

The Thirsty Turtles

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

Yuki-BAR Race Report 5/3/11

<http://bushwhackar10.blogspot.com/>

Thanks to Dave, Pat, and Don for putting on this great event. And a big thanks to all of the Camp Hanes staff, volunteers and racers who made this an exciting and fun race. We raced as a 3person male team. Gary, Mike and I have raced together a few times but this was our first 12 hour race together and our first Yuki race in the Hanging Rock/Sauratown/Pilot Mountain area.

We arrived at YMCA Camp Hanes the night before and stayed in one of the cabins. We prepped some of our race gear the night before and woke at 5am Saturday to get ready for the race. A few weeks back Gary lost his bike computer at the HR Adventures SPAR race in Williamsburg. A week ago, I misplaced my bike computer. Realizing none of us had a bike computer to track distances, Gary bought one the day before the race. At 5:30am we visited the race check-in and got our two big waterproof mytopo maps (one of the Hanging Rock and Sauratown Mountain area and one of the Pilot Mountain and Yadkin River area). We also got a sheet of race instructions and the UTM coordinates for the first 6 checkpoints, Bushwhack pint glass and hat. Back in our cabin we plotted the first 6 checkpoints and sorted gear before attending the 6am pre-race briefing.

At the pre-race brief we learned the race would contain 27 checkpoints (CPs). 19 CPs would be marked with traditional orienteering flags and punches, at the remaining 8 CPs teams would be required to photograph a landmark with team members and race number in the photo. The course was broken up into 7 sections. The sections would need to be followed in order, but within each section, the CPs in that section could be obtained in any order. Estimated times to complete each section were provided to help teams with time management. None of the CPs were mandatory so teams falling behind in the race could choose to skip CPs and still follow the flow of the race through the seven sections.

After the brief we had about 20mintues for last minute preparations including installing Gary's new bike computer. Ten minutes before the start, Mike was using his phone as a calculator to figure the circumference of Gary's 29er mountain bike tire so we could correctly measure distance while Gary and I read the instructions on how to program the bike computer. We finished with just enough time for a quick top off of fluids and then the team captains were called to the front to receive race passports, UTM coordinates for the remaining 21 checkpoints, and a clue sheet for the 8 CPs showing a picture of what we were to photograph when we reached the CP coordinates. The race started at 7am.

Section 1 had 6 CPs that we needed to trek to and find in the YMCA camp area including CP 1 which was a ropes course. We opted for a counterclockwise loop around the camp and found CP 5, 4, 6, 3, 2, and then headed to the ropes course at CP 1. The ropes course was great, we had to climb a cargo net to a platform then as a team we had to work our way across a series of small squares. Mike was the first one to jump to the first square. Gary was a little nervous and went second so he would have Mike in front and me behind him to help out if needed. The catch was all three of us had to be standing on the first square before the first person could hop to the second square – see the pictures on the race website above, it was a tight fit for the 3 of us on a square. Slow and steady, we managed to hop our way across the squares to the far platform where we clipped in and rode a long zip line across the lake. After a quick hike back around the lake we turned in our harnesses, helmets, and carabineers and punched CP 1. We then went back to the race start and found a table and plotted the remaining 21 CPs then found our bikes.

