



## CalEco – Auburn Adventure Race - Solo

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Team Nomad

This is a long, ugly story of getting lost in the woods all alone at the Cal Eco 24 hour Adventure Race.. Read it if you're bored..

How it all started..

Mark: I'm not doing Cal-Eco Auburn cos I don't have a Team. Grant is going to a wedding, Craig is in Vegas and we have no girl.

Jackie: Why don't you race solo and I'll support you?

Mark: Can you race Cal Eco solo??

Jackie: Sure

Mark: OK I'll think about it..

So now I'm entered solo I ask the new crew and team Eco Squallywood, Jackie's husband Mike is supporting Thomas, what time they are leaving the Bay Area and getting to the race.. For some reason they want to get there early and are leaving at 6AM.. Humm not a lot of sleep time and I hate early mornings.. So I get up at 5:45 kiss Hailey goodbye and head to the race. I get there and the parking lot is empty, my crew stayed up late on Friday night so they didn't end up leaving till much later. Even the organizer is just getting set up for the 1PM start time, I'm the first person there.. The only time I'll lead the race. 4.5 hours to kill now so I try to nap in the back of the truck..

They announce the race meeting will start at 1:30PM and during this meeting they hand out the main maps.. With all the usual crap about what roads you can and can't travel on they tell us that there will be an orienteering section at the start where we will be getting 2 out of 4 CP's and then on to the boats for the kayak section. They then tell us, as they are handing out the maps, that we will be starting in 15 minutes!! What! No time to plot a proper course and check routes?? I run of to get my special pens and start transferring points from the huge 1:50K onto the smaller trail map provided by the regional park. One thing that Jackie pointed out to me about the park map was that the north arrow was at a 45 degree angle... I pulled the spare bike rack tray out of the back of the truck and used this as a long ruler to draw parallel North lines all over the map.. I plotted the rest of the points and it was off to the start line for the O course map handout.

As usual, when Dan said go people started running in all directions to get 2 out of 4 CP's. I'd decided on the two that I wanted and started running to the North looking for the fence line as a handrail. As I'm running I realize I'm running with Team Subaru and the New Jen/JO team.. Great I think, these are good guys, the only problem is that my recent



ankle sprain and lack of running means I'm getting slowly left behind, the Jenn/JO gang look strong.. Never mind I can still see those guys ahead of me and I can use them like Rabbits.. Wait a minute, why is JO going that way? Clearly that's the hilly route with the most elevation gain and loss, so I decide to continue with my plan and head for the slightly longer flat route.. I find my 2 CPs and I'm heading back to the beach to get my boat.. As I get to the water I see Jen and JO just pulling away, Kent, the other solo guy, getting into his boat. Kent is fast so I'm feeling good and there are only about 8 other boats in the water. Keep in mind that this race had 24 full 4 person teams entered along with a bunch of 2 and 3 person teams. With only 8 boats in front of me I'm feeling quite pleased.

We have a 3 mile kayak across the lake to the CP1 and I'm gaining a little on Kent. We reach the next beach and I run up the hill to find CP 1.. Not too bad, its about 3/4 of a mile so I head straight there and then back to the beach.. I get to the water about 10 seconds behind Kent. Cool I think, he's fast and I'm still with him, feeling good.....

As we set out for the 8 mile paddle up the lake I'm keeping pace with Kent but after about 6 miles I start to get caught by the big 2 person boats, I try drafting but just don't have the power to hold it.. I get to the next CP and Jackie is jumping up and down, I'm not too far behind the Rabbits and doing well.

The next section is along the Western States trail which has been drawn on the map by the organizer.. Not sure how accurate the drawing is but finding the start of the trail is a challenge if you don't know the area or the trail.. Most people seem to have run it before and don't have too much trouble. I start running and I'm about 25 yards behind team Police Defenders who are training for PQ. But it looks like they're going the wrong way. I stop, take a good look at the map and they ARE going the wrong way! As I turn around they realize the error and follow me but its still not looking right. They keep going and I stop to try and work out if this is the right trail or not. I realize it is and start running, now I'm not a fast runner but at some point I start to think that I should be seeing other teams coming up on me as everyone really has to take the same trail. But I don't see anyone, not for about 8 miles or so on a single track trail. I notice the map has trails coming down to it from the West but I never see any of these trails while I'm running.. I know I'm going the right way cos I'm still following the river but why is no one else here. I'm thinking I might be on a scenic lower trail and the real trail is maybe 100 feet above me up the hillside.. After about 9 miles I stop and decide to climb up the side of the canyon to see if I can work out how far along the trail I've come or if there is a higher main trail. I know there are mile markers but that doesn't help if you don't remember what mile you started at.. I find nothing... As I come back down from the side of the canyon I meet a local team who know this place so well they don't even have the map. They told me they were arguing over who would have to carry the bloody thing on this leg.. Well they may not have been moving very fast but they know where they're going so I stick with them..

