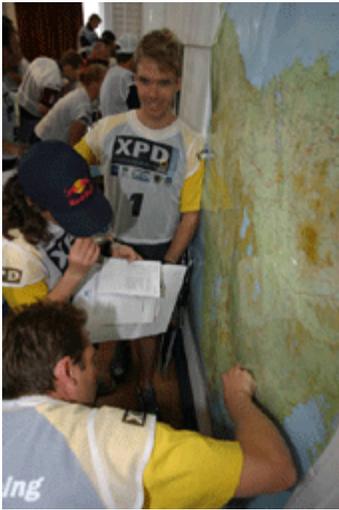




Team AROC/Mountain Designs blitz the field at XPD in Tasmania

Modified from excerpts from Judy Rusch



Tom Landon-Smith, Rebecca Rusch, Karl Strode-Penny, Matt Dalziel

Team AROC/Mountain Designs - Tom Landon-Smith, Matt Dalziel, Karl Strode-Penny and Rebecca Rusch crossed the finish line at 5:05am on Monday 27 February to win the XPD in just under 5 days.

Here is how it went.....



After doing the normal last-minute race preparations...buying food, sorting gear, gear checks, race registration, skills checks, and just catching up with loads of friends the teams received their maps on Tuesday morning 21 February 2006. The 650km race was a linear course with 14 different legs that broke down approximately into 150km of paddling, 350km of mountain biking, 150km of trekking and a mandatory 6-hr rest stop at the mid-camp at CP 15.



The race started at 7:10am Wednesday 22 February after an epic overnight bus ride from Hobart to Stanley.

XPD Day1 – Wednesday 22 February: Team AROC Lead the Pack on Remote Coastal Trek in Tasmania



Leg 1 (CP1 – 3) - 52 k MTB: After a very cold ride up a chair lift, the race started in the predawn light with a run down "The Nut" to the waiting mountain bikes. The lead teams were bunched together at the end of the ride. Team AROC/Mountain Designs were in 3rd place 2-minutes off the lead.

Leg 2 (CP3 - 5) - 27 k Paddle: Tom, Matt, Karl & Reba made their move on the wild Arthur River where they paddled furiously through the many rapids and moved into the lead ahead of Team Checkpoint/Thorlo/Carboshotz and Team Orion.

Leg 3 (CP5 – 6) - 26 k MTB: Another quick bike ride through forests to the ghost town of Balfour near the western coast of Tasmania allowed Team AROC to add a few more minutes to their lead over the chase teams before starting out on the trek.

Leg 4 (CP6 – 9) - 73 k Coastal Trek: This trek traveled through some amazingly desolate and remote landscape as they followed the shoreline amid ship wrecks, huge waves and high winds. They took off on the trek about 4pm Tasmanian time which



allowed them to get a good start on it in the daylight. Good thing as evidently a lot of the teams have had a terrible time in the dark locating CP8 midway through the trek. Fantastic navigation by the guys paid off, and at this point the top 2 teams separated themselves from the rest of the pack.

After almost 24 hours of racing, Team AROC/Mountain Designs was in 1st place and looked great. Closing in on the end of the coastal trek (CP9), they had a 15-minute lead over Team Checkpoint/Thorlo/Carboshotz. Team AROC/Mountain Designs had also snagged a good 3 hours of sleep on this leg.



"Rebecca looks like she has settled in well with the AROC boys, and they are going very well as a team. With the way they are going it is quite possible that they could finish the West Coast Trek before dawn, however in their course booklets, it is noted that their paddle boxes will not be accessible until 0800 on Feb 23rd, due to logistics. So in saying this, it is quite possible they have slowed down enough to arrive in time to get their kayaks ready without delay. The weather is quite harsh out on the coast line, with very cold winds hitting the teams hard, and this may also play a part in how fast they are able to keep going."

XPD Day 2 – Wednesday 23 February: Team AROC Extend Lead on the Bike in Tasmania



Leg 5 (CP9 – 10) - 18 k Paddle: The kayaking took teams through one of the most pristine rivers in Tasmania as they wound their way through dense rain forests to another ghost town for the transition. Northerly winds rose this morning making the paddle up river much harder and slower. Team AROC hit the water first at 8:14am Thursday morning with a 17 minute lead and it took them 3 hrs on the paddle...finished it in 1st place, but now with a 1 hr 25 min lead.



