

Raid the North Kamloops
Sun Peaks Resort

August 4-6, 2006
Race report by Marlene Wiig

I am ashamed to say that we laughed before we asked him if he was okay. It was just sooo funny to see Joey hanging upside down by one foot and we really needed the laugh at that particular moment. Besides, once we realized that it was actually a grimace and not a smile on his face we stopped laughing and started helping get him untangled from the branches and roots he had fallen through. We were just a couple of hours into Raid the North Kamloops and things were not going well...

Midnight, a dark back road near Barrier, BC, and almost a hundred racers charging into the dense brush in search of a small lake and the coast that would take them to CP1. Headlights bobbed and voices called out, but the attempts to keep our team together were fraught with difficulty. The trees and chaparral offered only minimal room to manoeuvre and required us to stay within touching distance of one another or risk being trapped in the fragrant and highly disorienting cocoon that occurred when the branches snapped back. We'd had to inch our way over and under the same fallen trees for quite a while until Joey managed to get his foot caught and he toppled into a dark chasm that the deadfall had created. The angle of the fall wrenched his knee quite badly and we all learned a few new swear words while extricating him from his predicament. We would learn later that the tendons and ligaments in his calf and knee had been badly damaged, but our stoic captain soldiered on with only the odd wince of pain.

We had wasted the better part of our initial two hours fighting the brush only to realize that we had been going in circles in our attempt to cross at a shallower section of water that wouldn't send Laurel into a hypothermic state too early in the race. We finally found a hip-deep crossing, held our collective breath, and waded in only to find that the temperature was rather pleasant - bordering on warm, actually. We commenced with the coastering section well back in the pack but didn't quite understand how far back until we saw the lights of a speed boat racing across the water towards us.

"We'll have to give you a ride to the end of the lake" the two guys in the boat called out to us. "You are hours behind the next team!"

Dejected, we started making our way over to the boat and pulled up with a sudden realization - "are you guys with the race?"

"Nah", they shouted back, "we're just out for a little cruise on the lake and saw the headlights on the shore."

After a visual assessment of their blood alcohol level and assuring them that they would only be assisting in getting us disqualified if we took them up on their offer, we continued along the rocky shore. We arrived at CP1 at 5:30 am, almost two full hours behind the next team and in second last place. Searching the shoreline for the trail that lead to the road to CP2 proved to be fruitless, so we calculated a bearing and plunged into the brush once again. A steep climb up through the trees brought us to the correct road

and we picked up our pace in an attempt to make up some lost time. It was only about 5 minutes into the run when we ground to a walking pace once again. Joey's knee would not allow him a faster pace and we solaced ourselves with the knowledge that we would soon be on our bikes, Joey's best discipline by far, and humming along speedily. Alas, it was not to be so.

A quick refuel at TA1 and we sped off down the gravel road. The first few kilometres of slight downgrade gave way to a gentle climb that graduated to some lung-bursting sections. Laurel and I settled into a friendly gear to commence the climbing but had to come to a complete stop when we saw Darcy riding behind Joey with his hand on his back, offering him a push up the hill. Joey couldn't ride! We had not considered that Joey, who is always the workhorse on cycling sections, might be compromised with his knee injury. He agreed to hook up to Laurel for a tow (after only minimal threats from the rest of us), Darcy and I distributed his pack and its contents between us, and we continued on. The misery on Joey's face was glaringly apparent and we missed the joviality he usually brings to the tougher sections, but only until we reached a wide open area with trails and tire tracks in all directions. We had a few more than humorous moments, hours really, sampling and discarding the various trails before heading over to Johnson Lake and the screaming fast downhill into TA2.

This section saw us carrying all of our paddling and climbing gear several kilometres to our destination – a rock face that descended more than a hundred feet directly into the lake below. With our paddles, packs and pfd's strapped securely to our backs we all made the harrowing rappel in good time and scrambled across the rocks to the waiting canoes in the early evening light. The 37 km paddle would take us about 6 hours we figured, so we put our strength into it and tried to get in as much distance as possible before night fell. We were concerned that Joey's knee would seize up in the boat and that occupied a good portion of conversation between Darcy and I while Laurel and Joey zigzagged across the water beside us in the waning light. I was busy thinking how we could help Laurel break her bad j-stroke habit when we heard Joey call out to Laurel to help him. He couldn't see very well and we had a few moments of panic thinking it was a bizarre manifestation of some other sort of injury, until Darcy looked over and suggested to the rock star that he remove his sunglasses now that the sun had gone down...

