

GODZone Adventure Race 2015 – Team Osprey Packs

Team 47:
Hilary Totty, Tane Cambridge, Mitch Munro, Dave Slater

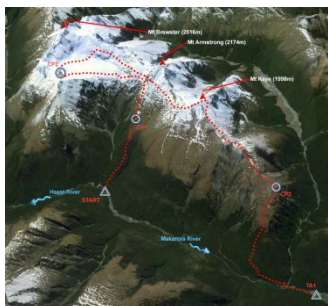
There was an air of anticipation as Team Osprey Packs hit the road, with both Vehicles bursting at the seams we ventured on the long road from Christchurch to Wanaka. With the sun in our face it was hard to think of the impending weather pattern that was soon to come.

We were lucky to have Hilary in our team who sorted us out (through some family friends) a lake front mansion, the perfect place for us to call home for the next few days. First task was to unload all the gear, and marking up everything. Registration followed the next day with a full day of sorting out logistics and packing the gear boxes. Quite a stressful way to spend the day before the race! With the 3:30am Saturday morning start ever looming, anticipation was rising high. There was enough food sprawled around to feed Africa, outdoor gear to start our own company and yet we had to fit it all into our gear boxes. Before we knew it however, it was time to offload the days stress, hand in our gear boxes and fuel up for the days to come.



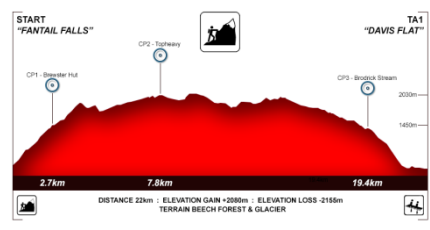
3:30am came around relatively quickly, and soon we were up and departing for the only motorised trip on our adventure. The bus wound its way around Wanaka, then towards the West Coast before pulling into Hawea for the maps to be handed out. We finally found out where we were headed and then set about frantically plotting the next few days (we were only handed half the maps at this stage). To be honest we all thought the first half would be a sprint race in Adventure Racing terms, but little did we know! By 6am we were back on the bus heading West... and into the rain!

Stage 1 – Mountaineering: [Brewster Glacier](#)



It was almost surreal to be finally under-way, so much so that the short little 1200m climb ahead didn't seem all that great. There as a little bit of patchy rain moving through around the start and as we made our way up through the forest it got pretty warm. We followed a trail of teams (and some mysterious green and white pills) up the steep track. All too soon we saw Seagate following a disappointed Chris Forne, who had alerted us to the fact that the Glacier section had been closed. As we got down to the base of the glacier it was a little bit of a let-down to have to turn around and go back, cutting the glacier section and the need for all the Black Diamond mountaineering gear we had carried with us!

Back on the main part of the course, the mist had rolled in and we had quite a tricky traverse across towards Mt Kaye. With Zero visibility it was a nerve racking hour or so before we could figure out for sure we were going the right way. Soon enough though, and just in time in terms of body heat, we were making our way downhill. It was a very wet descent through the forest, avoiding a few bluffs and patches of thick bush we were soon onto the main track. Much to our surprise on the way through there was a message left for us in stones: "GO 47". This lifted the sprits and we made good going into transition in the pouring rain.



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Stage 2 – Canoe: Makarora River

Our first Godzone transition was a bit of a blur. It was raining pretty steadily while we all huddled under a tarpaulin trying to sort out our wetsuits and lifejackets from our now redundant mountaineering gear, while simultaneously downing a can of cold baked beans and sausages! There were several teams in very close proximity to each other, so it was a rush to pump up our canoes and hit the water.

We weren't quite sure what to expect from the Makarora River having never paddled it before, but it had a decent flow with all the recent rain and I think we were all hoping for a few gnarly rapids to keep it interesting. We all felt pretty strong in the canoe and Mitch's earlier training lessons on how to steer the boat and paddle in harmony surely paid off as we passed other teams struggling to keep their canoes facing downstream.



We had a few little rapids to navigate our way through, but it was mostly plain sailing endeavouring to keep our boats in the fastest water. Our last river braid decision was a little off and meant a slightly longer walk across the river bed with our ultra-heavy boats but all in all we came off stage two feeling pretty good.

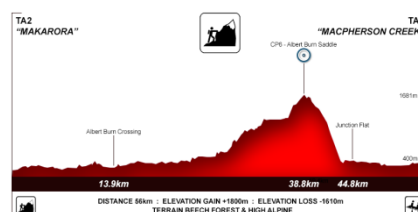
Stage 3 – Trek: Albert burn



After arriving in transition we quickly got changed into dry gear, loaded our packs with the pre-planned food bags and spare clothes, crammed our gear boxes to bursting point with wet clothes and canoe gear, and then we were off. At TA we were given instructions on where to cross the Makarora river. Due to all the rain which had fallen during the day, the river had risen and was discoloured, and the suggested crossing point looked more than a little dodgy. So began a frustrating 20 minutes of walking upstream, in search of more shallow water. Once across, we trudged back downstream to catch the raft across the swollen Wilkin river.

