

Mandatory Gear AR - 2010
Conway, SC
January 29-30, 2010

Bob, Marcey, and Drew's Race Report
Waterlogged Dogwoods - <http://wtrdog.blogspot.com/>

The Waterlogged Dogwoods, just recently reconvened with some new members (Drew and Marcey) and with a new sponsor (Dare2Live Dog - www.dare2livedog.com), signed up for the MGAR as our first race in 2010 - <http://www.checkpointtracker.com/events/50>. As the event started getting closer on the calendar, we were tuned into the weather forecast due to the impending winter storm that was to hit on race day. We all left Bob's house at about 3:30pm on Friday to make the drive to Conway, SC for the race check-in and night prologue. The Garmin Nuvi (AKA Sydney, because she has an Australian accent) did not do a good job finding the Church Youth Center where the start / finish was located – after a couple U-Turns and a phone call for directions we made it to our destination. **{Marcey's Input - Saturday was the Mandatory Gear 15 hour Adventure Race in Conway, SC. When I signed up for this a few months ago, I thought the same thing everyone else did – “How cold could it be in SC in January?” Well, like the rest of the country, Conway was unseasonably cold and the weather was brutal to race in. I was obsessed with the weather.com app all week looking at the forecast that went from 40% rain to 100% chance of rain by Thursday. Had I not paid the race fee of \$100.00 I may have reconsidered. I am not a cold weather person and suffered from severe hypothermia at Ironman Wisconsin a few years ago and had to be pulled from the course after 7.5 hours. This time, I had a team depending on me so there wasn't really a question. I borrowed some technical pieces of gear that I didn't have and hoped that the weather would give a bit.}** *Drew's Input: My last race was the Bushwhack 24 in OCT. Riding then on a borrowed bike, I vowed to get my own bike and do some more riding before my next race. As the MGAR approached I shopped craigslist for a good deal that fit my specs. Having not made a purchase the weekend before the race I increased my budget and purchased a new bike. “More riding before my next race” then turned out to be a two hour ride the Sunday before. I hoped the race would be lots of trekking and not much biking.*

We had enough time to check in, lay out our sleeping bags, and make some initial prep for the prologue, prior to the race brief. The weather report was still about the same – 35 degrees and raining. Too cold for snow, but not warm enough for a tolerable rain. For the race prologue, the team was split up with Marcey doing the run, Drew on the bike, and Bob plotting the UTMs and developing the course routes. Marcey and Drew did a great job on their legs and the Waterlogged Dogwoods would start about mid-pack, leaving at 5:43am the next morning. It was weird doing the course work solo, so the UTMs were triple checked to ensure accuracy. This took awhile, but the routes were fully complete prior to turning in the map that night. I think we all had some trouble getting ZZZZs due to the open sleeping area and pre-race jitters, but were ready to go early in the morning. CPs 8 and 9 were dropped from the course due to wrong UTMs listed (YAY – shorter course). After some last minute clothing option changes, we started the race a couple minutes behind schedule. **{Marcey's Input - Friday afternoon we drove down and camped out on the floor of the church with all the other campers. The Prologue started at 9:00pm with racers going out about every 30 seconds. One person biked, one ran and another plotted the course on the map. Bob is the navigator and plotted from 9-10 at which point they had to turn them in to the Race Director. Drew biked since he is suffering from plantar fasciitis and I ran. It was only a three mile run in the dark on a broken up railroad bed and seemed a little like a waste of time to get all geared out for something that only took 20 minutes! I snatched the required lifesaver and took it back to the RD. We set out all of our stuff for the morning, set our alarms for 4:45 and tried to sleep. I managed to see every hour on the clock and sang 'Xanadu' in my head all night due to my friend saying she was going to see the musical earlier in the day. I could NOT get that song out of my head! Our team was 16th after the Prologue so we ended up going out at 5:43}** *Drew's Input: I heavily debated with myself and teammates over which leg of the prologue I should tackle. Bob is our lead navigator and most certainly should do the plotting. I knew Marcey would kick butt at the run or bike. Typically I would elect to run, but due to recent flare-ups of ITBS and plantar fasciitis, I*

instead went for the bike with hopes of handling the miles injury free in the morning. I took the bike pretty easy and ended up being passed by 3 other teams. I reclaimed one spot when one of those individuals had some mechanical trouble. After returning to the church I got a enough of a glimpse at the map and an overview of the course - Yea! Lots of biking! My heart sank a little.

