

Kim's NZ Coast to Coast Adventure

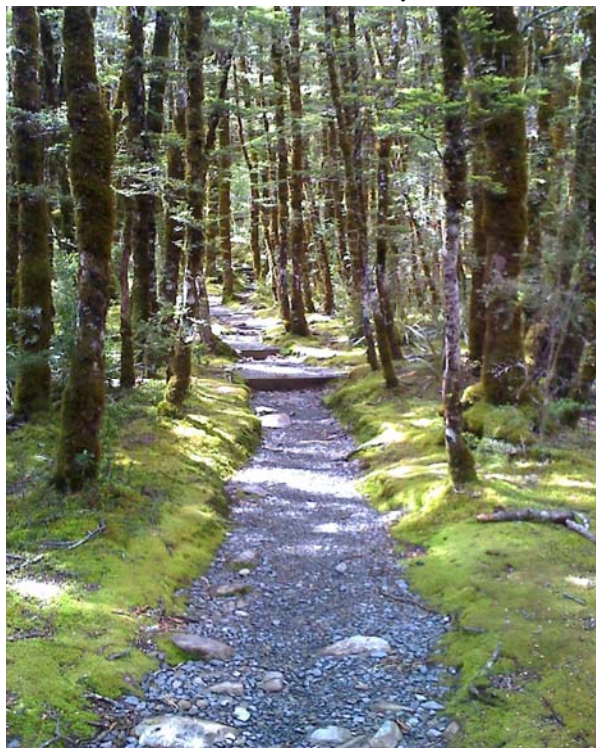
Well, after finding out that the river levels were too high to paddle and accepting the reality that I was not going to be able to paddle over the C2C paddle course this trip (the main reason for planning the trip) we set off to Arthur's Pass, as at least we would be able to explore some of the tracks around there and get some idea of what the run might be like.

The drive out was spectacular as we headed towards the snow capped mountains.... I saw where the paddle finished at the Waimakariri River Gorge Bridge. Wow.....the water was flowing fast! Then we watched as the river disappeared behind snow capped mountains..... The course was certainly going to be 'extreme' due to its remoteness. I now understand why they say that it can take days to walk out from the Waimak!

Almost at Arthur's Pass we saw where the run finishes down the Mingha River at Klondyke Corner..... my first glimpse of what the run course would be like! Upon



arrival we inspected the maps and once again were astonished by the wilderness around uspeaks of the surrounding mountains were



over 1800m and these peaks separated the road from the run course! Jan and I set off for an exploration of some of the tracks around Arthur's Pass. I started up Avalanche Peak track..... but after about 20mins decided to turn back as if something happened up there it would be hard to get out..... and the "Avalanche Risk was on HIGH" so best not to tackle it alone! I met up with Jan on the more gentle Devils Punch Bowl Falls track and then looked at the Bridal Veil Track this took us past some really beautiful waterfalls!

So what we were realizing was that the area is one not to be underestimated and that the “river flows” and “weather patterns” and instability of the land due to the numerous fault lines running throughout this area..... have a huge impact on planning trips and hikes!

We got a call back from Emily Miazga (3 time C2C female winner) and she had checked out the “Run conditions” and it should be ok to go over the courseso we picked up Emily from Greymouth Train Station (It had been a 2 hr trip for her) and it would take us just over an hour to get to the run start where the Bealey River and Deception Rivers meet. The adventure was about to begin..... Jan would pick us up some 5hrs later at the “other end”. We had food lots of Em’s Power Cookies” , First Aid and also packed the compulsory kit required for the race..... Emily had briefed me on the breakdown of the course..... Lots of creek crossings, wide open section, slippery rocks, big boulders, Goat Pass and then down the other side the really fun part..... so at 2.36pm we set off..... (A little late you might think???? But it’s daylight over there till 9.30pm)

Our first creek crossing was the Bealey River..... now if you can’t cross this the race does not go ahead..... we made it across no worries but it was flowing fast and was waist deep..... Emily had some second thoughts..... but on we went as we did make that first crossing..... So I followed her footsteps....along and up the rocks we went... Then across the river we went..... It was flowing faster up here but not as wide as the Bealey River, we followed little tracks like cow paths really then crossed the river again..... we ran off into the trees on the right side of the river and followed some little tracks under low branches as we headed towards slippery rocks..... we came to another crossing..... it seemed to be flowing faster and it was much rockier..... Em found a good spot to cross and over she went..... she had told me to go with the flow a bit as you cross.....off I set and I turned back..... it was a really really strong current..... so I went up just a bit further and had another go.....I took a few steps across and then my leg hit a big rock under the water..... Now my adventure really begins.....