Leg 6 (CP10 – 16) - 153 k MTB: This epic ride took teams through more thick west coast rain forests, past old mines, through ghost towns and railways and pass by towering peaks and canyons. Team AROC/Mountain Designs cranked it up on the bike and extended their lead. Roughly halfway through it at CP12, they broke free of the chase teams and had a much more comfortable lead...



- 1st: AROC/MOUNTAIN DESIGNS** at 17:53 Thursday Tasmania time
- 2nd: Team Orion at 20:13 (+2 h 20 m)
- 3rd: Team Checkpoint at 20:30 (+2 h 37 min)
- 4th: Team Discovery at 21:57 (+4 h 4 m)
- 5th: Team 4 Cancer at 00:37 Fri (+over 5 hrs)

While only 4 hours separated the top 4 teams, the rest of the field dropped off quickly behind them.

At CP15 at the end of the ride, they got a 6-hour forced rest at the mid-camp.

From www.sleepmonsters.com: *"Team AROC/Mountain Designs arrived at Gowrie Park mid camp 2 hours earlier than initially anticipated, clocking in on Friday at 2.47am. They headed straight for their freshly cooked hot breakfast and then dove into a bunk room to catch a few of hours rest ... well needed by the sounds of some very heavy snoring! They found most of the ride from Corinna fairly good with straightforward navigation ... until hitting the last quarter or so! Here very thick scrub and tracks that ended suddenly had them stumped and circling for some time, as it will most probably do the same for everyone else."*



XPD Day 3 – Friday 24 February: Team AROC/Mountain Designs Lengthen Lead & Try to Beat Dark Zone

Midway through the mega-bike ride, the top 4 teams were all within 4 hours of each other...at the end of that leg, Team AROC/Mountain Designs had blown that apart and put 4 1/2 hours between themselves and the 2nd place team. After the 23 k trek out of mid-camp, their lead increased to 5 hrs 20 min.

The team's big concern at this point was to beat the dark zone on the Derwent River...otherwise the race might boil down to the last trek into Hobart.

Leg 7 (CP 15-19) - 23 k trek: up and over Mt. Roland and along the ridge line in one of the most spectacular ranges in Tasmania. Team AROC/Mountain Designs took 7 hours to do the trek and transition to the next discipline. Timings and standings after the trek...the top 5 teams are now spread out over 9 hours:

- 1st: AROC/MOUNTAIN DESIGNS** at 16:01 Fri
- 2nd: Checkpoint at 21:20 (+ 5h 19m)
- 3rd: Orion at 23:18 (+ 7h 17m)
- 4th: Team 4 Cancer at 00:45 Sat (+ 8h 44m)
- 5th: Discovery 01:35 (+ 9h 50m)

Leg 8 (CP 19-21) - 51 k MTB: through the forests in the rugged mountainous center of Tasmania. After 3 hrs 45 min of tough biking, Team AROC/Mountain Designs pulled into the transition at dusk (7:45pm) and spent about an hour there before heading out on yet another long trek.

Leg 9 (CP21-24) - 44 k trek: This leg along the famous Overland Track was a cold and hard but they did manage to grab a couple hours of sleep. It included a checkpoint on top Mt Ossa, Tasmania's highest mountain. It took Team AROC/Mountain Designs 17 1/2 hrs against race estimate of 10 1/2 hrs and Matt's win in the Cradle Mountain Race along the same track in 8 hours just a couple of weeks before.

XPD Day 4 – Saturday 25 February: Team AROC/Mountain Designs Still in 1st Place

After a particularly arduous trek and a lake paddle, Team AROC/Mountain Designs still had a commanding 5h 53m lead over the next closest team. It was now a wait to for the drama that may or may not unfold with the dark zone on the Derwent River (see Leg 12 below).

The race was taking it's toll. At this point there were five teams continuing unranked due to minor injuries that caused one or more teammates to drop out.

