

Cardboard Crowns, Team 41 – Bruno Grossmann

0800: It all started relatively well: no rain, pleasant temperature to run...as decided the night before, we took the cross country ski path and made good progress. Although we had started running toward CP1, we decided to walk briskly instead - after all we expected it would take us at least 4 hours to finish the hike :-)

0845: Almost at CP1 but wait...What! A river? I guess my eye sight was not that good last night, I never caught this while looking at the map. So we scramble to put whatever we wanted to remain dry in our (too small) dry bags. The swim was refreshing, the drying even more - we did not have anything to wipe the water. Ah well, we would warm up while walking.

0915: Contrarily to what we had planned, we decided to bushwhack our way south towards CP2. We meandered east of the first two swamps, then cut west to leave the last swamp on our east side. And lo and behold, that choice paid off! We ended up almost right on CP2. At this point, we thought we had the hike section in our pocket. We then saw some teams were swimming again towards CP3 but we were not geared to swim for long distance so we decided to hike clockwise around Lake McCrae. The hike was long (we actually met some of the first teams already biking on the ATV trail). Unfortunately, we made a big orienteering mistake and ended wasting at least 45 minutes looking for CP3.

1302: Finally found CP3. We were sort of discouraged at this point because we thought we would not make to CP4 it before 1500. We were wrong. Walking or running, we made it to CP4 at 1400.

1405: We changed (wet shoes for dry ones, same for socks, grabbed some extra layers), replenished our water reserves, grabbed some food.

1445: We left CP4 biking. So we had made it to CP4 in the 6 hours limit. Too long to our taste, but we thought we might still be able to make it before 2200 to CP6 to continue on the long course. Boy, were we ever wrong! We started biking on the ATV trail. Wet, very wet. Muddy too, which made the going uphill not very efficient - the tires were just sliding on the mud.

1600: We finally made it to the road; at least we were going faster (15 to 20km/h according to the tracker). Alas that did not last very long.

1630: Back on the ATV trail. We realize the trail went through swamps. Did I say we had changed our shoes and socks to have dry feet? The water was so deep at some places we could not even bike - we had to push our bikes. And when I say "some places", I should really say that the dry parts on the ATV trail were few and far.

1820: Just made it to the CP5. We were already quite tired but happy to have made it before the last ferry. Once on the other side of the river, we took a small break. The temperature was going down, not a lot but enough to make us cold so we put more clothes on, we ate a bit and had a look at the map. Really, still that much to bike? Although we were pretty sure we would not make it by 2200, we decided to go as fast as we could. But we could not go fast. There was so much water on the trail, small lakes, we had to push our bikes through the water so many times we were going at a snail's pace (5 km/h or less). And when we thought it would get better, for example when we were going up under the power lines, we were surprised to still find these large bodies of water on the trail.

2120: Small victory (we had to have some): we found the bridge allowing us to cross the river (besides the highway) relatively easily. Now onto our last leg. But even though we were higher in elevation, there were

still a lot of these large puddles (incidentally, I am not sure one can call a body of water that is 50 cm deep a puddle) and that slowed us down like crazy. Everyone was getting tired.

0215: Small orienteering mistake, not surprising at that time of the night: we took the eastbound trail instead of the northbound one. However, our excuse was that the eastbound trail was not marked on the map. Anyway, it was not a huge mistake - we probably lost less than 15 minutes.

0245: We made it to CP6! 12 hours of biking, or, more precisely, 2 hours of biking and 10 hours of pushing our bike! Talking to the volunteers made us realize it would be hard to do the last part (canoeing **and portaging**) within the 9h allotted (short course A) . The nail in the coffin was when we were told that the portaging would be on the same kind of trails we had biked on. With a heavy heart, we decided to call it quits.

In conclusion, even though we were quite disappointed to not be able to finish the race, we still had a lot of fun. And if we do this again, we have a better idea on how to prepare: study the maps well, be ready to swim...and pray so that the bike trails don't get flooded to the point where it would get faster to actually run them!