

Up the creek without flippers...

by *Dirt Diva Di!*

That's kind of how it started for me ... 3 kicks and off they came! Never one to dwell on these things I figured if I was fast enough I could get round the course in time to collect them on the return tide (the reality was that based on fitness it would probably be on the second tidal cycle) but Grant (the kayaker) didn't have enough to do so performed probably the only rescue of the day and thankfully saved a search later.

Our Dirt Divas team of myself, Surita and Raeanne deflated our tubes before heading off on the rogaie around Pauanui which was a nice combination of easy control picking and mystery activities all at a gentle jog. A reasonably quick transition had us out on the Stage 2 trek along the coast and up the hill. Change of map scale had us moving cautiously to the first checkpoint there as we didn't want any back tracking. The solid climb had me wishing I had packed my trekking pole (which now seems to be finding

it's way on to my compulsory equipment list!) and planning a visit to Weightwatchers next week. What a relief to reach the top and a chance to loosen the legs on a downhill run before attacking the navigational challenge of the bike leg. This was the leg that would challenge teams the most. The method



X marks the spot... yippee!



Raeanne and Surita really wanted to go up for the view!

of recording the checkpoints varied between writing and photographing the controls to prove all team members had gone to each checkpoint - removing the temptation to send the strongest rider ahead or even splitting up to get controls. You had to keep your wits about you on this one. Predominantly down hill at high speed meant contact with the map was critical if the correct route was to be executed, and a control at the first track junction was a good way to get into the ride and the challenge of changing scale from 1:50,000 topo to 1:15,000 forest map. This RP was to come back and bite us later when we inadvertently photographed the

wrong control site! Along with several other teams unsure of what was the requirement for the photo we neglected to consult the course notes and took a stunning photo of the wrong sign at RP9! From there we had a faultless ride until I decided an off road criterium would be fun at the Phoenix / Koretake Rd junction and took my team uphill for a second look at RP12. Eyesight, old age, fatigue, road signs.... I have all the excuses ... should have looked at the compass!!!! From here we had a faultless ride to the TA3.

On to Stage 4. This for me was the best bit. I just love sitting in tubes floating down rivers! We probably lost the most time here but the stage was great with all the atmosphere of support crews and spectators that continuously cheered on each team from under sodden tarps and tents! For us competitors the rain did very little to dampen the spirits. After a combination of tubing and trekking we headed out into "them there hills" for the last stage. Another steep climb to a long tunnel took a fair bit out of my (by now) "al dente" legs. We returned along the water race, which from all accounts was almost tubeable by the end of the day, to our faithful support team of Roel and Ritchie.

This event was a great introduction to the sport of adventure racing - encompassing all the elements of navigation, planning, logistics and team work. For some it was probably an easy event - for oth-

ers it was a true test of character. Many competitors were placed outside their comfort zones during some part of it but every one completed the challenge in particularly trying conditions - good on you all!

To the organisers the event was great - we need more like this! The course was perfect for those wanting a challenge and suited beginners with the options to miss checkpoints. The challenges in adventure racing are never the same and now all you Gals need to go out and have a go at some more. Find one near you. Join up together for training with someone who has done it before and learn more about the skills. GOT have groups around the country that will help you get those skills. For my team mates Surita and Raeanne - last weekend we proved that we are indeed true Divas of the Dirt!

Di Michels