



Eden Challenge 2007

(McCain Adventure Addicts: Evert Meintjes, Hanno Smit, Patrick Mosterd and Louise Hemmes!)

Written by Hanno Smit

After a bout of inactivity this winter, stemming from surgery on my neck, i was itching to get back to my old ways and the Eden was in the perfect time slot to test the changes to my periscope.

I managed to assemble a team of three from Knysna being myself (Hanno), Patrick Mosterd and our lass and mother of four, Louise Hemmes. The fourth member came in the shape of



Evert Meintjes, who just like myself, had a very mediocre winter as well as bringing with him not only

many years of experience, but also the vacant ticket of the McCain Adventure Addicts, whom were in Brazil sampling what the Ecomotion will hold for next year's world champs. With our very able seconds, Marnus and Jeremy and copious amounts of fodder and drinks, we arrived at a very relaxed Assegaaybosch Game ranch.

The little accomadation glitches were soon sorted and a typical Heenop race briefing, strewn with delicious english and sponsor speeches followed and the tone was set for Eden 2007: snakes, heat and long drags on the bike.

Friday just past 06:00 and 16 teams set off on foot from the top of the Rooiberg Pass in blustery conditions and with almost 30km ahead of us before T1. We started with a relatively stiff pace, but lost contact with the first three teams on the descent from the mountain top. On the next bike leg we were lying third and were always going to be competitive on the wheels with our team being mostly mtb'ers, but a troublesome PC 3 saw us litterally dump the best part of an hour with huge energy losses.

The rest of the bike leg then became a game of beating the relentless Karoo sun and the heat. Fluid intake became as important as leg strength and by the end of the bike leg we were seriously taking strain as a result of the heat and our bodies trying to keep up with moisture replacement.

Leaving T2 for a 15km hike of perfect route finding terrain saw us getting pummelled by the ghost of the Karoo, who kicked me in my guts and then went on to a relentless exchange of blows onto Evert and simply just did not stop until we stumbled into T3 just after darkness fell.

The damage inflicted by the ghost of the Karoo onto Evert was severe and left us with no choice but to halt all racing. We contemplated taking Evert to hospital for a intravenous, but John Camel, seconder for Team Knysna advised us to sleep it out.

Almost 12 hours later, Evert had managed to drink 2 cups of coffee and eat 2 rusks and felt able to continue with caution.

Leg 4, a MTB leg with long straight roads sped by with an ever improving Evert, who was now eating and drinking with no difficulty. T4 was at a sawmill in a little Switzerland setting and also the start of our third hiking leg, which took us to the top of the foothills and then down a 100m rappel into a pretty kloof section which cooled everyone down to a normal core again.

At T5 we learned that one of the next PC points were cancelled and that motivated us to race for the dark zone at the start of the next leg, the paddle on the lower Breede. Being on the bikes again meant pushing the envelope and touching the red regularly. Our first PC was nicely nestled in the heart of Grootvadersbosch. We were still racing hard and going for the next PC just before Buffelsjags dam as we met up with Team Knysna, who had accepted that they would not make the dark zone and decided to cruise to the transition. The next PC came easy as well as a linkage road to the dam, but time seemed to be going faster than normal. By the time we reached T6, we had raced back into contention with Montrail and Hardrock, but Cyanosis had managed to get on the water and therefor the opportunity to complete the full course of the race before the Sunday morning prizegiving, but it was almost dark and we were more than an hour too late for the dark zone, which meant that not only were we going to sleep

our second night as well (what a race, 2 full nights of sleep!) but also that we were not going to be able to finish the full course before prizegiving the next morning.

At first light four teams: Montrail, Hardrock, Knysna and us set off from T6, a paddling leg of less than 20km, strewn with sharp basalt and technically very demanding. It quickly became evident that the correct craft and river knowledge, especially local river knowledge were essential, not only for a fast time, but also for survival. The water was at a very forgiving level: not too high as it gave one enough time to make decisions and react in time and not too low as to drag over the shallow rocks. We arrived 90min. later at the takeout at Napkysmond, where the river flattens out and prepares itself for the tidal zone and learned that the finish had been moved to T7 and that Eden 2007 has come to an end for us.

This race proved that my periscope is functioning properly again. To Evert it proved that having a chibbie means having less condition and to Patrick and Louise it proved that there is more fun than simply riding a bike. Well done to Jan for sharing with us his beautiful destinations and well done to all who partook in this race.

Birds were wispering that next year's Eden, yes, next year's Eden might be staged in the mystical Knysna forests... woo, whoooo...