

Robert Makurat - Long Sault Longshots

Our 4th wilderness traverse and probably the one that my wife Dorota, Jacek and I had the most fun at..right up to cp9/ta3. A couple of short races and 3 cottage training days this summer and we were ready, simple and quick check in, a couple hours prepping maps and gear and about 4 hrs restless sleep. A great egg breakfast and onto the bus, we got a nice 17 footer for our combined 520lbs and set up on Wahwashkesh lake for a perfect foggy morning paddle, our race plan was simple, lead in the paddle, strong bike and start trekking top 3. Having paddled the mag a couple of times I knew the north route would be more fun and fast, and really who wouldn't want to jog with a canoe over their heads for 6k? The first 9k to the take out was awesome, we started out in front and didn't let up, at the split it was us and Mercators taking the north route, it was great to have these 2 guys sticking with us, saw 3 young deer swim and after a half dozen rough portages and lift overs we were at the longggg 2.4k portage before cp1. Under 4 hrs at cp1 we were off to a good start, saw my brother Adrian and his teammates (race day rush) who had taken the south route and cheered them on. We were 2nd at the TA just behind Pulling foot and other than a minor mechanical the bike leg down the 'c' trail and 529 was quick and loads of fun. We got passed by the young warriors team at one of the mud holes just before cp3 and I thought to myself how much faster I was racing ocups and 24hr adrenalin races 25 years ago!! Getting to TA2 we saw pullin foot serving a penalty, not again! We started the trek and shortly after getting in the bush had a fast CanadaAR team run past us, the first mistake of the day; I stopped looking at the map and compass and we picked up the pace staying with them, 5mins passed and as we were on the left shore of a curving lake I had a look at the red needle and it was pointing in the direction we were all going..north..WTF.. Stop. Turned around, crossed the beaver dam and south we went, we got to cp5 in good shape, just minutes off team running free. A very refreshing swim across the shawanaga, some photo ops and off we were chasing. Easy nav to skerryvore road, a small bear sighting and down to cp6, running is not my favorite, I suck at it. Got to grouse lake as the sun set and cp7, we were still having fun but not for long. I figured on less than 2 hrs to get to cp8, but after the 1st km along the shore we opted as many teams to move inland and alternate between ridges and marshes..bad idea..should have come back out on the coast, this is where I wished we had brought a pac raft and avoided the entire trek. At this point is where our race changed, a couple of really bad tumbles in the woods agravating previous injuries and we slowed right down, it took us 3.5 hrs to go 6kms..on our approach to Ta3 the fun had stopped and we started talking options. Continue unranked, bike full course and risk dnf or short course. A tough call and one that I regret today but probably the right one at the time. Short course it was, 50k road ride to the finish and it was freezing! We got a great night tour of the Parry Sound waterfront and the well lit multi use trail, saw 2 bears going through someones garbage and cruised back to otter lake along the rose point snowmobile trail. As we were approaching the community centre we saw a team turn in, we caught up and it was Chad Spence and Pullin foot boys. I gotta say, they were in a daze! We started to chit chat and look at the map to see if we were on the beach road, they weren't in a talkative mode and we all headed down the wrong road, at this point we told them we short coursed and the look of relief on there faces was priceless! A great course and organization, amazing volunteers and good memories. Congrats to the fastest team Pullin foot and all the full course teams, we'll see you on the start line next year...