

SOME REPORTS FROM PARTICIPANTS AT THE BENDALONG ROGAINE

Trevor Gollan asked several teams for feedback on the rogaie. Here's a record of interview with Mal Gamble and Paul Monks followed by edited reports from other participants. Mal and Paul scored 2,050 points, placed 12th overall.

Trev: Congratulations on your effort. 2050 points puts you into the serious section of the competition. Did you ever think you'd get all the controls?

Malcolm: Firstly, thanks very much for hosting the NSW Champs, we both really enjoyed it and were proud of our result.

Paul will probably be better qualified to answer some of the technical questions, but we never planned to clear the entire course. Paul's route selection was particularly impressive on this event, thanks to the aid of his Lego blocks (yes, you read that right!) We have a kind of Manhattan skyscraper 3-D visual thing going on with pre-event mapping and the course eventually jumps out at us like finally seeing one of those 'magic-eye' things.

We were far from fresh going in to the event. Paul, for example raced an epic Victorian Alps High Country Ultra 100mile only 2 weeks prior to the NSW Champs and I raced Oxfam Melbourne Trailwalker 100kms only the weekend prior. So not ideal preparation, but we still like to try to fit it all in.

Paul: I've got a thing for data visualisation and the Lego helps us see what controls are simply not worth going for and establishing an efficient route in the large, before working out the specific path in the small.

Like Mal said, we weren't planning on getting all the controls – congratulations to the team that did, that was an amazing effort! We were going for about 400 more points than we ended up getting. We dropped a few due to the rain and general slowness.

Mal's probably understating just how tired we were going in to the event. I did 145km up and down the five highest peaks in Victoria, over 6000 metres of ascent, in 30 hours on my feet (plus a few hours sleep). Mal's Trailwalker team came third (by only a minute) and the team that came first set a new record. So we've both been pushing it pretty hard lately.

Trev: I noted your addresses in Melbourne. Did you travel up just for the rogaie? or part of a larger scheme?

Malcolm: We travelled up specifically for the event and actually have just returned late last night from South Australia / Flinders Ranges where we did the rogaie state champs there also after a long drive across. So a bit of a road trip with Paul and his partner Nicole and 11 month old Jackson.

Paul: Anything south of Sydney is a comfortable day drive. Likewise in the other direction. Especially now your state has exhausted all its tunnel PPP opportunities and is finally making the Hume in NSW a real road. ☺ Anything north or east of Melbourne would be easy for Sydney or Canberra residents to get to. I think Victoria's October 24hr will be held out that way. It would be good to see some of you there.

Trev: What's your rogaining pedigree? How many rogaines have you done and how do you keep fit for this sport?

Malcolm: As to our rogaining backgrounds, well we are both relative newcomers with this our 2nd year although Paul is much better equipped with a solid background in serious hiking and navigation, I come from a running background. We both met last year running Cradle Mt Ultra and have been racing ultra marathons since (perhaps overdoing these to the detriment of our rogaining results!) We keep saying to each other that one day we will come into a rogaie event fresh, uninjured and perhaps even tapered... well, one day.

I should note that this was the first 24 hour rogaie Paul and I have actually successfully completed after our failed Victorian / Kinglake Champs last year. So a monkey off our backs.

Paul: Yeah, at the Kinglake event I ended up sleeping in a gutter 2km from the hash house I was so tired. I really prefer rogaining to ultras and will choose them over ultras. There is a lot more thinking involved. A lot more decisions to be made, rather than just, do I eat/drink now?

Keeping fit for me is about hiking (with my son on my back nowadays), bike commuting to work, weights, step aerobics, and a little bit of running for good measure. Though I think Malcolm mostly does running.

Trev: What problems did you encounter on the rogaine? Were the control placements OK? (Always a question we course-setters ask.) Did you tend to go cross-country or round via the roads?

Paul: The control placements were great. The only bit we were genuinely confused by was approaching 64 from 54. There was a gully in between that didn't seem as prominent on the map as on the ground.

We went cross country for almost all of the daylight. Our original route was basically an anti-clockwise loop. We came through 63 just on sunset and switched our course to a figure eight by going to 21 instead of 50. We then did mostly road through the night.

Our biggest problem was when the rain was at its heaviest. The night before was really nice and mild. We weren't expecting anything more than light showers. We both had rain jackets, but neither was lined and we both had about one layer too little. Still, it was okay while we were moving. Then just before we headed into the bush for 71 from the north, my headtorch stopped suddenly. We had to stop and change the batteries and we both started shivering quite badly. It took us longer than it should have to get 71. It was very early in the morning, the coldest part of the event, it was pouring with rain and we were underdressed. Actually maybe our time from the attack point was okay given the conditions. Anyway, right after we got the control my headtorch died. I had to use Mal's backup headtorch. I discovered my headtorch had a very fine crack in the plastic housing. With all the rain and wet scrub it had consumed a few millilitres of water and short circuited.

