

Wilderness Traverse 2016 Race Report

As usual packing gear can be the most stressful part of the race. This time was no different. Check to the list pack the bags. Check the list again and unpack and pack them again. Always a bit more stressful when I am flying. I think this might be the first time that I have got to a race a didn't have to buy anything.

Thursday morning before the race came early and I was off to the plane. Arrived in Toronto and met Claire at baggage as her plane arrived just before mine. Was great to see her smiling face again. Hadn't seen her since we raced in NZ a couple years ago. We gather our gear and picked up the rental vehicle. Then we waited for Andrew to land. Wayne was to meet us as well but had his first adventure of the race when his flights got screwed up. We would head north to Parry Sound to get checked in and Wayne would meet us later.

Friday was up early and get the bikes together and gear sorted out. We had already been given information from the race director about what the discipline and the distance for each leg. This allows us to get most of gear packed in the right gear bins. We headed off to registration to registration at 4 to do gear check get our tracker and sign forms. Were disappointed as they wouldn't give us maps until 8pm that night. OK then back to the hotel to get food organized and have a quick rest.

8pm, Now the big reveal, what everyone has been waiting for. THE MAPS. Wayne and Andrew start looking over the maps while Claire and I start cutting the Mac Tac to water proof the maps.

The legs are as follows

Leg 1	Kayak/Portage	41km
Leg 2	Bike	25 km
Leg 3	Trek	28 km
Leg 4	Bike	72 km

Wayne and Andrew spent a couple hours going over the maps while Claire and I dropped off bikes and gear Bin #1.

We felt we were confident in our route plan thanks to google.

Back to the room and actually got about 6 hours sleep.

5:30 am and we are up and dressed. In the vehicle and off to Tim Hortons for coffee and Tea. OOPs forgot the sealed Cellphone, quick trip back to the room, there it is on the floor. 10 min drive to the race HQ and breakfast, OOPs again, forgot some of the maps, another quick trip to the room and back. Dropped off gear bin 2 and board the bus for an hour ride to the start. Things are getting REAL.

When we arrive it's a mad rush to the canoes to try and get the ones we want. Its about 15 min to race start. Mass starts on the water are always a bit crazy. We tried to get ourselves into a good pace. We thought we would be about midpack in the paddle. About an hour into the paddle was the first portage which was 2.3 km long. Wayne had made up slings for all of us so we could just loop them through the handhold and put the sling over our shoulders. Worked awesome. We got passed by a few teams on the portage but it was early in the race so

no big issue. Then about an hour more paddling and we came to the first route choice. We could have chosen to go on a north section and have a 4km portage or a south route that was a few more km paddling but only 300m portage and a 5km run without the boats to get CP1. We chose to go south with less portaging. We pulled our kayaks into a beach of a cabin and the nice lady directed us to the quad trail that would take us to the road which lead to the CP. NAILED IT!!!!!! Great call Wayne.

After looking back at the splits we got to CP1 in 32nd place but because we had a shorter route back than any of the teams from the north route we got to CP2 in 20th place.

Great paddle for us.

Quick transition and we were off. (and no I wasn't the last to be ready HAHA)

This was a short bike section with really only one route choice where we could stay on a longer better trail or take the shorter rougher wetter route. We took the shorter route. Everything went pretty uneventful and we got to transition at about 5 pm in about the same place. Transition a bit slower as we all changed socks and put on our secret bushwacking weapon. (soccer shin guards) and in the Ontario bush it was time well spent to put them on.

Off to CP 5 with a couple km on the road then take a bearing and head for the CP. Again Wayne and Andrew nailed the nav and we walked right into the CP. We made great time which got us there before dark as there was a 50 meter swim to leave the CP and we didn't want to do it in the dark. We stripped down to our underwear and put our packs and clothes in a dry bag. Claire is a great swimmer and ME NOT SO MUCH so she offered to drag my dry bag across with her so I could just

swim, thanks Claire. When Wayne swam somehow his coveted bottle of Coke fell out. He seen it floating away and jumped back in to retrieve it. So I guess Wayne likes his coke. Mission accomplished. Now next feature was a road we had to hit then pick up CP6 at an intersection. All went good again. Things started to get cool so we stopped and put some more clothes on.

Just past CP6 we needed to take a bearing and head for a lake as a feature that we wanted to skirt around to get us on a SW route to find the coast of the bay and then back north on a finger where CP7 was. There was lots of tricking nav and we could see teams lights all around us in the dark. We thought we were wondering a bit and losing time but by the time we got the CP we had gained a couple more positions. Quick stop and grabbed some water out of the bay and we were off.

CP 8 looked like we were going to have more than wet feet with all the marshes we would have to cross. We were able to skirt most of them and crossed a couple big bogs that held us up. When I stuck my pole threw one it was deeper than my pole. Glad we stayed on top. We ended up getting into CP 8 at about 3 am. The volunteer fed us granola bars and cookies, was a nice pickup. Now we were only 20 min from the transition. Arrived at 3:30 am to the last transition.

Last Transition was a cool and we all bundled and ate lots. We had arrived in about 15th place so we were inching our way up the leader board. We were pretty happy with the trek in the end, we had spent 10 hours and about 28 km with about 24 km of it in the bush.

We got ready to go and it was going to be a cool start to the ride, I was glad I brought my warm mitts. The Best thing about the transitions was the Ramon noodles, great pick up. AND AGAIN I wasn't last ready, that's twice.

As we were leaving a team returned to drop off a sick teammate. That was one more spot up the leaderboard. We also seen a few teams hiking in from the wrong direction so they obviously had some trouble finding CPs on the final trek. Not surprised as it was tough Nav. Wayne and Andrew had NAILED IT AGAIN!!! On the trek.

We moved pretty good through the first couple CPs on the bike and looked like we had lots of time to clear the course and make the finish in time. Well when Bob Miller (Race director) told us the last 20 km was slow and tough he was right. It got hot and the trail got rough. There was many long hike a bikes. I started to BONK so we stopped and my food like usual at the end of a race didn't look very appetizing. I was sitting on my hands and knees looking at my food not saying anything and I found out after the race that Wayne thought the situation was more serious, must have looked bad, haha. The team pulled their bags out and found me a handful of food that I was able to get down, thanks team. Definitely felt way better. Then the Hike a bikes started. Each hill Andrew would rush to the top and drop his bike and run back down and take mine either from me or some of the hills Wayne would push 2 bikes from the bottom till Andrew got back. By the time we got to CP 12 we were getting tight on time but felt we still had time to get the last CP and finish. Off we went. Just when you think things are all going to plan in AR shit hits the fan. We were just past the top of the last big hike a bike when I run over a stick and it popped up into my derailleur and BOOM no more derailleur. Wayne and Andrew went to work on making the bike a single speed so I at least had one gear. Claire had tow rope so Andrew hooked it to his pack and towed me on the flats and the hills. With the gear I had I could only help when we were climbing hills, we decided to skip the last CP and get on the pavement and head for the finish line to make it before the cutoff. We rolled in with about 20 minutes to spare.

Claire kept us awake with her constant chatter. She is a trooper, she crashed twice on the bike in the last leg but we never heard a peep from her. We had a lot of laughs a few very quiet times. All in all a great team effort. Thank you to Claire, Andrew and Wayne for making the race one I remember fondly.

Would like to thank Bob Miller and all of the volunteers that helped put on the race. This is one of the best organized races we have been to. The course was a real old style wilderness course.

Kelly Boyd

Epic Endurance