

Anarchy AR 2018 Wilderness Traverse Race Report

Summary

The first trekking stage went well although we made a few route choices that ended up being slower than we thought and didn't take full advantage of the marked course. Like most team we chose the swimming option.

We made good time on the bike given the conditions. It was a pretty straightforward slog through the mud and puddles

Canoeing at night was awesome again (I think I'm in the minority that enjoyed the night canoe in 2017). We made good time and had a few navigation errors that kept us racing the cutoff clock. Bushwacking with a canoe was also a first.

The last trek didn't end the way we wanted it too. We forgot about the more detailed Massasauga map we had, got confused trying to find the land bridge between the environmentally sensitive areas and ended up way off course. After talking with race hq we packed it in and started the trek of shame back to the TA.

I've got three finisher mugs from short course finishes so I'll gladly risk a DNF and take on the long course any day.

Stage 1 – Trek

The race started with a nice sprint around a small lake before heading south through the woods. We headed into the woods, and made our way south eventually finding the cross-country ski trail, which was crowded with other teams. We followed the trail till we lost it, headed south again and came out almost directly across from CP1. After a short swim we were through the CP and back on the trail heading towards CP2.

I'd planned a route that took us straight through the bush rather than following the ski trail. In hindsight we should have stick it out on the trail longer. We made our way south, and hit McCrea Lake just west of CP2.

We then started the swim across the lake, which the only thing I could say is I must have logged the slowest swim across the lake that day. It took forever and it seemed like everyone was passing me.

Another short walk through the woods, then a small swim, a brief walk though someone's campground (I wonder what people think when they see a mass of people in orange coming out of the woods). Another small swim and we were headed down to CP3.

We were then off to CP4 which the plan called for heading straight through the bush rather than following the trail. The rational being the trail was probably 2km and straight through the bush was slightly less than one. Even with the slower pace I figured we'd be faster. It wasn't as we ended up needing to swim across a stream

that was full of muskeg. It was around this unplanned swim that we also lost our SI Timing Chip.

We made it out onto the road and ran down to TA ready to report our lost SI Timing Chip and accept our punishment which ended up only being 1hr tacked onto our time and \$75 later.

Stage 2 – Bike (Snowmobile Trails and Hydrolines)

After a transition we were off on the bikes. Much like 2017, the bike course was soaked and it was going to be a muddy ride to the next transition area. Everyone knows the drill pretty well; bike where the ground looks dry and when you come to a puddle, look for a single-track section around it through the woods. Otherwise, you're hiking on the edge and dragging your bike through it. If you thought you're feet were going to stay dry, you were wrong. It started to rain while we were on the bike between TA1 and the paved road.

As stated above, I'd made a poor route choice from CP3 to TA1 and as a result we'd had a number of teams pass us. We ended up passing a lot of these teams again on the way up to CP5. We got to the ferry in good time and on the other side of the ferry we stopped, put on our jackets to get warm and I put some air in my rear tire which had been soft for the first part (I hate tubeless tires, the air is leaking through the sidewalls).

We started down the road and headed back up onto the trails. Around this time I started to get fatigued. We'd gone hard on the first section and I hadn't been eating enough as a result, I ended up walking hills and around puddles rather than trying to push through them. We talked and agreed that once we got across the first bridge onto the hydroline section then we'd stop and fill up on food.

At one puddle crossing, Nathan fell and was having a difficult time getting up so Rob got off his bike and helped him. As I was a boat anchor I told the guys that I'd bike ahead so they could catch up. After a few minutes I stopped and waited. A couple of teams came by and told me that the clip on Nathan's shoe had come loose and that he'd lost some of the screws. One of the teams happened to have some screws and was nice enough to give them to Nathan so he could fix his cleat and keep moving. Eventually the team caught up to me and we continued on exiting the woods and heading to the last section. As we biked down towards the overpass over the 400 we passed a Penske truck and a few teams but didn't think much of it. We later found out it was the unplanned Short Course B teams.