Oh and one other point, I think we scored 2150, not 2050. 31 and 73 didn't get recorded by our navlight. 31 was inaccessible when we arrived (i tried, waves reached my knees) and 73 the punch didn't work (flat battery?). Actually I mind losing the time on 31 more than the points. We tried approaching from both sides and it cost us almost half an hour all up - for 30 points! :(

Trev: As to your lost points, I expect we can change results. #73 failed for most people and we credited points; I ran out of time in building protection for the navlights and suspect Joe Public played with it. It worked for our early visiting teams, not for anyone who visited later. #31 surprised me - we obviously didn't visit it at high tide!

Trev: What were the highlights for you?

Malcolm: A highlight Paul and I noted and passed on directly to Phil Whitten was the quality of the mapping. We were staggered as to its comprehensiveness and accuracy even to the degree of vegetation density. There was obviously many hours of detailed work put into this crucial area of the event.

Another plus was the hash-house location and the associated supporting literature. I am about to embark on a long-service leave road trip heading up North and will probably call into Bendalong Caravan Park en-route.

Paul: The map was great – six different grades of track!

In terms of controls, 40 – Barbeque in the middle of nowhere was hilarious. Hitting 90 and 91 directly in almost pitch black (well, 90 with a slight overshoot).

The wide variety of vegetation throughout the course was also a highlight. As a Victorian I noticed it was a lot more humid than the coast environs I'm used to and that was really obvious in the vegetation in the gullies.

The overall highlight of event was that we kept scoring well right to the end.

Trev: Were you affected by the All Night Cafe fire?

Paul: We did hear from a couple of people that we passed that it wasn't there anymore, that it had burned down. We were jogging on the road in the opposite direction at the time, so didn't stop to find out what that meant. We spent much of the next hour trying to work out if we had heard them correctly!

Trev: Anything we as rogaine organisers can do to improve the event?

Paul: Something I think we can all do is get more people actively involved in the sport. It would be great to see the numbers that Europe gets, especially in the longer rogaines. So keep sharing your passion with people and giving them a great introduction to the sport.

From Roland Cifersky:

Firstly, it was a great course! and we really did well until we got into the heavy rain at control #71. We made the stupid decision at the start that with 1 to 5 mm forecast we would not need our Goretex jackets. So we took only the light-weight Windstopper jackets. We both were shivering once we got out on a track close to #71. We wrapped our space blankets around our body directly on the skin because everything else was already totally wet.

You guys did a wonderfully job and I can't think of anything what you could have done differently to prevent Stewart's health problem.

The only thing you could stress again is that you need to feed your body with sufficient and nutritious food all through the course to prevent the muscles from degradation.

Looking forward to do the next one!

From Alex Ramsey & Selina Stoute [Alex and Selina won the 6-hour event, scoring 930 points]



We didn't have time on the weekend of the event to complete a 24 hour rogaïne so opted for the 6 hour option. It's great training for us and gives us an opportunity to explore a new area.

I think it was a great idea that you left the 6 hour option open for the full 24 hours. The 24 hour event is the main event and by having the 6 hour event open across the 24 hours it creates lots of flexibility for novices and the experienced. We certainly weren't fazed by not knowing the outcome of the event until after the 24

hour was finished.

The only problem we encountered was finding control 74; there were more creeks in the area than marked on the map. We approached the control from the NE (walking up the main creek). We thought our attack point from the road was approximately 200-300m from the control but when walking up the main creek we came across two creeks and tried both of them but could not locate the spur with the control on it. I don't think it was the course setters fault – there just wasn't enough detail on the map. If we had been patient and gone back to basics we would have got the control. As it was we felt we had wasted too much time on the control and, only two hours into the event, we decided to ditch it and move on. I estimate that this cost us 100 points (70 points + one 30 point control we ditched towards end due to time constraints).

We tried to use the roads as much as possible given that the terrain was fairly slow moving, but I would estimate we spent approximately 50/50 on roads and cross country.

The highlight of the event was the location – we live in Canberra and it's always nice to get down to the coast – but I hate lawyer vine! Also the use of waterproof backing paper for the map was an excellent addition!

Nothing I can think of that would improve the event, it was well run and the post-event food was great!