Leg 10 (CP 24-25) - 14 k kayak: The paddle on the spectacular Lake St. Clair was a breeze for Team AROC/Mountain Designs who finished it in a little over 2 hrs (race estimate was 3 hrs). They felt so good about the paddle and their lead they stopped at a pub to warm up, have pies and chips and call home.

"Can you believe it - I just had a telephone call from Karl!! Team AROC have just paddled the length of St Clair Lake, and are now in the pub, eating pies and chips and drinking coke. It sounds like they are having a fantastic time, and are loving the fact they have so much lead that they can go to the pub en route and still not fall behind. They are not going to make the dark zone in any case, which is why they have the time to spare now. They aim to eat, then do the next leg and have a sleep before they start the paddling tomorrow morning. It sounds like there's been lots of singing and dancing along the way - and a brain explosion from Karl at their last transition, as he forgot to sign in and then was asking the guys where his back pack was - only to be told that he

was wearing it. Tom's prediction is that they will finish at 9pm Sunday night. Lets' start the timer and check that he's correct!" (Paula Wilson)

Leg 11 (CP 25-28) - 87 k MTB: Team AROC/Mountain Designs set off on this leg at 5:49pm Saturday. They finished the ride along the east bank of Lake King William and along the Lyle Highway to the kayak transition in 7 1/2 hours, arriving there at 1:30am Sunday morning. They slept for a few hours (safely since they enjoyed an 8-hr lead at this point) and then headed out on the water.

XPD Day 5 – Sunday 26 February: Team AROC/Mountain Designs Are Victorious at XPD in Tasmania

Leg 12 (CP 28-30) - 62 k kayak: This leg was broken down into 3 parts: (1) With no dark zone, a 13 k flat water paddle above the dam. (2) With no dark zone, a 3 k portage with kayaks around the dam. (3) Finally, 45 k of grade 2 rapids down the Derwent River. For safety reasons, a dark zone had been applied for this part of the leg, and teams were only allowed to paddle this section between 0615 and 2045. After a good sleep at the end of the bike (enough to see them through to the finish), Team AROC/Mountain Designs started the paddle at 4:30am Sunday and still had plenty of cushion left in their lead over 2nd place Orion. When they came off the river 10 1/2 hrs later, Matt's partner Gen was there to greet them...said they all looked great and in fantastic spirits. Last she saw of them, they were headed into a bakery for some food and drink before heading out on the trek.

Leg 13 (CP 30-33) - 39 k trek & abseil: This leg took Team AROC/Mountain Designs over towering Mt Wellington and a spectacular 100 meter abseil down the "Organ Pipes". Team AROC/Mountain Designs descended this around midnight with a great view of the stars and the lights of Hobart. Tom said it was one of the best abseiling he had done. It was all so beautiful and he didn't know whether to look up at the stars or the night view over Hobart

Leg 14 (CP 33-34) - 3 k kayak: A short paddle across Hobart Harbor to the finish at Huon Quays took AROC a quick 40 minutes. They arrived pre-dawn Monday morning at 5:05am, greeted by race officials, well-wishers and friends.

Congratulations to Team AROC / Mountain Designs, decisive winners of the 2006 XPD in Tasmania, Australia. Tom LANDON-SMITH, Matt DALZIEL, Karl STRODE-PENNY & Rebecca RUSCH ran a flawless race on all levels...technical, strategic and emotional, and they were rewarded with a commanding win on what proved to be a grueling, punishing 650 km course through some of the most desolate (and beautiful) parts of Tasmania. It took AROC/Mountain Designs a total of 4 days 21 hours and 55 minutes.

Top 5 teams as of 5:05am Monday morning in Tasmania:

1st: AROC / Mountain Designs finished at CP34 at 05:05 Monday

2nd: Orion left CP30 at 00:30

3rd: Team 4 Cancer left CP28 at 12:53 Sunday

4th: Discovery left CP28 at 15:15

5th: M.O.A.T left CP28 at 15:46

For statistics on AROC/ Mountain Designs <<[click here](#)>>

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