Putting the river crossings behind us, we settled into a good pace and worked away at catching a few of the teams in front. With some slick nav and track finding by Tane, we made good progress until we reached the Albertburn, where we were halted by another dicey river crossing. After having a go, it was clear that we were not going to be able to make a safe crossing. So we backtracked down the river to cross at a safer point. Once across, we scrambled up the rocks on the true right of the river, to join back up with the track. After that point the going got a lot easier, but by this stage it was the wee hours of Sunday morning and we were all feeling a bit weary so we decided to have a stop at the Albertburn hut. We grabbed 1.5 hours sleep, regrouped, and were back on the trail just as it became light enough to see.

We followed a DOC marked trail for hours until it finally petered out and there was a short, sharp climb through a maze of boulders and spaniards to get to the top of the valley. At this point everyone was feeling a bit low, so we decided to take some No-Doz caffeine pills. These had an instant effect and we charged to the checkpoint at Whare Kea Lodge, catching 3 teams in the process.



Whare Kea Lodge was the high point of the trek, and we had 19km of easy going hike to look forward to. Unfortunately on the descent it became apparent that Hilary was in trouble. She was suffering badly from GI problems and was unable to hold any food down. Our pace slowed and we struggled

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endlessly down the valley, crossing our fingers for a doctor at transition. Hilary showed great character and grit to continue, and we were all well aware our race was hanging in the balance at this point.

In transition, the staff called a doctor who dosed Hilary up on a cocktail of drugs to help settle her stomach. We put the tent up and slept for 5 hours to aid Hilary's recovery (and I don't think anyone else complained either!).

Stage 4 – Canoe and Coasteering: [Matukituki River](#)



After a bit of a rough night with Hilary feeling unwell and receiving some medical intervention we were off on our last canoe. The team was feeling pretty happy to be off their feet after a long trek and excited in anticipation to see what the coasteering was going to entail and just how far our swim was going to be! We had a rather uneventful trip down the Matukituki river and were all feeling a little jaded and sleepy after our rough night. Off our boats and onto the coasteering brought a bit of life back into the team. Jumping in and out of the water along the rocky banks of lake Wanaka we were all pretty happy with our new Sea to Summit dry bags keeping all our worldly possessions dry! The water was fresh but pretty nice after a few days of racing!!

The 400m swim across the lake in our wetsuits, life jackets and towing our packs in our dry bags was not as simple as first thought. Let's just say it was pretty hard to keep up a decent over-arm stroke with all that going on, so a slower steady breaststroke seemed more energy efficient for most. We arrived at the end of the swim to a crowd of enthusiastic Godzone groupie's including the familiar face of Anna (Mitch's girlfriend) to welcome us to the next transition!

Stage 5 – Mountain Bike: [Criffel Range](#)

The swim across the lake was fairly refreshing and after two days of trekking and Canoeing it was quite nice to be riding along on our Mountain bikes with warm weather and a tail wind for a bit of a change. We rolled into Wanaka to pick up the next set of maps mid afternoon. There was no time to relax, but a few minutes to regroup our breaths and thoughts on what lay ahead before moving onwards and upwards to the Criffel and then Pisa ranges. Midway up the hill the rain and wind rolled in. The weather reached its worst as we made it to the top, and it was feeling like it was going to be a long night ahead.



There was a little confusion on how to get onto the track to the Pisa range but along with the Cure Kids team we got straight back on track just as the sun managed to pop out just in time for sunset. Almost immediately after it got dark we stuck problems with Hilary puncturing both her front and back tyres! Once on the move again we made some good progress. As we climbed onto the Pisa range the mist rolled in and with the cold wind. Tane went through a rough patch falling asleep on

his bike both pushing and riding his bike. However we all knew that the conditions were so extreme that we had no real option other than to keep going. Eventually we descended from the tops and into the Meg hut for some much needed rest. Turns out 5 or 6 teams had decided to do this too, giving us some idea of how we were getting on.

Sleep and warm was good but we all had a target to meet in less than 24 hours at Kingston to make the full course cut off. We were now into day 4 and getting moving in the cold and damp was hard

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work and so was the stop start Mountain biking we were encountering. Soon enough however we were down and into the Shotover Valley, almost there... or so we thought... We pushed and rode for the next few hours up and down approximately 400 to 500m of vertical decent and ascent. It was fair to say morale was down a bit, but we were still making progress and another visit from Anna raised the spirits quite a bit and soon we were making our way into Frankton for a quick side trip to Burger King. We were pushing the cut off time by calling in but it was probably worth it given what we had just been through.

Around 8pm we rolled around the lake front and into Transition for the paddle ahead, all ready to beat that cut off time of 2am Wednesday morning!

