

The Thirsty Turtles

<http://www.checkpointtracker.com/teams/481>

911 Adventure Challenge 2010 Race Report 8/10/10

<http://911ac10.blogspot.com/>

Thanks to Bruce, Pat, and Don for putting on another great Bushwhack event, and huge thanks to all of the other volunteers and racers who made this an exciting and fun race. We raced as a 3person male team. Gary and I have raced together twice and we added Mike to our team for this race. This was Mike's first adventure race! Mike was nervous for his first race. Gary had been building it up telling him how hard it would be, and we were all wondering about the lake swim since we had never practiced swimming with our pfd's (life jackets) on. Since this was Mike's first race, Gary and I wanted to pull a little prank on him so we told him there might be an underwater checkpoint in the lake and asked him to bring and carry a snorkel and mask just in case.

We got to Umstead about 6:45am to a long line of cars parked on the shoulder waiting to get in when the gates open at 7am. After a quick check in where we were given a big map (1:24000 scale) of Umstead and Lake Crabtree (LC) areas with trails and greenways marked but no checkpoints on them. After unloading our gear and getting the bikes ready, we attended the 7:30 pre race briefing. We learned there would be 30 checkpoints worth a total of 800 points and a second small (1:10000 scale) map for the orienteering course (O-course) but you could not have both maps at the same time. To get the O-course map you would have to turn in the big map. We also learned more about the dreaded lake swim w/pfd. The swim would be worth 100 points and should only be 20-25min and then you either need to swim back or hike back around to the bikes. Race volunteers collected each team's pfd's and would transport them to the swim start so we would not have to carry them throughout the race. A few more race instructions about safety and forbidden zones and then we had about 10 minutes for last minute tinkering before getting the 8am start.

At the start, there was a surprise prologue. Teams would have to complete a short orienteering course before they could get their race passport. The orienteering course had 6 control points on it A1, A2, A3, B1, B2, and B3. Teams had to choose to get the 3 A's or the 3 B's. We chose the B's and took off on foot. The points were pretty close to the start and easy to find, it appeared most teams chose the B's. It took us about 15 minutes to complete.

After picking up our race passport with UTM coordinates we saw there were 23 checkpoints (CP1-23) to plot on the big map, six checkpoints (CP24-29) that would be premarked on the small map, and one bonus checkpoint (CP30). The UTM coordinates for the bonus CP could be found hanging below CP14. We plotted the 23 CP's on the big map then studied the map for a couple of minutes formulating a strategy. We chose to make a counterclockwise loop through Umstead then head to LC for the swim then make another counterclockwise loop around LC before heading back to the start to get the small map and do the orienteering course. This allowed us several options to cut out CP's if time ran short.

Our first CP was CP2 in Shenck Forrest. After seeing Hubcap single track on the map (none of us had ever ridden Hubcap before) we decided to take that route, after all this was supposed to be an adventure! Our decision was rewarded 5 minutes into the trail when Gary spotted a CP marker hanging by the trail. I checked the map and said there is no CP near here keep going, but Gary was insistent so he got off and checked... the tag said NI... checking the race passport he saw that was the Bonus CP30! We found it without the UTM coordinates. This was really cool and we left for CP2 on great spirits.

When we finished Hubcap at Trinity Road, we planned to bike in the trail on the east side of Trinity into the back side of Shenck Forrest then hike to CP2, but we saw a marker that said no bikes so we started in on foot. After a minute or two we couldn't pick up the trail head so I reached for my compass... no compass, where was it? I quickly commandeered Mike's compass (an old one I let him borrow for the race) when I remembered that compass didn't work so well. Rather than bushwhack in 1.5km, we looked at the map again and decided to ride around to the pond on Reedy Creek Road where I knew there was a trail leading into Shenck Forrest that would get us close to CP2. On the way in to CP2 we passed a few teams on their way out, TBD and Waterlogged Dogwoods among others. Some of the fire roads in Shenck looked new or refurbished and it took a little extra time to make sure we were headed in the right direction, but we found CP2 then we made our way back to the bikes and headed into Umstead.