Section 2 would be a long bike ride with 6 CPs to find. We left the YMCA Camp about 8:15am and made a counterclockwise loop around Sauratown Mountain. We stopped at CP 7 where we had to take a picture of a road sign before riding up a long hill on route NC66 towards the gap between Sauratown Mountain and Ruben Mountain (Hanging Rock area). Over the gap, we followed roads around the North side of Sauratown Mountain to CP 8 where we had to find a waterfall and photograph it. We got close enough to hear the waterfall and I was sure we were in the right place, but we could not see the waterfall and there was a barbwire fence in the way. As we dismounted the bikes and made plans to hop the barbwire fence, another team came towards us from further down the road and said if we go a little further down the road we can see the waterfall without needing to hop the fence. We did and then our view of the waterfall matched the picture clue sheet. We are a slow biking team; or rather I am slow on the bike, so it had already taken us over an hour to get the first two of six CPs in section 2. We still had over 20km of biking to go to get to section 3, so we made the decision to skip CP 9 and head up the road to CP 10 and 11. When the road up to CP 10 and 11 got *too* steep to pedal, we dropped the bikes and hiked through the woods to CP 10. We tried to shortcut a straight line through the woods to CP 11, but the hillside was too steep and we had to backtrack to the road and take the road up to CP 11. I don't ever think I have seen a road as steep as the one leading up to CP 11 where we had to photograph a road sign with a curve on it. After a screaming downhill back to the main road, we had a long hilly ride to CP 12 in the town of Pinnacle. We found CP 12 (Mt. Moriah Church) in Pinnacle and while Gary and Mike took a photograph in front of it, I fiddled with my rear derailleur because it had started skipping like it was stuck between gears. We had already spent almost 2.5hrs on this section and we still had 9km to go. The suggested maximum time for section 2 was 2.5hrs – we were falling behind. Much to Gary and Mike's dismay, I broke out the tow rope. We had tried towing once in a previous race this spring and it didn't work out because we used an old bike tube to tie to Gary's seat post to the frame on my bike and there was only about 15 centimeters (6 inches) between our tires. There was no way that was going to work, so this time I brought two old tubes and tied them together. This gave me about a meter between my front and his back tire which was manageable despite my constant desire to scan the horizon and check the map. About 1km into the tow on a downhill section I was tapping my brakes to keep the slack out of Gary's wheel when I

heard a ping and I had no more back brakes! As I yelled at Gary to stop I realized this could get bad as I was using my front brake to keep from overrunning him. I started shouting Go Go Go! We managed to pull over in a driveway to assess the situation. Mike, who had been trailing us, saw something shoot off my bike and he actually went back and found it, it was a brake pad from my back brake. It had gotten so worn and thin that it was shot out the gap between the disc and the brake housing. I guess it could have been worse, the last time I had a brake pad get that thin it didn't get shot out but it got wedged against the disc and locked up my back brake causing me to crash. I had to take off both front and back brake housings so I could remove the remaining 3 pads and then, by trial and error, match them back into the brake housing to balance them out making sure to provide the best brake possible for the back brake. Time lost - about 20 minutes. We also decided not *to tow for the time being*. Lessons learned: 1) If you are going to tow in a race, practice it before the race. 2) Tune your bike regularly; especially check your brake pads before a long race in hilly terrain.

After a quite ride in to transition area one (TA 1), we filled up our camel backs and picked up our PFD's and donned them under our packs. This was the start of section 3, an off road biking and trekking section crossing the Yadkin River, thus the need to wear our PFD's.

As we headed out into section 3, we punched CP 13 then 14, and headed to CP 16. As we left CP 16 headed to CP 15 there were two left turns and we took the wrong one – partly a navigation error and partly brain fog starting to creep in after 5.5hrs, we ended up at a Boy Scout camp and knew we were lost. When I figured out where we were, the only way back to CP 15 was a steep uphill. Try as I might to find a way around, I couldn't so we had to backtrack up the big hill to CP 16 and take the other left turn down to CP 15. After CP 15 we rode down some railroad tracks about 150m to the trail crossing the Yadkin River. We got some very curious looks from people picnicking near the river as we picked up our bikes and trudged out into the knee/waist deep fast moving water and began to cross the river on foot. After crossing the first island we crossed another section of the river to a second island where CP 17 was located. A bit of miscommunication about which island CP17 was on resulted in Gary backtracking across the river to the first island. With the roar of the river Gary could not hear Mike and I yelling at him to come back, but before Mike and I could jump in the river to chase Gary down, two other teams emerged on the far bank and told *Gary they could not find CP 17 on the island*. Mike did get a good video of Gary crossing the river though *but* it was Mike and I who both fell while crossing the river and got soaking wet, good thing we held on to our bikes! After CP 17, we had another water crossing to get to the south side of the river where we pushed the bikes up a very steep trail to CP 18 and then rode out to the Ivy Bluffs trailhead where we photographed the trailhead sign (CP19) and then rode down to CP 20 and TA 2 where we could finally get off the bikes and give our legs a rest.

Section 4 was an 11-12km paddle down the Yadkin River to the takeout at the bridge on route NC 67. A week before the race, we debated renting a 3-person canoe so we could all ride together or single kayaks so we could paddle independently. With the water moving quickly and the rocks relatively easy to navigate, I don't think it made much

difference but we opted to rent 3 single kayaks (Yadkin River Adventures – Paul was very helpful) mainly in case the water level was low. We thought the kayaks would get over/around the rocks easier. The paddle down to CP 21 and TA 3 on the quick moving Yadkin River only took us about 1hr 15min.