As we're running along I'm chatting to the girl on the team, she seems to be the fastest runner and she is opening a gap on her teammates, then I hear a call from behind.. "Hey Mark! Can you bring her back when



you're done with her" I love a team with a sense of humor.

When we get to the TA I thank these guys for letting me run with them and go find Jackie, she has all my bike stuff ready and off I go. I'm trying to find the start of the trail but the map is so crap that it takes me a while. Now its dark and things are really hard to see. I find a trail that's heading in the right direction and it looks good with the bends going the right way. It turns out that the trail I'm on is the one that leads down to the river, the washed out dam and stops, as I get down there I find a bunch of other teams who have done the same thing and we all have to climb back out together. I drop them and off into the dark I go. It looks like I'm back on the Western States trail along the side of the river but the map is crap and none of the trails are marked and most intersections have more trails than are shown on the map.. Its dark and I'm alone again, and suddenly I'm at a gate for the highway.. How the hell did I get here I think, What bloody trail am I actually on?? Who knows, I turn around and head back down the hill and I see a little trail of to the left with a WS sign. I take this trail and it's muddy but rideable. I hop over a log all pro mtb style and my front wheel drops into 8" of thick mud and stops dead as the back of my bike and I keep going over the bars... Now I'm upside down in the air and splat, land on my head in the mud. The only real injury out of this was the Ziploc bag of goldfish crackers that were in the outside pocket of my pack they're now orange crumbs.. I'll still eat them later...

Once I get to the bridge and the other side of the river I have a 2-3 mile climb up to the start of the next O course.. I get up there and make my way to the place where I think the CP B is located.. I stop, take a bearing from the trail and start riding across country towards the CP. Its hard going so I decide to park my bike against a tree and continue on foot looking for the CP. After 10 minutes of looking and not finding anything I decide to head back and take the bearing again. I start back the way I came following what I think is my trail and I land on the main trail that I started from, the only problem is that I've not seen my bike on the way back.. Now I'm scratching my head wondering where the hell I left it. I spend the next 30 minutes wandering around in the dark woods looking for my \$5000 brand new Trek Fuel 110 that I seem to have lost.. Now if the reflective parts hadn't been so covered in mud I probably would have found it a lot sooner. I even considered sitting down, lighting a small fire and waiting till morning if I couldn't find it.. Panic over and I found the thing right where I left it but not easily visible with all the mud on it... Remember to turn the blinky on next time.. Doh!! So now I still had to find the CP, I should have quit right here as I'd already spent 50 minutes looking for the CP and it was only a 45 minute penalty for missing one of them.. I eventually found it at the bottom of a cliff, the only problem is that you had to get to it from the top and I didn't have a rope. If there wasn't another team already down there I wouldn't have even looked. I'm wearing mountain bike shoes and I'm trying to climb down a rock face covered in moss.. Well I slip, slide fall and end up in a bush, the other team says hi and start climbing back out.. I punch the CP, climb back out and head back to my bike. This is nuts, I'm not going to find another 12 of these...

Finding CP A was much simpler, it was on top of a hill and fairly easy



to get to. No trouble there, but leading away from the CP and heading to the TA I take a wrong turn and end up on the road. The Silly Rabbit's crew are driving by and stop to tell me that I must be lost as I shouldn't be on the road. No kidding!! That much I knew, but thanks to them I now knew I had to climb all the way back up the bloody hill and go the other way. Add another 1.5 mile of climbing and I'm pissed at myself.

I found the TA and Jackie was in the truck trying to stay warm as the temperature had dropped. She made me some pot noodle and I sat down in a comfy chair for some warm food. Turns out that getting back on the bike wasn't going to be easy and wasn't what I wanted to do. After some warm food I changed into some warm, dry clothes and handed my passport to Dan Barger the race director. I thanked him for a fun 9 hours and told him I'd decided to call it a day. I'm not sure if I was the first to quit but he did look surprised. I think I just got tired of suffering on my own, I'd much rather suffer with company and I was having one of those days where I couldn't have found my way out of a paper bag. My head wasn't thinking straight, but my body was strong. All this meant that I got lost at a much higher speed than usual and any errors were multiplied by this....

After some more food I stayed to help Mike and Jackie support Team Eco Squallywood for the rest of the race. This part I really enjoyed.. Maybe I should take up full time service crew. I put up my tent and got 4 hours sleep on the banks of the American River while waiting for Thomas and crew to finish the bike section.. It took them nearly 7 hours I think in total for that one section... Again I'm so glad I decided to call it a day.

Feel free to pass this on to anyone who cares and a big thanks to Jackie and Mike of Shooting Star Adventures for supporting me throughout the race..

Cheers,

Mark.