

#28 - Anarchy AR Race Report

Team Members

- Brady Vincent (Captain, WT Participant 2015 and 2016)
- Matt Graham (Rookie)
- Ilana Kingsley (Rookie)

Stage 1 – Running

We started out at a decent pace on the run and easily found the first checkpoint. Initially I'd considered heading directly into the woods but opted to follow the other teams ahead of us as they were sticking with the road. As we got to the right turn on the trail I saw ahead of us coming back up the road Snowpants, Blackbird and the other lead teams who'd missed the trail. Running down the trail I looked over to my left and saw Snowpants just booking it through the woods. We cut into the woods and ended up behind Blackbird and the Warriors on the way to CP2. We wouldn't make it to CP2 before we were already wet. Shortly after CP2 the lead teams were gone and we wouldn't see them again until the awards the next day.

We came out of the woods and ran down the road before going left back into some woods, up a steep hill and CP3 was right there. Now heading down to CP4 I managed to lead us to the top of a cliff. Getting around that obstacle and looking out I can see the Warriors heading out on the bikes from Grand Tappattoo.

Transition 1

Where's our hydration bladders? They're at the next TA. Not wanting to carry a full bladder on a short run (3L=6lbs approx.), we'd filled them up and were going to put them in our packs as we headed out on the bike. I'd put them in the wrong bin. We grabbed some empty water bottles in the bin and a fill them with Gatorade that we had stocked in the bin and kept going.

Stage 2 – Bike to Orrville

We headed out on the bikes and got stopped almost immediately by a train. It was probably closer to 10min before the train had passed and we could continue on with the other teams that had amassed.

We made it to the start of the Seguin trail with little difficulty and started towards Orrville. Not that far into the ride there was a group of teams were heading through a tunnel under the 400 which takes you to the Super 8 and not towards Orrville.

I only faintly remember that we'd biked this section in 2015 on the way to the Massassauga. We crossed the highway, past the Tims and Petro Canada and now we're heading up a trail I remember from 2015. The ride went relatively smoothly, left around a puddle, right around a puddle, in-between puddles, straight through a puddle. Keep peddling when going through the puddles and hope you don't hit any big submerged rocks.

Transition 2

Drop the bikes off. Ah, there's the hydration bladders and they're full, no need to spend time topping them up. I changed my socks to something dry (for now), moved the bin, grab some nutrition for the road and left the TA running.

Stage 3 – Long Trek

We ran out of the transition, down the road and around Sugar Lake. We hit all of our targets and made good time through the woods coming out right at CP6. I found out later that we took one of the more southerly routes with most of the teams heading north. We'd opted to head straight into the woods and make our way towards the checkpoint by coming around the south side of the grass lakes to the west of Vinett lake.

Heading to CP7 was pretty straightforward. Run up the road for most of the way, walk for a bit in order to get some food into us then run the rest of the way down the long driveway. Once we reached the end of the road, we took a easterly bearing, smashed our way through the woods and a grass lake or two and came out on the shore of Horn Lake a little north of the point but within view of the CP. I floated the idea of swimming from there but my team vetoed that option and instead we headed southeast to the point and a shorter swim.

At the swim, the only items I put in the dry bag were my gloves and buff. Everything else is either already wet or will dry quickly.

Once we got past CP7 and back onto land, we headed back into the woods, went straight through a grass lake then took at southeast bearing to the road rather than heading straight out. On the road we ran down to CP8 and the transition.

Transition 3

Check my bike lights, change my shirt to a dry shirt, pull a dry pair of tights over my now damp (previously soaked) tights, pull some bike shorts over my tights, put on my wet bike shoes, topped up the hydration bladders, stage the bikes by the truck for departure and grabbed some candy from the very nice volunteers. All right, lets go!

Stage 4 – Long Bike

We maintained a good pace from the TA through to CP9 and then back down to CP10. Along the Seguin Trail it was much of what we'd seen earlier riding around or straight through some large puddles. As we were approaching CP10, a truck heading up the narrow road stopped us. He asked us where we were going and remarked that south of CP10 the road was a dead end except for some snowmobile trails that are almost impassible on a 4-wheeler. I guess he's never been on a mountain bike or seen what kind of terrain we can go through.

After CP10 we were aiming to get out of this sections and onto the road section to CP11 in the daylight. This didn't end up happening as we had several mechanical issues that needed to be resolved. Rim brakes are not suitable for racing and I recommend hydraulic disc as a minimum.

