



Royal Experience Swazi Extreme - 1 to 4 May 2008

(McCain Adventure Addicts: Graham Bird, Tatum Prins, Hanno Smit, Patric Mosterd Super seconds: Mark Loftus, Nikki Smit, Kate Southey)

Written by Hanno Smit

McCain Adventure Addicts earmarked this event as one of the major AR's for the year and left for Swaziland accordingly prepared. The team consisted of Graham Bird, Tatum Prins, Hanno Smit and Patric Mosterd, replacing Andre Gie and our well oiled seconding team consisted of Mark Loftus, Nikki Smit and Kate Southey.

The pre race evening was uncomplicated and therefore allowed for us to get a good night's sleep. This was going to be critical as the Rogaine race format would force us to race 54 hours. The Rogaine format required teams to race a full day with a 6pm cut-off, then a full night with a 6am cut-off, another full day with a 6pm cut-off, a final night leg with a 6am cut-off and the last day leg with an 11am cut-off and the finish. Each leg had the mandatory CP's and then an array of optional points (OP's), each counting 1 point. Missing a cut-off would





leave you with less a point for every 10 minutes late. This penalty was intimidating, both in the fact that one would not only lose the hard earned point, but also desperate energy and sleep wasted.

The 5am start had us chasing Salomon Pro and the pace was hard and fast and also puzzling as we kept passing teams, all with different point chasing agendas. This hike leg included a tubing section which was cancelled at the start due to bigger water after the previous night's downpour. A short bike leg followed with the status quo remaining.

After filling up with valuable carbs, like McCain Real Oven Baked Chips, we stormed out of transition to tackle a long hike including a kloofing section, which had also been cancelled due to higher water levels. This leg also included a bouldering section with a floating point and that meant we had to stay on the slow going boulders as to be sure of not missing a point. Fatigue started and we slowed down dramatically and at one stage fell back as far as 40min behind Salomon Pro, but crawled back to just 7min behind them at the transition, with Cyanosis close behind us.



Another bike leg and a hike saw us comfortably in at

the overnight transition with about 40min to fuel up before the 6pm departure for a 30km night hike covering a long section of kloof, which is always going to be slow going unless you find tracks or paths. We opted to play safe and collect the CP points first and found the going very slow along the river and then decided to follow the road going up the mountain to collect 2 more OP's as we were simply just not too sure how long the kloof would end up to be. This turned out to be our biggest mistake of the race as the river bed was relatively easily passable and much shorter with no altitude gain. We arrived back at the

overnight transition with 2 points short and 2 hours to sleep, a tactic we believed would pay dividends later on in the race.

With the 6am start we were off on a short bike down to the river, with Salomon Pro and Cyanosis still fuelling up after their full and successful nights. Then onto our feet again we led the charge to the rope section, but got beaten to it by Salomon, with Cyanosis arriving as we set off for the rest of the hike through a very testing and vertical kloof section just before the transition. A final bike to our 6pm transition, saw us and Salomon Pro lose valuable time and we both



decided to



forfeit 2 OP's. Cyanosis, whom was still behind us decided to go for these and pulled it off with about 3 minutes to spare.

The next night section consisted of a bike and a hike was quite comfortable and saw us back in transition with two hours to sleep.

We were now 3 points behind Cyanosis and 2 behind Salomon Pro and that meant that we had to pull off something special to catch up to them and therefore we had tackle the final day by doing something totally different as the teams leading us. The day started with a bike down to the rafting transition. Salomon Pro and Cyanosis opted for the rafting leg strewn with a healthy

4 points. We had no choice, but to hope for a long and difficult rafting leg for those teams and ourselves then tackling the whole day with our bikes. We set a furious pace, but encountered one point taking more time than we hoped for as well as one puncture and eventually fell short of two easy points close to the finish line. We were happy with this option we took on the final day as it was the only way we could have bettered our third position. In the end we did not succeed and ended up losing another point to those ahead of us, but it felt good.

Oh, did I mention how beautiful it was just about everywhere, how green the bush, how thorny the Kloof's, how impressive those boulder gardens were with their intimidating crevices or did I mention how huge and exposed the ropes were on top of that phallic pylon? The Swazi Xtreme was really Xtra large!

A special word of thanks to Darron and his team for an awesome race. Also thanks to our super seconds who kept us fueled and rested with wonderful transitions.

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.
- Black Diamond - For Icon and Cosmo head torches that lit our way brilliantly
- Giant Bicycles - For providing the team with exceptional Anthem MTB's
- Island Tribe - For protecting us from the harsh African sun.
- Squirt - For keeping our Bikes lubed and operating smoothly!