We were just over 24 hours into the race when we rounded the last corner on the lake and began our paddle to shore and the next transition area, where our fantastic support crew awaited with warm clothes, warm food, and conversation other than the grunts I had been getting out of Darcy for the past few hours. I was tired – we all were – but it sure perked me up in a hurry when I saw the lights of the ferry coming straight towards us on the water! Screaming at the others in panic, I was confused when I was regarded with blank expressions and told that the ferry wasn't even at the dock! Ah yes, gotta love those sleep monsters.

Laurel took all of about 2 minutes to settle into her hypothermic routine once we reached the transition area and we all concentrated on getting both her and us warm after our stint

on the water. Soup, ravioli, hot chocolate, dry clothes – and then a quick walk to warm up and wake up before hopping back on our bikes to begin the climb up the logging road.

Funny thing about those logging roads – they go on. And on! For forever it seemed. We'd been on our bikes for a couple of hours when we all noticed almost simultaneously that we were weaving all over the place. Not wanting to be the first to say it, I almost jumped for joy when it was suggested we take a 20 minute power nap and was probably the first to toss my bike and sit down beside it. The bikes had all been abandoned; we were lined up in the ditch with our backs against a rise and were sleeping in seconds. Had we thought to take out our shiny silver space blankets not only would we have been warmer but we would also have resembled the Stadium Dogs for which we are named. Darcy's alarm began chiming at the 20 minute mark and he promptly woke up, turned it off, then snuggled in and went back to sleep beside me. Shivering spastically, I could not match his drowsy bliss and jumped to my feet, waking the others at the same time. Back on the bikes, back to the endless climb, back to the dreamlike trance of those circular pedaling motions...

The early morning sun (finally!) illuminated our surroundings and we were impressed with how far we had climbed during the dead of night. Remember, what goes up must come down, and we were thrilled to reach the summit and add a couple of layers for what was sure to be a roller coaster fast ride down to TA3. Add a fleece, a wind shell, skull cap under the helmet, two pairs of mitts and hop back on the bikes before breaking too much of a sweat in so many clothes. The road started on a gentle decline that had us speeding up gradually and right when the breeze started to cool us off – you guessed it – we hit another section of hills! Since getting all the clothes on had been a 10 minute ordeal we weren't about to take another 10 minutes to get them all off, especially since we knew (hoped?) that the downhill would be coming soon. So, we sweated our way up this set of hills and were finally rewarded with some super fast, super fun downhill. With a huge smile and cold tears of joy streaming down my face I shot past Laurel on her hard-tail while blessing my full-suspension Rocky and we pulled into the transition area in the early morning sun.

Joey's knee had loosen slightly and he wasn't complaining as we headed off on what we thought would be a short trek along the trails on the ski hill to the finish line. We were in high spirits until we came upon the first marsh. It was really wet and really big. Almost as big as the spiders in the trees that we pushed away while circumnavigating what seemed to be an inland lake! Reaching the other side and resuming travel on our easy trail kept us happy for a good 5 minutes until the trail petered out. Great! More bush whacking. Once again sampling and discarding a number of faint trails, we kept heading in a generally upward direction until we emptied out onto a road near the ski lift. Hiking up a ski hill is generally like a huge set of stairs and we were nowhere near what should have been one of the easier CPs. Lots more up, a little bit of down, climb a fence, a little more up, do a complete circle and voila! We found it just as Joey's pain threshold snapped.

The gear and pack disbursement went more smoothly this time, probably because we had only one more CP to go and Joey was anxious to get to the finish line, and we headed down the stairs, er, hill. With Darcy packing most of the weight, Joey wincing with every step, and Laurel and I thinking about showers and cold beverages, we hit the last CP, took a 35 minute left turn detour when we could have gone straight down for 5 minutes, and wandered into the finish area with a time of 34 hours and 46 minutes and in second last place. That we finished at all is testimony to the commitment that we have to each other, even in the face of grave injury and inebriated boaters trying to get us disqualified.

Thanks to our sponsors who provide great gear to keep us going, and to our support crew who provide everything else.

Racers:

Joey Roa, Captain
Marlene Wiig

Laurel Shuttleworth
Darcy Campbell

Support Crew:

Brandin Roa

Adrian Harding

