

Bushwhack AR - 2009
Harris County Park, North Kackalacki
September 25-26, 2009

Bob and Drew's Race Report
Team #119 - Waterlogged Dogwoods

Team Waterlogged Dogwoods took awhile to come together for the BAR 2009. My normal TWD team-mate Mike, recently returned from Afghanistan and was getting ready for the Savage Man Tri, and a new member to the TBARC-RDU Group, Marcey, broke her collarbone and is recovering. Drew Lequick, an Army buddy, decided to test the AR waters, having never done an AR, biked at night, much less on single track, and using a borrowed bike he had ridden once ever. We did one training event together the week prior, paddling Crab Tree Lake and riding Sludge and Umstead Trails at night – so I guess that was enough prep.

Drew's wife, LeeAnne, was our race support and she did a phenomenal job coping with the stinky truck, drying our wet gloves, and saturating our caffeine fix. As with all the other locals, we had little clue as to where the Bushwhack AR course was going to take us – thinking Jordan Lake, Umstead, CrabTree, Falls Lake, and Harris Lake were top destinations, so pushing southwest of RDU into Raven Rock and Sanford was a bit of a surprise. My house is only about 20min away from Harris Lake, so after check-in we decided to head home, and do the coursework on my dining room table with the aid of TOPO software, Google Maps, and an Erin special delivery of Andy's Cheeseburgers. My son Nathan really enjoyed trying to help us plot UTM's and color with the highlighters.

Back to the race check-in, we unloaded the canoe, headed to the race brief and made the final prep for the race start. The Bushwhack crew threw in a run prologue to track down 3 CPs near Harris Park Ponds on either the A or B Course – we chose A. The first pond point was in a waist deep swampy mire and the second was easy to find as well. The third was on (or should I say not on) a southern pond adjacent to the lake. CP0, Triangle AR, and the Waterlogged Dogwoods looped the lake several times looking for it, but to no luck – we all decided to head back. On the way back we stopped at another pond on the Peninsula Trail that could easily be confused for the other lake and decided to take a gander – finding the CP on the western shore, and then back to the TA.

I think there were 2-3 teams ahead of us when we started the first bike leg. We decided to get the single track CPs first and only had trouble finding the CP in the gorge whoop-d-doo's, since there were several sections of it. Drew did really well keeping up and we headed across the road to the Northern portion. These trails gave us a bit more trouble, because some of the trailheads were tricky to find, but we found all of these CPs as well. We probably should have taken the same way back to the CP as we came in, but decided to take the Powerline trail, and found some really nice pricklers. I always plan on wearing long pants before doing serious Bushwhacking, but always end in shorts for these sections – ripping my knees up.

The lake paddle leg was one of my favorite parts of the race – the eerie red glow from the Nuclear Power Plant provided a great backdrop to the silent night paddling, felt like Ranger School water infiltration. Drew and I decided to carry the canoe across the peninsula like a lot of other teams and we cut down on the length of the paddle quite a bit. The mysterious middle of the lake CP turned out to be a small island – I thought it would be a Redneck Yacht Club anchored out, ready to offer up some hotdogs and beer – too bad, maybe thoughts for the next race (Don, Pat, Jeff?). Cleaned up the paddle section and headed for the TA to get back on the bikes – so far no substantial rainfall, just a light mist – which felt great.

The next bike leg was along a hardball road west toward the Sanford Sand Lee MTB trails. About 300 meters from the TA, I noticed Drew had a flat rear tire – maybe that is why he was not liking

being on the bike as much lately, it could have been flat for awhile. A quick change and we were on our way. Jeff E was waiting at the entrance to the park and I thought he would give us some additional UTM's to plot, but the directions were to ride around the 2 mile trail and find the CPs somewhere along the way. Sounds easy enough, except the trail network got confusing, branched quite a bit, and several of the rock garden routes took awhile for us to push our bikes through – wonder if anybody was able to ride these upright? After double-backing several times, we only found 3 of the 4 points after checking the letter designations and verifying with Jeff E where they were placed. On the ride back, we picked up a little black un-collared puppy friend who ran along us for a mile or so – got a video of him trying to keep up. We decided if he could hang the whole way back, we would keep him as a mascot – or at least help him find his home. I think he may still be running out on the course.

At the Cape Fear bridge, we transitioned to the paddle and this is where the race went downhill for us. The good thing was that it was now light and we could finally see where we were going, the bad thing was that the river was unsuspectedly low even after the small deluge from previous days, and we had a really unstable Kevlar racing canoe – fast on open water, not good for dragging across rocky rivers. Everything was fine until we portaged around the dam and started toward the first rocky section. We spent a great deal of time wading the canoe down the river and finding as many rocks along the way in the murky waters. Sure enough, the fragile canoe picked up a small hole in the stern where my big fat butt was residing. I cringed on every new scrape and bang – wishing we had two river kayaks at this point. Luckily I picked up a new bilge pump to make it easier, but still always had a substantial amount of water in the boat – reminded me of the EFIX paddle with Beelzebub's Canoe. A quick stop at the Camp Agape rope traverse, and bypassing the unfortunate 8 hour teams, and we headed for the O'Course at Raven Rock. One final rapid had us tipping over because the long unstable canoe was hard to manage in the required quick turns.