CP2 seemed to take a long time, but once we got into Umstead, we clicked off the CP1, 3, 5, 4, 8, 7, and 9 in a counterclockwise loop and felt we had made up some time. The water was up in the creek from CP3 to 5 and we had a good splash in it. After CP9 we headed past the airport overlook down to LC and stopped before I-40 and headed into Rocky Road single track to get CP10. The clue was grassy slope and when the trail turned northeast following the creek we saw a beautiful grassy slope but could not see the CP flag. The creek was high and Mike prepared to swim across to search the slope with another team already on the slope looking. When he jumped in he realized it was only waist deep so he waded across and I followed. Up till now the CP flags had been hanging easily visible when you got close, they did not try to hide them. After about 5 minutes of looking on this beautiful slope we figured, if this was right, we would have found it by now. I went back across the creek to check the map. Seeing we were close to a second bend in the creek back to the northwest, I figured we overshot it by about 150m so we headed back down the trail. Upon closer inspection, we saw a smaller grassy slope across the creek barely visible through the trees lining the creek. Back across the creek and up the grassy slope I spied CP10 hanging on a tree. We biked out of Rocky Road and down to LC for the swim stopping to pick up CP21 on the way.

We had hoped to get to the swim at around 4hrs into the race but it was more than 5hrs when we got there. I was out of fluids having consumed 3.5 liters already so we made a pit stop at the LC facilities to fill up. I was also glad to see Bruce had a cooler of Gatorade at the swim start and I gulped one down. It was a hot day. We were also informed that the coordinates for CP14 were off and we were given new coordinates. We didn't really have a plan for the swim so we just figured we would swim across then hike back around to our bikes. We donned pfd's and jumped in the lake. Mike was wearing his snorkel and mask, Gary was wearing webbed swim gloves and I carried the dry bag. We could see several teams in the water ahead of us. The swim was slow and it took

some experimenting to get comfortable with what strokes worked best, everyone seemed to do it differently. Mike really enjoyed swimming with his mask and snorkel on, and we all wore our shoes on the swim. About half way across I had to stop kicking, my legs were cramping so it was arms the rest of the way. We made it across and punched CP23 then hiked back around to punch CP22 and get our 100 points. It took us less than an hour to earn those 100 points so it was definitely a good use of time.

Back on the bikes with just less than 2 hours to go and we briefly debated just going for CP14 (50pts) then back to the O-course but decided there were too many points around LC that we could reach by roads or paved greenways to pass up so we headed on a counterclockwise loop around LC. We picked up CP20, 19, and 18 then headed across the bridge towards CP17. We hoped to take a road close to CP17 but when we got there it was an Indian Temple that looked like a fortress with a giant bobwire fence, there would be no shortcut here. We backtracked about 300m to the Lake Trail and hike in about 500m to CP17 with another team. We road around to CP15 then took the greenway to CP16. Decision time again... with about 45 minutes left, can we go for CP14? In hind sight we probably could have but at the time I wanted to make sure we got back in time and hoped to go out on the O-course, after all, orienteering is one of our strengths. So we headed back to the start/finish picking up CP12 on the way.

When we got back to the finish, we only had 15 minutes left. We switched our big map for the O-course map just to take a look. The closest CP24 was about 600m away but hilly terrain. We decided to go for it and with 7 minutes left we would give up. We were close, real close but could not see CP24 so we gave up and headed back to the finish. We got in 1 minute late.

We came in second in our division by 10 points, the same 10 points we lost for being 1 minute late. In a cruel twist, had we ended our race without trying the O-course with 15 minutes left, we would have been first place tied in points but faster than Team Tripod who finished with 4 minutes left. The decision to go back out on the O-course with only 15 minutes left will haunt me for a little while. After hearing the results, Gary joked... "but noooo, we had to be greedy!", and Mike said it best "hey, I'd rather go down swinging!"

My bike computer showed we biked 48km. I estimate we hiked (we don't run – hence the name Turtles) 11k, and swam 500m w/pfd's on. We never got lost, but lost some time looking in the wrong place for CP10, and we found the bonus CP30 without the coordinates! Overall it was a great race, one where we did better than expected, didn't screw up or get lost, and Mike completed his first adventure race. Congratulation to Mike and all the teams that competed in the 911 Adventure Challenge. We look forward to racing on our home turf again next year.

Our next race will be the Bushwhack Adventure Race 2010 on September 18th
<http://bushwhackar10.blogspot.com/> .

ChrisK