



**McCain Adventure Fanatics**  
**Salomon UGE 220km AR - 24 to 27 Jan 2008**  
(Jeanette Walder, James Lea-Cox, Ryan Hoderne and Garren Soutar)  
*Written by Ryan Hoderne*

To mark the start of the AR calendar for 2008, it was to be an exciting excursion to Harrismith and surrounds for the UGE 150/220km adventure race. Nic Mulder, together with his Cyanosis team mates were the en route organizers, with Eugene and Michelle Botha being the event organizers for this event.



(The McCain Adventure Fanatics and the Addicts and the start)

The McCain Adventure Fanatics team for this event included the bike portaging - barbed wire fence climbing Bubbles Walder, James-Lea Cox, the calm & collected navigator, Garren Souter, who is not phased by much & pushes his bike for training & the laaitjie of the team Ryan Hodierna.

We arrived at the Sterkfontein Dam resort on Thursday 24th January, which marked the start venue for this eagerly anticipated race. Race briefing began at 21:30 and started with a few photos that were taken by the race organisers when scouting the route. They included some spectacular views and rock formations in the aptly named "Big Sky Country", a good move to wet the appetite of the 30 or so eager teams. After some last minute preparations, the McCain Fanatics were off to listen to their pillows prior to an appropriate 7am start.

For the first leg, after a Le Mans type start, we were onto the water for a 23km paddle across & around Sterkfontein dam. This leg included some fun PC points on an island and in trees and took just over 2hrs, with us taking out only 10 minutes behind the other McCain team ("McCain Adventure Addicts"). We then headed for the hills on the first 25km hike leg of the race, taking us up and over some breathtaking scenery leading us back into the dam for a short 'n sweet 50m swim before dropping into the next transition at the amazing rock(?).

After a quick kit-check and a good munch, we were onto our bikes for a nightmare ride or should I say hike! It was a measured

87km stretch which ended up being a 110km leg for the Fanatics. Some climbs were so steep it was painful pushing, the sleep monsters were beginning to creep up and bite us on the bums during this section, but we pushed through. We were out for 10 or so hours and hiked and pushed for 4hrs into the unknown until we ended up in a marsh land; realizing then that we were heading in the right direction, we put our heads down and grinded our chains to T3, only to find out we had lost 3 positions. Our seconds treated us to well deserved Debonairs pizzas & Steers burgers, that were now cold... having expected us a few hours earlier. We decided to take an hour nap in T3 before conquering an awesome ropes section, set up by Gravity Gear, at around 3am.

The Fanatics made quick work of the climb & abseil before setting off for PC 12 on the saddle. On route, I suddenly realized that I hadn't clipped the PC card at the abseil, so back to the abseil it was, where Garren made short work of the climb & we were back on track. It was to be a lightning fast hike for the Fanatics, making up all the lost places within the first half of the hike and pushing on to the next transition for the river paddle. Our transition was speedy as ever as we headed off for a 2km shoulder killing portage to the river section.

Being my first time on a river in a K2, I knew this was going to be an exciting section. The paddle was 27km down the Wilge River into Harrismith. It included 2 or so compulsory portages and loads of obstacles to manoeuvre ourselves round. This leg was certainly the highlight of the race for me!! I was grateful we had a very experienced paddler on board, Bubbles guided us through the rapids and around the logs effortlessly, playing follow the leader for the majority of the time. We entered the final assisted transition and were met with yet another treat, some KFC chicken and chips to see us to the finish line.

The final stretch home started with a 9km bike to a secluded little Boshuis, hidden amongst wattle and eucalyptus trees where we were to navigate ourselves on foot to 6 points in & around the tricky and overgrown orienteering course, before the final bike. Sore bums 'n all, we set off to bike up Donkey Pass, characterised by two cement strips simulating "the stairway to heaven" that led us straight up the escarpment and onto the top of the infamous Harrismith Platberg Mountain. Once we had clipped the PC hanging from a fallen microwave tower, we headed back down along the same torturous route they follow on the Harrismith mountain run, only difference was, we had our bikes with us. Racing to beat the dark to the bike drop point, we were only too surprised to be met there by the other McCain's who were there to collect their bikes already, show-offs! • They set us off with encouragement into the night for our final stretch home. After some bundu bashing & path making, we found the final climb, made quick work of it & shot off back down to finish at the Mount Everest resort in a time of 38+ hours, what a spectacular race!

Our thanks go out to our seconds, Mike & Ian who treated us to some lovely take-out meals, they were our alarm clocks and kept things running smoothly throughout the race, thanks guys; and to Eugene & Michelle, and to Nic Mulder & his Cyanosis team for a super race, great training for Bull, we will be back for lots more.

The McCain Adventure Fanatics 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!