

Keen Adventure Race 09

"A Journey through the Otways".....and what a journey it was!

Well I lined up for my third Keen AR.... this time as a mixed pair..... I teamed up with Kev Piercy an XPD enthusiast keen to give this style of racing a go! This event, however, unlike the others, was "unsupported" during the stages.....so knowing how important and beneficial a support crew are in these long events I was lucky to have my Keen partner from 08 Jan along as support crew/volunteer.....and what a smart idea that was!!!!!!

Packing was a challenge.....lucky Kev had a car and lived in Victoria as he transported camping gear and the boat! Jan and I packed lightly But were still not happy with the excess baggage of \$200 plus we were stung at the airport even though we travelled Qantas business class.....I was not happy but channelled my anger into a 5 page letter to Qantas Maybe you'll get to see that too! Oh and when we arrived, Qantas left my box behind, so they had to send it to Lorne via a taxi which cost them just as much as my excess baggage JUSTICE maybe ?????

It was freezing down there and en route I purchased extras such as "more thermals" and "waterproofing".....yes Victoria had been in drought until we arrived..... So I hopefully I was well prepared for the cold and the wet!

Day 1 Tuesday 27th April – Race day loomed it had rained all night (and even hailed)..... It was raining during the briefing and I was gradually acclimatising to the cold.... But was I ready for what we had in store?????? The twist was announced..... "Time Credits" - What this meant was that you had optional checkpoints (CP's) and if you chose to find them you would get a certain credit..... so KEEN 09 now was going to include some extra strategic planning..... not that there's not already heaps of strategy in AR! So a new challenge.... Something different..... Mmmm interesting!

The Prologue – Run/Paddle/MTB Surfing (Wye River/Kennet River)
Although no optional CP's for this leg some strategic planning was necessary as we could get paddle Run CP's in any order.... We chose to Run then paddle... we managed to get out into the surf no problems but I was certainly a little out of my comfort zone! Others started with a paddle (this proved to be the smart option) but we did well managing to find all the CP's before heading out on the bike.... Now on the map this was about 6k and it took us more than 2 hrs..... why so slow you may ask? Well – one, it was in the Otways and two, it was a mudslide... so my well practiced technique of bike carrying came in very handy! We didn't make it easier for ourselves by not marking the CP descriptions on the map.....thus guessing the clues.....so we wandered right past the CP later having to backtrack 1.5k in the MUD.... A lesson well learned. I had a huge stack when flying down a slippery muddy hill and landing in the blackberry bushes provided a somewhat prickly but cushioned landing. This stage finished with surfing.....now this was a bit cruel as it had started raining..... I was freezing (Kev even put on a LS wetsuit & he's a Victorian).....but I managed to paddle out & even stand up for a split second.... But not enough to get a 3 minute time credit! We finished the stage in just over 4hrs.....

Now usually you would rest after 4hrs or so of racing.... But we had 18 maps to mark up and prepare for the 3 stages ahead!!!! So Kev and I were up till almost midnight planning our course, marking maps, and packing gear luckily Jan was on hand to cook and contact maps..... I was so glad we had some support, but I felt sorry for others who had no one! This year because of no support we had to prepare boxes for each stage and also pack & unpack bikes.....so this all took extra time and extra planning as during the stages we had no access to support crew! This certainly added a new challenge to the race.....

Day 2 – Stage 1 Coasteering/Paddle/MTB/Trek/Paddle (Wye River /Kennett River/Apollo Bay/Aire River Crossing/Aire River Campground) I woke feeling pretty good but a bit anxious..... The swell had increased and it was a cold drizzly day! The coasteer along to Kennet River was beautiful and I loved running along the rocks.... Had one huge spillthat's what happens when you lose your concentration smiling for the camera! We had a quick change to the paddle and I put on everything! Thanks Novak & Jo for the CAG! The swell was pretty big but we managed to get in and out at the CP and at Apollo Bay without too many issues.....phew! We were anticipating a pretty wet ride.... But to our delight we had some road then we ended up travelling along the "Snowy River Track" it was beautiful and mossy so although soft underneath it was better than mud and very very pleasant! There were some great tracks along this route, with a few more hike-a-bikes along the way.... We arrived at Aire River Crossing just before the cut off allowing us the option of getting some extra CP's..... We bush bashed for CP8 but left out the rest.....a smart option as we started the paddle just before dark and finished on dark..... an enjoyable and rewarding day! Now we were freezing though But once again Aunty Jan came to the rescue; she had not only put up our tents but she had the kettle on! Oh and Kev provided the biggest challenge of the day with the tent he brought..... Jan had to enlist the help of almost all the volunteers just to work out how to get it up! So we got dry and into some warm clothes..... There were no showers, so we just had to get warm and rugged up..... lucky as everyone would have been a bit on the nose..... no Ritz & glitz in this sport, that's for sure! We had hot, steaming noodles from the multimillion dollar noodle man (he charged \$10 a pop) so after \$40 dollars of noodles and a glass of red I was ready for bed - but that was not to be.... We had to clean our bikes..... That meant unpacking and cleaning them in the dark.... And we didn't even have a hose Jan had to bring up containers of muddy water up from the river Others had their bike **in** the river! Then before bed we set about unpacking and repacking our gear boxes for the big stage!