We eventually made it out of the woods and then made good time down towards CP11 until we followed the road on Portage Lake Rd instead of taking the right onto Lawson Bay Rd. After that correction, we were back on track and felt some relief when a race volunteer drove by and shouted some encouragement at us.

The slog from CP11 down to Healey Lake Rd never seemed to end. For the longest time it seemed like we were constantly climbing without any descents. We also ended up walking around most of the puddles rather than trying to smash through them. At some point along this section Ilana's brakes final gave out for good (rim brakes got chewed up by the wet sand) and when she asked what to do about going down hills without brakes I replied "You don't need brakes". We stopped at the intersection of the trail we were on and the C-line snowmobile trail, which confused us for a bit as it wasn't on our map (I'd assumed incorrectly we were on C-Line). This ended up confusing me as to where we were and it took me a bit to realize their map on the board went all the way down to Moon River. After I cracked out the WT Course Overview map, I realize where we were and we headed straight. We finally made it out to Healey Lake Rd and cruised onto CP12.

Transition Area 4

We arrived into the transition around 0030 on Sunday morning. Based on my crude calculations, we needed to be on the water prior to 0000 in order to have any shot at making it to CP14 prior to the cutoff. Given that we were now effectively on the short course, we took our time getting ready for the canoe. We ate, changed our clothes and put on our rain gear. I reset the declination adjustment on my compass to match the easterly declination on the Massasauga Park Map. We then grabbed a canoe and headed towards the water.

Stage 5 - Canoe

We set off from the dock and headed in a westerly direction. The fog in this area wasn't bad, although we canoed without our lights on as this allowed our eyes to adjust to night vision and look for silhouettes on the horizon. We made it out through the narrows into Woods Bay without any issues. We passed a team that obviously lost on our way to the second narrows where we turned north. We turned north, headed through a second and third set of narrows and weaved our way without issue up to Miron Island. As we approached Miron Island, the fog got a lot quicker and at one point we got turned around 180deg. At this point I kept the compass out and gave directions in order to keep us directly on our bearing. At the top of the point we turned east and then headed towards CP13. At this point Matt started to fall asleep and rocked the canoe pretty hard in the process. We pulled up along the rocky shore before heading across the CP13 in order to change seating and make sure we weren't going to have an incident prior to arriving at the checkpoint.

We arrived at the CP13, got out of the canoe and sat by the fire so that our Matt could get some rest. The last thing we wanted was to tip the canoe in the dark and fog where we could see the shore. While we waited, I adjusted the park map in the map bag so I could see the upper part of the park where CP14 was. In the process I cut off CP13 and the bay immediately north of CP13 at the fold figuring I knew where we had to go when we left. It turns out I didn't cause after an hour at CP13, we left and looking at the map I made the mistake as to where CP13 was in relation to the 1200m portage and we headed easterly into the bay just north of CP13. When we got to the end of the bay it took about 15-20min to figure out the mistake. We then corrected and headed towards the portage.

Once across the portage we headed northeast to the portage into Spider Lake. At the end of this portage, with both my teammates tired, we stopped and they both rested for about 45min to an hour. What I found interesting was at no point did any teams pass us while we were sitting there.

After we got back on the water, one teammate wanted to head straight towards the finish and not complete the course. The other teammate and I overruled that request; we hadn't come this far not to finish the course. I want my beer mug!

We made our way to CP14 without any issues as the sun was up and the fog had burned off and then made our way over to Three Legged Lake and the access point. With the canoe on my shoulders and the map in one hand, we managed to walk past the portage into Scott Lake and by the time we realized it I figured we're committed to the long portage and kept going to Otter Lake. From there we made our way to the finish line with a time of 28hrs 7min on the course.

Summary

The 2016 race had left a bad taste in my mouth, as my team hadn't raced to our full potential. I feel vindicated after the 2017 race. We had a few minor setbacks that kept us from finishing the full course but we went hard and pushed each other. In past years where we would have trekked around some features (i.e. grass lakes and such) this year I decided if it was in the way I was going straight through it.

I'm probably one of the few that really enjoyed the canoeing this year and loved the added challenge of navigating through the dark and fog. I made good use of my chemical light for reading the map rather than using a flashlight. I'm now looking forward to 2018 and completing the full course.