From Matt Webster [with Wayne Eliot, finished 2nd overall scoring 2,770 points. See their route on NSWRA website]



Our initial plan involved trying to spend a bit of time on tracks and trails, running on the obvious tracks (5 mins on, 1 or 2 mins off), and dumping our packs for some out and back running. We planned to be in the central part of the course for night time, where we hoped navigation would be easier in the steeper terrain. We planned to break at the All Night Café, and if we were feeling well, hoped to do some more running in the morning. Our return home had plenty of escape routes.

The first 6 hours went incredibly smoothly - we hit all our checkpoints first time, and our speed was quite fast. The only hiccup was near checkpoint 21, where we encountered a river with no bridge. No problem - we stripped to our undies and swam across.



Berrara Lagoon, near #21

Since we were way ahead of a clean sweep score, we decided to hit CP 41 (the only CP we had dropped from our planned route). We reasoned that we had some chance of a sweep, so we may as well go for it now (and not when we were near the HH, when we couldn't). Unfortunately, we missed the next CP, and spent some time looking for it. Night had descended, we were no longer running, and our scoring rate quickly dropped (along with a few CPs). After scoring 1020 points in the first six hours, we scored 400 in the next six.

We wandered into the ANC post explosion, and had our only substantial break (about 35 mins). The hours until sunrise were slow going, made much more uncomfortable by the rain. We kept moving, and the score kept ticking, albeit slowly. We didn't consider another night-time stop, otherwise I think the cold would have got to us.

Morning came when we were on top of a hill, back on a track, and things started to feel a whole lot better. We modified our route again, avoiding some far flung CPs, and picked up the pace. We even began our running routine again. The return home through the lake was interesting - I found the water on my feet soothing, although I don't think Wayne liked it as much. It was good to be in the company of other teams, after a fairly lonesome night in the sticks.

We had a final dash along the beach, before climbing the headland and grabbing the final 2 CPs. We ran all the way from the last CP back fast, after recognising a few threats. We finished with 8 minutes to spare, and we were spent. We knew we had done well, but didn't think we would win the Men's division. It felt great.

Congratulations on putting on a great event, although I was wondering why there was no sponsorship? My brother rogaines regularly around Cairns, where he reckons a field of 80 people gets some fairly decent prizes from the 2 local Adventure stores. It would be great to have some spot prizes, even if they were just some unwanted stock from an outdoor store.

From Jonathan Miller [with Melisah Feeney finished 6th overall with 2,280 points, also 1st in Veterans and 2nd Mixed team]



In response to your questions, I entertained the notion that we just might get all the controls when we were doing well at dusk, but I was very aware that 'productivity' declines significantly after the first 6-8 hours of a longer rogain.

I did my first Melbourne University Mountaineering Club 24 hour walk in 1979 – these were 'line events' like orienteering courses. I did a few of these and a few rogaines in the early 1980s, including the

1980 intervarsity and Australian championships in Victoria before a long-term foot problem, and a move interstate, encouraged me to stop competing. I returned to rogaining in a low key way as I took up orienteering in Canberra in the 1990s.

I have become more serious about rogaining since I have had the opportunity to team with someone as strong as Melisah, who only started in the sport in 2005. We have now done seven events together, mostly 6 and 8 hour events. Last weekend was our first 24-hour together other than the World Champs at the Warrumbungles, from which we had to withdraw due to illness and foot problems. Melisah and I keep fit by running a few times a week, cycling, stretching and yoga. We are on a fitness and skills training schedule to build up for the world champs in Estonia.

The main problem I faced was getting seriously cold just before dawn after the rain. Melisah has had some ongoing issues with her feet and shoes.

Navigationally I was pretty happy with the way we went - Melisah did really well in the brain-dead early hours of the morning. Certainly the scrub was pretty tiring in places, particularly at night. We were lucky to get 100 at night, but the only other one we had problems with was 76, which I thought might have been a bit low relative to the indications of the contours. We often took the roads so we could go faster and have a confident attack point. This was less practicable in the spine of controls 52 to 51.

The highlights for me always include knowing we are still going strong at dawn – a beautiful time of any event – and there is not much longer to go! I really enjoyed the fast run up the eastern shore, picking up controls quickly. There were some very picturesque valleys, although I saw them a little less joyously for the slowness of the scrub.

We were lucky with the All night café – we got there at 5pm and having a feed we did not have to carry was a real boost for us.

The HH choice was wonderful. The amenities and the beauty of the site – and the quiet for sleeping – were great.