I was swept off my feet and soon I was being washed down the rapids..... I went totally under a couple of times coming up for air and then when my head popped up I was looking for a way out! I grasped

for rocks as I went flying downstream finally pulling myself out at an "Eddie" (a small area of water that usually flows in a circular motion in the opposite direction – safe spots on rapids). As I tried to crawl out of the water I realised my left arm wasn't working and it felt really funny..... my body was totally frozen at this point as the water in the river is melted snow.....I stood up and looked for Emily..... she came down over some big boulders towards me and asked if I was OK.... I said "my arm feels funny I think it might be broken"..... she said it looks dislocated..... and by now it was extremely painful.... At that point she tried to put my arm in a sling (cuff & collar) but there was no chance.... I screamed uncontrollably every time Emily tried to move my arm..... We tried to walk out..... I held my arm but almost fainted..... I was freezing, nauseous and in extreme pain.... I had to sit down.....

Emily took off my wet shirt, and dressed me in thermals, then put on my plastic pants and threw jackets over me and put me in a space blanket bagI also was lucky to have Panadol in my first aid kit. I was curled up on the side of the river freezing as Emily went out for help..... She said "I will take 45mins to get to the road.....then will have to flag down a car and I won't have phone service till Arthurs pass..... I don't know how long it will take to get to you and I'm not sure how they will get you but it could be 4 hrs..... So she left me with all her gear and food and there I waited.....waited and waited.....

I was in so much pain.... I can't describe..... I felt like the poor Koala I had come across last week.... I was being eaten alive by sand flies as I lay there huddled up..... I was thinkingWhat would I do if no one came to get me?..... How would I survive? My left hand had gone cold and lost circulation... this scared me! I was trying to pull my arm out myself.... It was really, really hurting but this somehow relieved the pain.... So I pulled and pulled and it was feeling ok.....but when I let go the pain was even more severe! I somehow managed to put my arm up on a rock sideways and this relieved some of the pain.....but I was freezing as I was exposed to the cold.... Somehow I managed to put on two jackets on my dislocated arm and zip them up..... I was now slightly more comfortable and coping with pain and cold.....

I have no idea how long I was out there but I know when I saw a helicopter pass by up the gorge.... I thought that must be looking for someone else..... as It had not been 4 hrs. The chopper turned back and I could see people looking out..... I waved..... As the chopper came close by the safety blanket ripped to shreds..... I started shaking uncontrollably and then a lady popped out from behind the rock and came over to me.....she had been winched down to me as the chopper could not land! She pumped me full of morphine and some anti nausea stuff and after about 15 minutes of lots of pain and torture trying to get my arm into a sling and into the harness..... I was winched to safety.....the chopper landed on the river bank and they tried to make me more comfortable..... I was feeling pretty spaced out at this stage but I was so glad that I was warm and safe!

The chopper stopped at the roadside where we had started the run.... Jan climbed in and gave me a hug I do remember that! I felt safe as we then took off again and headed for Greymouth..... I was transferred into an Ambulance then taken to hospital..... my arm was still dislocated at this stage and the only comfortable position was my arm up in the air..... so I had someone holding my arm and someone pushing the trolley.....I was still in severe pain but safe.....

I remember at the hospital the Doctor rolled me onto my tummy..... and next thing I saw Jan and Emily..... I was lying on my back and they told be my shoulder was back in place..... I was taken for and x-ray and the good news.....no broken bones! I lay there for a few hours getting my readings back to normal I think my pulse and BP did some weird things throughout the ordeal.... Jan and Emily got Pizza and we stayed in a motel in Greymouth..... I was OK nowI was so thankful to Emily for getting help and knowing exactly what to do in this situation.....a true champion and hero!

So back in Australia now it looks like my 2010 C2C dream has been shattered..... my shoulder will be at least 6 weeks in repair and that's if there's no tear! I have learned a lot about the C2C course and will be able to better prepare for 2011.....but more importantly I learned that NZ is a rugged place and they do it tough over there! So REMEMBER.....never skimp on safety gear..... FA, thermals etc..... I never do.....cos they may just save your life!!!!!!

Hopefully I'll be back on my bike soon.....but for now I'll just have to remember how beautiful my last ride was in Governor's Bay NZ!