Day 3 Run/Paddle/MTB/Orienteering/MTB/Trek (Aire River/Blanket Bay/Skene's Creek/Barwon Dam/Cumberland River/Lorne/Airey's Inlet)
We woke to a frost..... yes everything was frozen..... Gary Sutherland had placed their race vests in a towel to dry out..... they were snap frozen to the towel..... the coffee pot would not boil so Jan had to go in search of hot water for coffee..... And just before we were set to head off the pot boiled.... I was relieved as it meant I could put a hot thermos in the box A for the trek! Now just to remind you we were camping in the middle of nowhere and it happened to be the coldest morning on record in Victoria since 1956 at that time of year -

and we were starting our big stage! Lucky it was to start with a run.... But I had a slight problem - my shoes were frozen.... I somehow managed to squeeze my feet into them and survive..... Soon we were off racing and we decided on a route change from what we had marked up.... If we opted out of two CP's we could gain more time.....it worked in our favour and we had a fast 20k run which included some of the spectacular Great Ocean Walk Along the way we saw the biggest Koala I have ever seen (**Editors Note: now this may have been a slight hallucination!**)..... we were the first team into the TA..... we had a lead on the others teams but opted out of 30mins of time credits.... At the time a great move.... But maybe not in the long run! So off we set from Blanket Bay in our Mirage.....the conditions were just perfect.... The sun was out and it was all smooth sailing.... It wasn't long before we were overtaken by the eventual winners ORION Health Mixed..... they were in a Fenn XT a great choice of boat for the event..... we paddled away being passed by a more XT's and Red 7's but still made in into the TA about 5th. We then encountered our biggest hurdle.... Our box with food, shoes etc was missing.... We were in a mad panic as how were we going to survive.... Kev would have to ride without water /pack and have no shoes for the trek..... Gary & Brit from Teva/Mountain Design's offered us their left overs and just as we were about to set off Kev located our box.....it had old XPD numbers on it as well - and do you think that 5 sets of eyes could see the sticker "Team35" NO! Phew so we gave back the food we borrowed making Michael the "Bike Stacker of the century" scale a tower of boxes to place it back into Gary & Brits box. Soon we were off..... It was a beautiful uphill ride for over an hour.... I didn't mind the hills as it made me warm..... we hit a really rugged downhill track and again chose to opt out of a few CP's that would take longer than the time credit..... We were first to Barwon Dam for the Orienteering and first to set off afterwards..... we managed this in the light which again was a great bonus..... our strategy was to save some energy on the MTB trails as they would take longer than the time credit..... but we thought we should at least do one but turned back half way to the track as it had taken 20mins to just get to the start of it.....so we lost 40 mins..... Mmmm not such a great move! We continued off into the night and were riding well..... We overtook a team that had chosen to likewise opt out of the MTB CP's in Forest! We navigated well and found the next CP opting out of the 4 Rogaine CP's along the way..... (The credit for the 4 was a total of 3hrs 20... but we figured in the dark it would take us way longer) so we proceeded..... We hit some mud yet again and had some challenging slippery descents.... I flew over my handlebars and my map board snapped..... So had to do without it for the rest of the leg (Thanks to Greg Toman from Area 51, I got a replacement for the next stage). We located the Cumberland track and pummelled down hill to the campsite..... here we woke the volunteers as we arrived at 10pm..... I don't think we were expected for several hours!!!! It was freezing there was this ferocious wind blowing though the valley.... But lucky the Rapid Ascent Team had come to the rescue with a strategically placed campfire!!!! I stood beside this fire as I drank my, now, luke- warm coffee and consumed a huge packet of potato chips.....Mmmm – great Adventure Racing food!! Brigitte reminded us at this point that we can't start the paddle till 9am..... We were aware of this and set out on foot as there were plenty of optional and compulsory CP's to keep us going till then. We set off up the Cumberland Track.....it was beautiful.... I had done some of this track in the Lorne Anaconda Race in 07 & 08 and remembered one of the Creek crossings..... along we went up to the falls collecting 2 CP's on