Dale (Race RD) laid out the course to be tacked clockwise or counter-clockwise. Like most other teams we started out CCR, heading to TA1 first – in a cold and steady rain. At TA1, we needed to retrieve 5 CPs on bike using a Google Satellite Map to guide us through the very muddy trails. It was still dark, so navigation was somewhat of a challenge. The only CP we had trouble with (along with most teams) was CP5. After scouring the area and a little help from Team GoBushwhack, we found it along a more of a deer path trail. It was getting light at this point, but we were now feeling the effects of the cold (mostly hands and feet). **{Marcey's Input - We decided to hit the singletrack first going in a counterclockwise direction. It was pretty fun riding in the dark but the rain had already started and the 'singletrack' was a mud pit. Actually for the first 30 minutes, I was waiting to get to the singletrack and realized that this was Conway's version! We were about 70 miles from Myrtle Beach so the terrain was flat and swampy. We hike-biked a lot due to the mud and I managed to keep my feet dry during this portion. My lights went out about 45 minutes in (I charged them overnight!) and Drew was kind enough to give me his back-up light so now I could see about two feet in front of my wheel, in the dark, in mud.}**

A quick ride to TA2 where we needed to trek to get CPs 6, 7, and 10. We dead reckoned to get CP6 and started straight lining it to CP7, which was in the thick stuff. The open areas on the map were not very open due to secondary growth. We realized we went too far when we hit the drainage trench and decided to head out to the main trail to adjust our attack. We decided to head to CP and then double back to CP7. Dale gave some instructions to some teams on how he placed the point, which was just enough information to allow us to find it. It was a tough CP, hidden away in the deep vegetation. A fire was roaring at the TA when we got back, but we didn't make the mistake of getting drawn in to its alluring warm rays. We are from the North Carolina, so are a hardcore breed of elite warriors. **{Marcey's Input - After finally getting all the checkpoints we took off to the next section. It was getting light at this point and now that we were on the open roads the wind and rain picked up. This area, for those that grew up with me, would be equivalent to the Modoc area. We could ride seven miles and only see a few houses – no stores, gas stations or anything else to speak of. It was basically fields and swampland. When we got to the next transition area to change into our running shoes and get more checkpoints, Drew and I started getting really cold. Our feet were now very wet, our hands were wet and I had to keep helping Drew get his gloves back on after taking them off at every checkpoint. If I had a dollar for every time some salesperson said 'These gloves are warm and will keep your hands dry'....yeah well, I know now that all of them must have been on crack because there are none and every Adventure Racer there would say the same thing! This section involved finding checkpoints through some really thick brush and briars. Bob (Army Ranger/Superman) moved through them like it was nothing. I had to keep yelling for Drew, who was probably ten feet in front of me sometimes but I couldn't see him because the brush was so thick! There were some checkpoints that weren't plotted correctly (not Bob's fault, the RD maybe didn't use the correct coordinates) so we wandered around a bit getting more wet and cold. After we finally finished that section, we hopped back on our bikes. Note: Later in the day, when I was speaking to some other teams about how thick the brush was, they acted like I was crazy and then realized that it was because I was with Bob and Drew (Army Ranger #2), who plot point to point and don't necessarily take roads or trails. They just follow a compass. Lucky me!}**

The next part of the course was a long bike ride to TA4 to the Northwest, getting bike CPs along the way. The rain was fairly steady at this point and we were all suffering from cold feet and toes. The secondary dirt roads were also starting to get extremely waterlogged and were getting harder and harder to ride on at a decent clip. Drew didn't know at the time, but his rear air pressure was going down, so was having a hard time keeping up. We retrieved CPs 11, 12, and 13 and I was about to make the call to just bee-line it to TA3 and just starting hitting the mandatory points when Marcey started to go south. **{Marcey's Input - After a couple more hours of riding and trekking I started going downhill. My feet were soaked by this point from the mud and rain and I couldn't get my hands warm. The biking was going**

really slow because Drew (unknowingly) only had 10psi in his tires and was having a hard time keeping up, thus, my core temp going down too.} *Drew's Input: I peddled and peddled, but couldn't figure out why I couldn't keep up with Bob and Marcey. I was out of breath and could hardly talk, they were getting cold. Maybe if I had more than a day on a bike in the last 8 years I would have thought to check my tire pressure. Instead, I rode it, on and on.*