Stage 6 – Kayak: [Wakatipu](#)



We arrived into TA in reasonable shape considering the previous stage antics. It was a reasonably swift transition and we were soon firing down the boat ramp, into the breaking waves of the Wakatipu as the Sun went down. There were 3 teams in close proximity, but we soon stuck with just Team 18, "You can cry but keep moving". The wind was relentless and the waves seemed to be a match for any ocean liner, let alone the wee kayaks we were cocooned in. An hour or so passed and so did our pace, as we were all feeling the effect of the continual pounding of the southerly. Dave being the strapping lad of 70kg on a wet day was soon feeling the effects of the cold. Hilary was enjoying the ride and she battled to stay awake as Mitch and Tane powered on.

Before we knew it, time was called to beach to reassess our tactics. Dave's body temperature had dropped significantly and a toy or two was thrown in the air, before they landed the tent was up and all were snuggled in our bags. It quickly became apparent at this point our long course hopes were dashed, and we went into damage control. After a few hours sleep and just as Dawn broke, we were back in our boats and we dashed for the controls and onto Drift Bay, TA5.

We knew we were in for 6 hours compulsory stop, and for the first time in the race we were able to dry out and feed ourselves, giving us a new lease of life for the remaining stages.

Stage 7/8 (Short Course) – Mountain Bike: [Old Person Ranges](#)

We left Kingston in high spirits and sunshine at 2pm, and despite damn sore backsides, were looking forward to a 170km bike ride. Working well together, we chugged our way to the top of the range and began the long descent down the Nevis valley. We were treated to some good company from the Irish team DAR Dingle, and experienced a beautiful sunset whilst climbing back out of the Nevis.

The descent to Cromwell certainly put our brakes to the test! Poor old Hilary came a cropper off her bike halfway down the rough trail, and gave her knee a decent graze. In addition, her GI symptoms had returned, which was of notable concern. Tane didn't want to feel left out and had a crash and then a pretty spectacular near miss right near the bottom also.

We rolled through Cromwell, stopping at the public toilets to refill our drink bottles. Looking back, we were probably already dehydrated by this stage as we had drunk very little in the 9 hours since Garston. Leaving Cromwell, we were cruising along nicely with Dave doing the gruntwork at the front of the bunch while Mitch powered along with Hilary on tow and Tane flailing along all over the road at the back! We continued in this manner for about 50km before Hilary hit a wall and we decided to put up the tent and get a final bit of rest before the push to the finish.

After 2 hours sleep, we all woke absolutely freezing and were keen to get moving. The sun on our backs was welcome, and everyone started out well on the 10km to go to the final transition. With

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about 4km to go, Hilary's health began to rapidly deteriorate, and by the time we reached transition she was struggling to stand upright let alone speak.

Stage 9 – Kayak: Lake Wanaka

A slow-ish transition allowed Hilary to recover a small amount, but being so close to the end we were all blinded a bit by “finish line fever” and neglected to understand just how bad a state Hilary was in. In hindsight we as a team made a poor decision to leave the transition with her in that condition.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing and decisions are a bit blurry after 5 days, almost 500km and minimal sleep... so we continued and left transition on the way to the finish via a 68km tour of Lake Wanaka. Just as with most situations in the race once we got into the main part of Stevenson's arm the headwind picked up, and things got a bit colder again. The checkpoint was on the Island and we had to get out to collect it, which also provided an opportunity to put warm clothes on.



Here it became apparent we were not going much further. Hilary was in a bad way, we considered using our “yellow brick” tracker but decided the fastest way to get her medical attention was to get her back to transition ourselves. Mitch showed his strength in paddling her back by himself, while Dave and Tane paddled alongside providing moral support and keeping an eye on Hilary.

Back at Transition, Hilary was quickly whisked away to the Medical Centre and straight away put on an IV, then given 3 lots of antibiotics for the following week. While Hilary was taken away, the rest of the team were able to paddle (with a stand in Hilary, Kate from Team 55?) round into the now shortened course to cross the finish line unranked. Crossing the finish line without Hilary wasn't quite the same, having come so far and to get so close it was a tad disappointing not to finish as a full team.

As a team, we hadn't succeeded in our goal of finishing the full course, but we all certainly had the adventure of a lifetime. There were a few hiccups along the way, and it was an extremely demanding course which pushed everyone both mentally and physically. But we soldiered on and battled our way to the very last. A lifetime of emotions packed into 5 days!

Now that the dust has settled and everyone is on the mend, we can take enormous pride in our achievement. We gained a heap personally and as a team, and can proudly say we have been a part of what was Godzone 2015.

A huge thanks to the race organisation for putting on such an incredible event! Thanks to all those who followed us through the race - it was humbling to see so many messages of support, and especially to Anna, our number one fan, showing up along the way, providing us with a Moral boost all the while keeping the rest of the world and our supporters up to date. To our sponsors, Osprey Packs, Black Diamond, Sea to Summit and Southern Approach, it was a pleasure to be able to use your gear, and we hugely appreciate your support. Also thank you to Bivouac/Outdoor for helping us with some well used team clothing (Arc'teryx, Outdoor Research)