the way..... then we were to scale what looked like a cliff..... realising the time credit for the next CP was only 15 mins we opted to head back to where we started and go for the compulsory CP's..... We went out along the rocks beside the ocean..... night coastering..... Lucky for those Ay Up lights..... They were fantastic..... Kev and I got all the compulsory CP's and found ourselves in Lorne at 3am. We ventured off into the hills behind Lorne to grab some extra CP's it was taking us an hour to collect these for only 20 – 25 mins time credit..... We now realised we would have been better off using our time up on the MTB CP's..... so we ended up in Lorne at 7am having collected all the CP's that were in range We then accidentally came across the kayak trailer and the cabin where the Rapid Ascent Team were We popped in for a coffee as John had said we were free to stop in Lorne for a coffee if we arrived early.....Most teams were ready to paddle at 9am...so off we set! It was a beautiful calm day yet again I was so excited when I realised it was only 10k, instead of 20k like the earlier ocean paddles. We finished at Airey's Inlet and were relieved that we had convinced Jan to collect us from there rather than wait for the shuttle bus! I jumped into the car with my wetsuit, spray deck lifejacket etc still on and ran straight into the hot shower when we finally go into the Caravan Park at Anglesea..... It was before midday so plenty of time for some food a sleep and a nice dinner at the pub before the final stage.... We were feeling a bit disappointed as we had run and ridden so well early in stage 3 But the way the time credits worked did not favour the strategy we had adopted.

Stage 4 - The Finale - Orienteering/MTB/Run/Paddle (Anglesea-Airey's Inlet). We planned our orienteering well we thought and ran to most of the CP's avoiding a line up at the ropes..... We chose Archery and I shot almost a bullseye on my second shot so we were good to go! Kev had a bit of a swim in the river for the last CP and soon we were onto the bikes. It was great to have a few more onlookers at this point as the one day racers were around and also Kev's family had come down to watch us at our transitions. The MTB course was great and we followed rally notes rather than a map..... which was ok once I realised that ST meant **single-track** rather than **street**.....Mmmmm am I dumb or what???? The final day in the previous KEEN Races have been heaps of fun and this was no disappointment.... We travelled some awesome single-tracks and the views were just spectacular...then we ran off below the cliffs at Urquharts Bluff up to Castle Rock..... I was just loving it and Kev and I were running strongly, still.....we now only had the paddle to go! But the swell had picked up they changed the final CP back to Urquharts Bluff..... I was relieved as at least we know what to look for as we had been there..... We managed to just get out through the breakers.... And paddled towards the bluff.... There were surfers out and there were big waves crashing on the beach as we rounded the point into the CP we were trying to avoid all waves..... but as the A team's (Deanna & Sharon) Pink Mirage turned sideways on a wave the next one picked us up and we nose-dived..... the next minute we were under and the Mirage went flying on the wave crashing into the girls & their boat....."lucky we had helmet's!" said Deanna! We all made it safely into shore with our boats..... I ran to the CP as Kev tried to clear water from the kayak..... Mmmmm guess what, the pump wasn't working.... So lots of bailing followed.... Then out we set for the final paddle into Anglesea.... Just 8k of paddling ahead..... we had a real challenge getting out and the waves were so powerful that as we paddled out through the just broken waves my entire body was throttled backwards and I felt like I was

going to break my back.....lucky the third & final wave we had to brace was not quite as fierce and we go through..... The paddle from here on in looked pretty straight forward but as we neared Anglesea the swell was ever increasing and there was a huge bombie appearing off the final point..... we managed to get through and caught a perfect little wave in to the beach at Anglesea..... a perfect end to a rather challenging paddle..... So Kev and I ran through the finish line proud on conquering Keen 09.

Rapid Ascent certainly put on fantastic events and this was one of them..... I definitely preferred the format of the previous two races, as you could not opt out of CP's and thus providing for a greater challenge navigationally.....we had support crew which really added to the race atmosphere and we didn't have to pack unpack and repack bikes so many times during the race time..... but none the less, I know I will be back again for more!