She was shaking uncontrollably and was having trouble talking. We weighed our options: 1 – stop and build a fire, use the space blanket to warm her up, but we would still be in the cold and wet with no dry clothes to change into. 2 – make our way down State Highway 65 to the Church at the start / finish, about 5.5 miles of road biking. We decided that the smart option was to head to the Church, where we could warm up and regroup. Along the way, we stopped to let Drew catch up and I was asking Marcey some questions to see if she was doing OK....she was not, shivering drastically, was confused, and mumbling. I asked Marcey to continue on so she was not just sitting in the cold rain, getting worse. I told Drew the route back and then rode to catch up with Marcey. I had her in my sights until she rounded a bend and then disappeared. She stopped at a really small gas station, Clewis – obviously a family owned establishment in Saint Paul Forks, SC. Sam Clewis and his wife, an older couple, were tending the store when Marcey walked in. I can only imagine what they were thinking when they saw a soaking wet shivering Adventure Racer who was having difficulty forming thoughts and words. We all arrived and decided to get some coffee and warm up a bit. After explaining that we were doing an Adventure Race several times, hearing “Do Wha?” in response, and answering questions about why we were doing it today (obviously not an optimal day but it was scheduled long ago).....Sam Clewis and his wife warmed up to us and allowed us to have unlimited refills of coffee and encouraged us to hang out in front of the propane warming stove. They were really hospitable and didn't even mind all the wetness we brought into the store with us. **{Marcey's Input - At this point, I calculated that not including my bike but including both pairs of shoes, I had about \$800-1000 in technical gear on and I was still wet and cold. After about five hours I said I didn't feel well and we decided to go back to the church. I started shivering uncontrollably and evidently forgot an entire conversation about needing to go back but I did start biking toward the church which I think was about seven miles. Close to a mile away I saw the first gas station all day and went inside. (Like Small's gas/grocery if you are from home). The older couple behind the counter looked at me like I was out of my mind and the woman said “You sure didn't pick a good day for a bike ride”. They didn't understand it was a race for awhile because there were 100 people spread out over 70-80 miles and we were the first team they had seen. I couldn't talk from shivering and thankfully Bob pulled up on his bike and explained to them. They were so awesome! We bought some coffee and they pulled a rocking chair up to their propane heater. Drew came in about 20-30 minutes later. We had already broken a rule by not staying together but I was pretty much out of my mind trying to get to shelter. Several country folk came in and out, looking at us like we were insane. I realized later that I still had my black balaclava on so they probably were scared of me, thinking I was a ninja and worried I might take them down! After we warmed up we put our wet shoes back on and went to the church to dry out and try another attempt to get some points.}** *Drew's Input: Was I really 20-30 minutes behind?! Ouch. I love propane heaters in the middle of no-where SC! All of my gloves were still wet as we left, and I could not quite push my hands into them. The store owner Sam Clewis saw me leaving with no gloves, pulled a set of cotton work gloves off his shelf and insisted I take them. Not wanting to offend him, I accepted and wore the gloves for the short bike to the church.*

After warming up a bit, we decided it would be best to continue onto the Church to change out of our wet clothes. Marcey was feeling really bad about having to divert, but felt better when she saw other teams having the same trouble. We talked about where we wanted to go from here and I think we were all dreading the thought about going back out. In the end, I think we made the smart choice and Drew and Bob decided to venture back out to get some points at TA4 while Marcey stayed back. This time around we wore waterproof riding pants and got some baggies to place over our gloves while riding on the bike. It is miraculous how those two pieces of clothing made such a big difference. **{Marcey's Input - When we got there, I saw a few teams that had decided to call it a day. I had no dry clothes to change into so I started getting worried that if I went back out, I would not make it back (there aren't sag wagons or people out looking for you like in triathlons) safely and since we weren't going to get all the mandatory checkpoints anyway, I wanted Bob and Drew to be able to go back out and get**

as many checkpoints as he could. So, I made the tough/awful/wimpy decision not to go back out. Some of the other racers started giving Drew and Bob their Gortex pants and gloves that they weren't using. They also gave them the MacGyver idea of putting plastic bags over their hands! The Isotopes team thought of this and I say...genius! Another genius move was from the GoBushwhack team who put shower caps over their helmets. Who needs \$50 helmet covers when you can just put a shower cap on?!

