams were searching for a way off the mountain all around us. James was the unlucky one who had to do the bivvy dash a few times in the night with some stomach issues. In the morning we woke up having slept well through the character building evening. The teams around us were still searching for the path and had not slept. Smart move on our part as we made short work of the sleep deprived teams passing more than 10 teams in the next few hours as we descended into transition. We had now moved up from 31st into the teens.



The next 60km bike followed a river upstream, crossed the watershed and then descended along another river all along a good road. Beautiful riding and feeling good to move consistently fast for a few hours.

The next trek was an epic of around 60-70km with a short 15km horse ride. The trekking was through some awesome mountains with more up and down. The highlight being descending another 1000m through more jungle along a poor path in a rainstorm at night. Epic. Tweet did some good work with the map and we were one of the few teams not to get lost for a few hours on the section. There was a compulsory 1hour rest which we chose to take before the

horse ride to nap and dry our feet. The horse ride was interesting, as no of us know much about horses. Bates looked uncomfortable for the first and only time in the race while James looked like the lone ranger and Tweet nearly lost his foot as his horse stood on it. I would have laughed if I wasn't struggling to sort out the petrol from the brakes on my beast. A surprise 5km hike at the end of the horses took us into transition for some more bike riding.

The roads were not as marked on the maps and had by now turned into a mud fest after 3 days of rain. Full marks to Tweet for nav first half of the section. Once on the correct road we cruised, clipped another CP and passed 2 more sleeping teams. Another huge ascent with no gears and we were back in transition for an hour nap before setting off on the last trek. Huge up, huge down (another 1000m or so) picked up our paddles from Bubbles in a quick transition, few more km along a gravel road and then a fun little paddle in croc-like boats. From the boats we trotted 5km towards our bikes. Apart from a scenic little detour through a swamp the leg went well. Everyone was in good spirits and we were all managing to run the flats and downs with Bates cracking the whip.

The next section was cancelled. It was a special stage which followed a railway track using huge skateboard like carts. Only the first 6 teams did the section and all the others teams drove around the section and got a 4 hour penalty. Free sleep for us, I got the luxury to sleep in the van for 3 hours. Sweet! Another quick bike ride to the coast and we were set for the final battle with the crap boats for 25km to the finish through the night.

The team styled the paddle, no sleep monsters or sea sickness and senses of humour still intact. The sea behaved herself and was flattish throughout the paddle with a tailwind for the first 15km. We paddled too well and our support crew was still sleeping when we arrived at the finish just after midnight after a little under 100hours of racing.

Thanks to McCain for helping us to go on this cool trip. To Tweet for running such a professional, organising so much, and not getting us too lost. Thanks Jambo for keeping me sane in the boat on the final paddle and styling the whole route. Bates you are a machine. Bubbles thank you for putting up with us during the race, feeding us so well and dealing with all those wet socks. Dave the bushman cameraman, for keeping us laughing by being such a goofy dude

The McCain Adventure Addicts wish to thank the following team sponsors who support our adventurous lifestyles:

McCain - For supporting our active lifestyles

PVM - For providing us with nutritional products to keep us going.

Giant Bicycles - For providing the team with exceptional Anthem mountain bikes

Salomon - For the top class footwear

Island Tribe - For protecting us from the harsh African sun.

Squirt - For keeping our Bikes lubed and operating smoothly!



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