Race volunteers had transported our bikes around to TA 3 so they were waiting for us when we got done with paddling. We traded kayaks for bikes and hit section 5 for a 17km ride to CP 23 and TA 4. As we passed through the town of Donnaha we were supposed to stop and photograph CP 22, a big fancy locomotive engine, but two days before the race it disappeared so all teams were given credit for that checkpoint. However, as we rode through town, I thought I saw the engine but Mike and Gary were ahead of me and I didn't want to make them ride back to photograph a checkpoint we didn't have to find. When I caught them at the next turn, I begged Gary to try towing me again and he agreed. We took it slow at first but he managed to tow me most of the next 13km in to CP 23 and TA 4. At one point we hit 65km/hr while towing downhill, that was probably the most scared I was all race because I had the fear of losing my brakes again. We checked in at TA 4 and filled up *our camelbacks* again. By now 9.5hrs had elapsed and we had 2.5 hours left to finish.

Section 6 was a trek through Pilot Mountain State Park with 4 CPs including one at the top, but with only 2.5 hours left and what I estimated would be a 1.5hr ride to the finish, we only had about 1hr to trek. Looking at the map, we could only get to CP24 in that time and had to skip CP 25, 26, and 27. On the way in to CP24, I stepped on a rock while reading the map and twisted my ankle. As I lay on the ground assessing the damage, Gary walked up and said “Hey here is your bike computer!” It had been in by backpack the whole time and fell out when I tripped and fell. Good thing we had a little extra time for me to limp to CP 24. We overshot CP 24 a bit and had to work back to it. After punching CP 24 it was back to the bikes.

Back on the bikes we began section 7, a 13km bike ride back to the finish line. With nearly 2 hours to get to the finish we didn't have to press. My legs were feeling very tired but had not begun cramping yet, an issue I struggle with. Mike kindly offered to tow me some and helped pull me for about 9km before we hit a big hill. After walking the bikes up to the top we decided to take it easy (no more towing) for the last 4km to the finish. We pulled up to the finish with a little more than 20 minutes remaining. As we prepared to turn in our race passport there were several other teams finishing and we heard someone mention the bearing question. We looked at our race passport again and saw there was a question we had not answered – “What was the bearing from CP 26 to the Sauratown Mountain Tower?” I had thought you actually had to get to CP 26 (the top of Pilot Mountain) to be eligible to answer the question, but re-reading the passport, there was no such requirement. To find the answer, we *overlapped* the two maps, *found* a long straight edge to line up the two points then used my compass to measure a bearing and corrected for declination. We put our answer on the passport and turned it in at 11hr 43min with 17 minutes to go. We were done!!! Time to relax and watch the remaining teams come into the finish, shower, and then attend the post race pasta meal and awards ceremony.

Gary's new bike computer that we hastily calibrated registered *84km!* I estimate we paddled 11-12km, and trekked 4-5km while finding 23 of 27 checkpoints. Race highlights/lowlights include:

- Really cool ropes course with a zip line (found out heights make Gary nervous. I heard 9-1-1 Adventure Challenge will have a ropes course!)
- Minor mechanical – brakes (could have been worse... much worse)
- Got lost once – from CP 16 to CP 15 (As navigator I HATE getting lost)
- Crossing a river with bikes (Never done that before. Given the water depth and velocity, bikes in water equals too much drag. We had to carry them)
- *84km* bike w/tows from Gary and Mike – thanks Guys!
- Not cramping!
- Leapfrogging with several teams throughout the race including - Two pieces of Scheidt, BLACKOUT, RDU-Trailblazers, others...
- Just being outside all day in the beautiful countryside with great views of Sauratown Mountain, Hanging Rock, and Pilot Mountain

Our next race will be the 9-1-1 Adventure Challenge at Umstead State Park near Raleigh on June 5th. <http://911ac11.blogspot.com/>

ChrisK
The Thirsty Turtles

Gary tried recording our course on his RunKeeper App
<http://runkeeper.com/user/191098438/activity/33719199>

Not sure if everyone can see this or not, but if you can, check out the activities for April 30th they map most of our race.

Gary edits