Across the snowmobile bridge before the hydro-line we stopped, rested and ate some food. Feeling re-energized we started back out to finish the bike course. On this section, after walking around one or two puddles I decided to just start pushing through them after seeing Matt blaze a trail through one. You really end up wasting more energy getting off your bike, walking then getting back on your bike. I can say that my bike was a lot cleaner pounding through them. At one point I crashed heading into a puddle. As I was entering the puddle I looked to the left and saw an

easier line and tried to turn. My front wheel got hung up on a submerged rock and down I went.

The rest of this section was mostly uneventful, the last 5km dragged on, we put on our lights and came into transition around 8:30pm.

Stage 3 – Canoe

We started on the canoe around 9:00pm after about 30min is the TA. I had changed all my clothes and was now warm and dry. The night was beautiful with little wind, some clouds but you could see the stars and eventually the moon came out for a few minutes.

Heading to the first portage we could see some teams in front of us and going off the map I could tell that they were overshooting the first portage. Rule of thumb; follow the team in front of you at your own peril. Without much effort we hit the first portage and then the second. On the third portage we saw all the teams ahead of us getting out and, ignoring the rule of thumb above assumed that was the portage. We got out and ignored the teams standing around just assuming they were eating a banana and headed up what we thought was the portage. It wasn't and after a few minutes the Made in Poland navigator, Rob and I started talking and figured out where we were and how to get to the portage. Back on the water, we moved over the muskeg slowly and got to the portage and continued on.

We made it through Eagle Lake and into Vaughan Lake without any issues. At the bottom of Vaughan Lake we had no issues finding the portage. We headed down the portage trail and then down the road for about 1km coming to the start of the portage trail to get into Moon River. I was carrying the canoe on this portage and when we went down the trail a little ways Matt looked and said it was too steep to be the trail. Eventually we realized we'd passed the trail and we ended up bushwhacking with the canoes to get to the river.

Back on the river, we had a calm paddle down to CP7, CP8 and a nice portage around Moon Falls at CP9. We canoed up through Arnolds bay and headed North through Moon River Bay towards the portage into Healey Lake. Getting out at the wooden bridge, we started up the portage following the flags. We got onto the driveway and went straight past the portage trail and walked about 0.5km up the road before Rob noticed the mistake we made. We turned around, headed back and found the second part of the portage trail. Putting into Healey Lake, we were starting to get anxious, as we knew that we'd be close to the TA3 cutoff.

On the lake we headed straight for the beacon then as we got closer I pointed out Blueberry Island as our target. Making the turn at Blueberry Island we could see CP10 off in the distance. At this point we're making plans to blast through the CP as fast as possible and get on to the TA. Rob grabbed our canoe and I grabbed the other canoe and ran up the portage as Matt checked in. In Conger Lake we made the sharp left and after a little paddle I scanned the area with my flashlight, lighting up the portage sign.

Rob and I portaged the canoes on the final trail and we put into Blackstone Harbour for what should have been a short paddle. Unfortunately that's not what happened. I'd been visualizing the launch at Three Legged Lake where we'd canoed into last year and we canoed past the Pete's Place dock. After a few minutes I knew we were off course but couldn't figure out where we'd gone wrong (still visualizing Three Legged Lake). We looked behind us, saw the lights of what turned out to be another team and mistook it for the TA staff and started to race back. Eventually the team passed us making the same mistake we did and we stopped to try and figure out where we were. I scanned to shore with my flashlight and right in front of me was the Pete's Place sign. Then I realized my mistake, but we still had some time.

Stage 4 – Trekking (Getting lost on the way to CP12)

We ran up to the TA, placed the canoes down and then proceeded to rush through the TA knowing we had less than 10min to the cutoff. The TA staff gave me a briefing and we all agreed to head out on the course together. After filling up the hydration packs, we headed out of the TA. We followed the initial course marked by Bob and then took our bearing and started heading towards the gap between the sensitive areas. We forgot that we had a more detailed map of Massasauga and I proceeded to navigate with the standard map. As a result, I couldn't tell the difference between wetland and land that was wet, I thought that we'd passed through the gap and hit a portion where it loops around when in fact we hit the east edge of the gap. We turned east and ended up drifting way off course. Eventually we ended up calling in for navigation assistance. We chose to hike back to the TA and end it there as two teammates were beat and it would still take us another 3-4hrs to get to the next TA.