

Bendalong 2008 NSW Champs

Paul Stein and Matt Cooper (team 13)

102km, 47 controls, 40 leech bites, a million scratches, 7 black toe nails, 2360 points, 5th place and 2 missed controls. That was Bendalong 2008 summarised in a sentence, but the experience requires many more words. Such as describing the beautiful area in which the Hash House was placed and the scenic beaches and headlands to walk/run around and the tranquil lakes and waterways that were home to abundant birdlife and fish (how about the stingrays that you could pat!). Add all this to a brilliant map and good rogaining weather and you start to get a good picture of the success of the 2008 NSW champs.

We arrived with plenty of time to spare but still seemed to be rushing as noon approached. We had decided to zig zag up the east half of the map and then head around the north and back down the west. We knew there was 600 points on offer to the south of Red Head Rd which would be good to get to also. So, at the “go” off we trotted to 47 only to find that other teams had made better time along the beach. Oh well, we’ll have to catch that time up. 46 then 36, 57, 65 and 35 and we were travelling quite well. I started to head toward 64 before my trusty partner reminded me that we were to get 54 first. After 64 we headed up to 74 then 63 and here we had decided to make our way back to the coast via 75 and 33. Turns out the Mansfield’s with all the kids in tow had beaten us to 53 and were on their way back to HH. It’s always good to see the families out enjoying the sport. We headed on to 31 and 73 meeting up with El Presidente along the way and then picked up 62 before heading back to try and conquer 100 before dark. 21 was ok but we probably should have headed around the track to the west instead of taking a bearing from 21. It was slow going and we must have been very close but bailed and headed west to the track. Considered going back in for another look but chose to head around the top and pick up 81 (about 6pm, head torches on here), 61, 40, 91, 90 and 60. The water was welcome but we soon got more than we hoped for when it started to pour just after 80. Dropped 43 after only spending a little while looking (probably hit it too far downstream) and headed to 41 where the track running was welcome to give our legs a break from the undergrowth and to assist in warming us up. Ran about 5km then to 42 as then bush was not appealing at that moment (mental note: look for some orienteering long pants to assist with travelling more swiftly through the scratchy stuff) and then to ANC to hear about the excitement they had had. Also caught up with the winning ladies team Gillian and Alexa with whom we’d been having a tussle with up the eastern part of the map (and with whom we would resume a tussle with much later down in the south). We then made our way to 70, obviously getting quite tired, and then back to 50, 30 and 52. It’s always nice to get through the night and start to get the light of a new day and our spirits began to rise as it got lighter. We decided to leave the clump of controls to the north-west of 52 (I think if we’d have had long pants and less tender legs we would have had a go at some them at least) and made our way to 92 hoping to leave us time to attempt many of the southern controls. Picked up 34 and 82 fairly quickly but with only about 4 hours remaining we were concerned about just how many we could pick up on our way back. We ran, as we had done on most of the tracks and roads, hoping that we had eaten enough to keep away cramps and fatigue. We picked up 76, where we noted a lone rogainer and then down to 56. Out to the main road again and down to 59 and even 83 which I thought may have been a risk, but partner Mat bravely encouraged me on. Picked up 25 and then trudged through the water to 68 (what a great spot for a control!), up the spur to 39 and around the streets to 24. I read the wrong clue here but managed to find it ok and then across to 48. Had to wade across murky lagoon as we failed to cross up nearer to the control. Obviously tired! Then headed up to 23 which I was panicking about getting and around to 58 (scary when tired) and finish. We were extremely pleased to time our finish so well (7mins to spare) after bailing early on our last 24hr. We were happy with our overall effort, but the first question asked of us was “So did you get all the controls? David and Julie did”. Well that was an amazing effort by them. Congratulations! Well done to all those that took part and many thanks once again to the Event Coordinator, Trevor Gollan and Course Setter, Phil Whitten and their wonderful team of helpers. I really hope we can continue to get people to volunteer for events so that this wonderful sport can develop and flourish. Can you help? See you all at the next rogain.