A matter of continuing discussion certainly in Canberra is the preferred terrain and style of bush for rogaining. I have very fond memories of my Victorian days going across open farmland and open bushland (detracted slightly by the number of fences!) Rogaines like the Warrumbungles and others with thick scrub provide a different test. While I loving bushwalking in less disturbed areas, when rogaining in persistently thick scrub, I sometimes think wistfully of the more open country of rogaining in my 20s.

What is the deal with getting the little plaques done for the trophy? Should we get that done locally? I notice there is no plaque for last year's winners – Anna Booth and Phil Creaser.

From Jason Lee [with Nik Dontschuk, scored 1,470 points, finishing 27th overall]



I don't think we encountered any major problems on the rogaïne. From my perspective, it was a good race and we did commendably. We did have some intentions of staying on the course for the full 24hrs, but at 3am in the morning at the hash house, hot food in our stomachs, rain pouring down, feeling wet and cold, we made a call for three hours sleep that I think we don't need to feel ashamed of. In all, I think we had about six and a half hours rest that perhaps we could have utilised in scoring more points. But all that is in retrospect...

We spent about 40mins at the all night cafe. We were 'waiting for water', but that was just an excuse to have a rest really. We stopped for another half hour at W3 where Nik treated his sore feet and removed some squashed leeches. We got into the HH at just after 3am, went to sleep from 4 to 7, and left for a morning loop around 7:50am.

We found all the controls that we looked for. If we took longer than we should have, it was because of small nav mistakes rather than poor control placement.

I really enjoyed the beach controls. That was the best part of the course for me.

The all night cafe fire did affect us. See above. But it was a good excuse to have a rest.

On the whole, I think you as the organisers did an excellent job. I really enjoyed myself. One small niggle though, the final instructions did say that there were spot prizes, though that obviously did not eventuate. I know that spot prizes are dependent on sponsorship. But I guess I feel that if you promise something, you should deliver... Improvements? Spot prizes. A little more PR work with sponsors could provide some material incentive for those of us rogainers who can hardly ever expect to place. It also keeps people sticking around for presentations.

I've put some of my photos on the ACT rogaining website, among other places.

And from Nik:

Yep, I traveled up from Melbourne, with Alistair who competed with Neil and did quite well. Originally he was going to be my partner however i was thankful he found someone closer to his fitness level. Leaving me able to walk for the next few days post rogaine.

This was only my 3rd rogaine and by second 24-hour event. My first was the VicChamps in Kinglake (another difficult 24) which we ended early as a teammate refused to keep going after a rest at the Hash house. My second was more successful, an 8 hour in Dunolly Vic with Alistair, he dragged me to a second place covering 45km in that time.

Keeping fit is more part of life than individual training. I have no car so I ride everywhere, this includes going 4km to uni each weekday and 15km to work (these are one way distances). I have done a few jogs of around 10 - 15km's however these are in no way a consistent activity. Although i am trying to motivate myself to do my exercise for the upcoming UniChamps Rogaine.

Really loved this rogaine. The terrain was just so much different to what we expect in Vic. You actually have water in NSW, amazing. Shame about the All Night Cafe fire, not to say the rest wasn't welcome, a hot meal would have been tops about then. I might have convinced Jason to say out otherwise.

My only complaint about the course would be the location of water points, I felt they were too grouped along the coast. Making a large section of the course without them. This however was more a problem with our course plan than anything else as I focused only on high point loops. The HH was not in the best location, however this is probably just something that has to be accepted in coastal rogaines.

An improvement would be the serving of toasted cheese sandwiches at HH, which is commonplace at Vic events. Nothing is better, in my mind, than a toasted cheese sandwich with a burger pattie and tomato sauce at 3 in the morning when you're buggered.

From Joel Mackay, President NSWRA: [Joel, with Andrew Black and Jonathan Worswick finished 4th overall scoring 2,520 points.]



I wanted to thank you and your team for all the effort you put into the NSW champs over the last few months. I thought it was a great event - the coastal scenery was excellent, everything seemed to run very smoothly, the ANC worked well [*obviously Joel's team visited ANC at 5am, well after the fire*], the water-drops always had copious amounts of water in them when we visited and the hash-house site was absolute luxury! When the worst you can find to complain about is a few leeches, you know the event was a real success! Of course there was some scrubby scrub, which is always worth a bit of blaspheming at the time, but that is all part of the sport really - adapting to the course - so it doesn't really worry me too much. All the teams we met along the way were having a good time (except for those that had tried unsuccessfully to get 100 - but that was why it was worth 100 points!), another good indication that the event was appreciated all round.