Many 24 HR Teams passed us along the river paddle, but we decided we could make up some time on the O'Course (my second favorite part). Drew and I decided we would hit all the northwest points and then swing around to try and get 7 CPs – ended up getting only 6, because we were conscious of time. On the way to the first point, I felt a very jellyfish like pinch on my right arm and quickly brushed a white / tan snail like caterpillar from my arm onto the ground – hurt like a bitch. A unique pattern of caterpillar death quickly formed on my skin and the sting stuck with me throughout the rest of the race. The burning aching pain in my arm and then in my arm-pit region, the color of the little beast, and with a little research I narrowed the culprit to be a Puss Caterpillar, very nasty - <http://neuro.bcm.edu/eagleman/asp/> <<http://neuro.bcm.edu/eagleman/asp/>> We thought the trail, that was clearly marked "This is Not a Trail" was pretty funny and stopped to take a picture. On the way back along the creek trail bisecting the park, a bridge was out, and I jumped over the small ravine. Drew saw the broken slanted bridge and tried to go over, and slipped on the wet surface, banging his knee pretty bad – OUCH!!! The morale of this story is "Follow the Leader." We made our way back to the TA and found the canoe almost submerged due to the small hole. There was one more O'Course CP we thought about getting on the way down the river, but it was high on a cliff and we were now concerned with our time management and being done with the paddle as quick as possible, so we bypassed.

The last paddle section on the Cape Fear seemed to be the longest. Luckily the shallow rocks were more sporadic and the depth of the river was more conducive for our canoe, but it dragged on a bit with the constant bilging. We were both pretty tired and I think we both fell asleep paddling a couple times, but ended up making it to the next TA in OK time, happy to finally lift the canoe onto the truck one last time. More McD's coffee, a little Chef Boyardee, Arby's Roast Beef sandwiches, some salty chips, fresh socks and dry shoes, putting on some padded shorts, and we were off on our bikes in a steady light rain.

We headed up the unimproved road to the hardball and headed over to the Raven Rock Park Trek Leg. This was a quick 30 minute ride with a few more hills than the rest of the course. At this

point, time management was the name of the game, so we decided to retrieve the trek 2 CPs on the western part of the park – probably should have bypassed some of the trail using the power lines, but missed that opportunity due to not paying attention. The trails were pretty muddied from all the horse hoof indentations, which begs the ultimate questions - why is it ok for them to F up the trails, but not OK for mountain bikers? We ran most of the Trek and decided to bypass the third CP on the way back to the parking lot – in hindsight, we probably should have went for it, but it is definitely better to be on time without the steep late penalties. Back on the bikes, up one last big hill, which challenged our intestinal fortitude one last time, and we were on our way to Camp Agape. Erin, Nathan, and LeeAnne were waiting to take a picture at the finish and we checked in with about 20 minutes to spare.

We changed into some dry clothes, but decided against a shower – ate some great BBQ and tried to stay awake long enough for the awards ceremony and pre-race discussions with other teams about their experiences. Team Waterlogged Dogwoods ended up finishing 2nd in the Open and 5th overall – an amazing finish for Drew's first AR. We packed up our gear and LeeAnne drove us back to my house for some post-race Fat Tire Beer (a great choice), and some Beatle's Rock-Band and RB2. This would make a great Race Challenge to set-up a RB2 set and have a team's try to get top scores. Then it was lights out until we woke up the next morning to the delicious smell of Erin's Big Breakfast – to top off the end of a great weekend – JJ won at Dover to close in on the lead for the NASCAR Chase!!!

Once again, the Bushwhack AR Crew and volunteers have put on an exceptional race – and kept us guessing on where the course would lead us. Great job to all the racers, especially to CP0 / Inov 8 and EMS – it was awesome to race along with you as you were going for Checkpoint Tracker Series Gold and Silver. I'd like to thank Drew for teaming up and sharing this great experience, and for LeeAnne providing exceptional race support (going out of the way to dry our gloves and shoes at the culturally diverse late-night Sanford Laundromat and bringing in fresh McD's coffee). The whole AR community (racers, directors, volunteers, support crews) are great folk to be around. And finally a big heart-felt thank you to my 8 month prego wife and 2 year old son for allowing me to participate in these wacky adventures and for being there at the finish line in the rain.

Pics at - <http://adventureracing.meetup.com/17/photos/>

Bob and Drew
Team Waterlogged Dogwoods