So, Drew and Bob took off and I stayed and watched one after another team call it a day. When I saw my neighbor, Jeff, come in I knew there was no shame since he had completed Primal Quest a few years ago.

Am I disappointed? Absolutely!

Am I super proud of my team? Heck yeah!

Can I wait until the next one? Already counting down the days!}

We rode the 4.7 miles to TA4 and decided to skip the mandatory points, but go after the three interior CPs closer to the TA. The two volunteers at TA4, Misty and Nick, were inspiring – having been out in the cold rain all day long, they were cheerful and very helpful. Nick told us that there was a small canal that we would have to cross if we attacked the northern CP directly from the South, so we took the trails around to the west with no problem. The wind was picking up and this area was mostly open farm land, so the wind just beat down us. The final ride in was manageable and we rode into the Church at about 5:30pm – then it was warm up and eat time. *Drew's Input: With some dry clothes, some borrowed waterproof pants (Thanks Rob!), bags over the gloves and just a short ride to a longer trek, the afternoon was not as frigid as the morning session. That's not to say it was comfortable, rather I didn't lose any more feeling in my hands and feet. The rain also slowed considerably or stopped, making the whole experience better.*

The quote of the race came from this trek stage – Bob located a large log to use as a make shift bridge to cross the canal and take the short way back to the TA. We lifted it to test the weight and see if we could move it. It was very heavy and Bob said something along the lines of "We'd better not try, it's heavy and I'm not warmed up yet." This tickled me terribly! Not warmed up yet? We're ten hours into a twelve hour race Mr. No Taper, what the heck do your warmups consist of?

We looked around for Marcey, but did not see her, her stuff, or her bike. I found a note that said she wanted to beat the weather and headed back to Raleigh with Team Go Bushwhack and that she hoped we didn't feel abandoned, signed, "The Wimpy Ninja". No we definitely did not mind and you are not a "Wimpy Ninja", you are "Mighty". As Theodore Roosevelt said – **"The credit belongs to the person who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends themselves in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that their place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."**

The Chicken Bog was absolutely spectacular and I went to town on it. I was eyeing the cheesecake and chocolate cake, but didn't make a move on it fast enough – because it was gone. The real race drama occurred with about 10 minutes left, when EMS, CP0, the Trakkers, and the Isotopes were all making their way back from the last TAs with little time to spare. CP0 was one minute late, losing a CP as a late penalty, but still ended up first with 21 out of 23 total CPs. The Waterlogged Dogwoods ended up as an unranked team with 15 total CPs. Within the 10 ranked finishers and 2 unranked finishers ahead of us, we came in 13th overall.

Thanks Dale – it was a great course, you had awesome post-race food, and the race swag was top notch. Since many teams hit the road early the teams that stayed definitely went home with their fair share of goodies. We also appreciate the option to stay overnight in the Church Activity Center, which really helped reduce race expenses. A special thanks to all the volunteers who braved the weather alongside

us and were cheerful the entire time. Adventure Racers always astound me with their commitment to pressing on, having fun, and helping their brethren continue on. Thanks to our families for allowing us to feed the appetite.

The ride home was very interesting, hitting the ice at the NC / SC border, and then the snow just north of Fayetteville. A few stray bands hit hard on RTE 40 heading to Raleigh and the non-highway roads were a mess. We arrived at Bob's house at about 10:50pm and Drew stopped to assist a family stranded on the way home, making it back to his house at about 1:00am. Raleigh had about 5" of snow, which made for some great sledding on Sunday.

And.....Waterlogged Dogwoods Rule #1 is now in effect. No 12 hour or more Adventure Racing from 01 NOV - 01 APR. Racing in NOV and MAR will be sprint events only and dependent on the location. No races in DEC – FEB unless it is the Southern Hemisphere.

<http://www.trailblazerar.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=7029&sid=b7ba814dffe8fcd963d756978e8d3705>

Race Pics - <http://adventureracing.meetup.com/17/photos/818022/>

So, until warmer weather, we are signing out.

Bob, Marcey, and Drew
Team Waterlogged Dogwoods