

## Hornsby Rogaine Event Report - Team 24

A quick introduction to those who don't know us (Brenton and Meredith Gray visiting from Qld). Our team was a mixed team (not veterans yet unfortunately because my wife refuses to age). If you saw us on the course today we were in the matching blue tops and I had a bit of wildfiresports.com.au gear on as well but that was probably drenched in sweat.

There were certainly a few great features of the event. It is the best attended rogaine I have ever participated in. Approx 400 competitors and a wonderful mix of generations. We were genuinely in awe of the number of kids we saw after five hours either walking or being carried (perhaps taking a nap) but nonetheless still on the course. I bet those parents are looking forward to sundown.

It was also a beautiful area through the National Park and the organisers had clearly made the day as picturesque as possible by taking us to the shady creeks and local lookouts.

It felt hot (I don't sound like much of a Queenslander saying that) but having such an accurate map, clear instructions, plenty of water options and an interesting course always helps with the motivation.

The other first? We have never been so alone on a Rogaine after one control. We headed south from the start to do what we thought was the obvious SE loop only to find one other team with us who disappeared after one more control. So unnerving was it that I broke my own cardinal rule of ignoring other teams by stopping to look at the map to see what clanger we had made in our route choice. Knowing there was 400 people out there and nobody near us so soon after the start just felt odd. (Still haven't worked out if there was a clanger, all correspondence welcome).

I tend to not be a detailed planner. As a native orienteer rather than rogainer I am perhaps more comfortable planning whilst moving and we did a broad plan only. We spent about 20mins before the event started developing some rough guidelines. Do the streets first before it gets any hotter so we could perhaps jog for a while initially. Get all the way to the North (via the Mountain Bike Park on the Centre of the map) because the North East looked the best concentration of points. We then wanted to do the Great North Walk back for the pleasure of the walk more than the points and we would figure the rest out after the 80 point water stop in the park. We felt that the SW corner although it had a lot of points had a bit too much distance in them so ignored that as we had to drop something. I felt particularly lazy today and didn't bother estimating our distances before leaving but just counted checkpoints (six per hour on streets, down to four per hour on any rough bush tracks and also once we were getting tired). And so it unfolded. No real errors, a bit of time fluffing around here and there (couldn't easily find the car wreck in the mountain bike park -- a bit embarrassing ---and couldn't find the tracks home from the last control either although neither could the other 8 teams we shared a Conga line with back to the finish!)

The biggest concern today wasn't in the navigation, the map was too good for that, but overheating. Coincidentally I did the Lake Macquarie Rogaine around the same time last year but my partner didn't show up so I jogged around by myself for a few hours and didn't eat or drink enough and ended up cramping so badly I had to walk out. However, it did reinforce one other Rogaining lesson and that is the only times I have ever run out of either food or water were on Metrogainers. Nothing worse than running to a shop to find it closed or finding a tap in a park to see the handle taken off in case there are water rustlers around. So today was the big hydration pack and I was glad to do so as managed to drink enough (9L) to make it to the finish so that the cramps kicked in after the event.

Anything else of note? Ah yeah, had a three foot red belly black snake rise up to strike me before I finally saw it one step away from landing on it. And that was the final first for the event, because this snake was on the bitumen of a busy suburban road in the middle of the Hornsby suburbs -- who would have thought that was the time to avoid reading one's map whilst jogging! I try to see the positives out of seeing snakes, figure if I got that close, and it was ready to strike but didn't because I finally moved away means they really don't want to bite us....

Thanks to all the organisers, it was a beautiful day and it is always appreciated how much effort is made by the volunteers to put on such a large scale and successful event.

Brenton and Meredith Gray

brenton@wildfiresports.com.au

ps if anyone happens to be in QLD on March 29, the 6hr day/night rogaine I am helping to organise is going to be a cracker with very complex navigation in a wildness area 40mins from Brisbane CBD. The map has great detail as based off the two maps used for last year's state orienteering champs.