

Ricky Thackray's Race Report *(lifted from his training log, thanks Ricky!)*

Started the day early because I actually wanted to be there for the start of rego in case there was stuff to do/assist with/get in the way of. As it turned out I got my bike ready, watched Jen highlight her map then decided that was a good idea so followed suit. Thanks Jen :-). It turned out to be a good plan because all the tracks on the map just looked like contours whilst I was riding so I just followed the highlighter.

Anyway, first activity was to guess who'd be the first to make it up the hill to the maps. Fletch first guessed me and I guessed him but then we spotted Oscar and decided he'd win that race. In the end I forget who won but Oscar, Michael, some other guy and I were in the first four. Got the aerial photo and was about to take off when I realised that reading the instructions might help. Good idea but not much help - collect six controls and all Aussies are worth five minute time bonuses. Oh well, I read them all and am certain of two Aussies, certain of two non-Aussies and have not much idea on the rest of them. Let's just go collect random controls then and pick up the two certainties on the way. I know Wiggins is not an Aussie so off to collect Dean first with Oscar leading the way. Basically just followed Oscar through Dean, Davis, Gerrans and Evans, who is my first certainty. Turns out by this stage I had already picked up three Aussies (not that I knew it) - woohoo! Oscar turns around after Evans so I continue on to McEwan. No problems at all with the first five, in fact I'm having a ball but then I decide Renshaw is not an Aussie because he's that clown who headbutts fellow competitors and an Aussie wouldn't do that so I head for Rogers. Unfortunately for some reason I think I'm leaving Renshaw so head south around the clump of trees, expecting to see a small clump ahead of me. Fletch runs past me in a different direction. I figure he's blazing the course and I'm lost. Eventually I'm heading south east, no small clump so figure I've stuffed up. Sure enough I eventually see the fence marked on the map, which I have to cross to get to Rogers, except I haven't yet so head west, over the fence and spot the control just up the hill. Few minutes lost but not too bad. I know Cavendish isn't Australian so head for Millar then throw in Hunt for the sake of it (neither is but no big deal). Hunt has an SI brick so I tag that for good measure too. Then it's down the hill into the slop. Tooms takes a photo. I complain about my shoes getting dirty but then slop my way through and up the hill. Hooray!

Off on the bike and my legs are already tired on the way out of the paddock. Hopefully they'll get better soon. They don't. Spot a team coming back from #1 and know I'll be coming back too so make sure the junction is clearly visible as I don't want to go hunting on the way back. On the way back I look out for who's just behind me but there's no-one so figure I either have a lead over Fletch or he's miles in front and I've already lost him. No problems with #2 then onto #3 by the down-and-up route. As I'm riding slowly up the hill I figure I'll cut out the hill option that I've drawn in on a later control because this is already a slog, but then realise I'm already on that hill. Oh well, it's not so bad. A pair that I'd passed keeps up with me on the uphill for a bit but then I lose them. Follow the bend around on the way to #4 but don't see the junction, no big deal - the map is 25 years old so it's probably overgrown by now. Follow the bends to #4 but on the way I get a bit nervous that I might have passed an indistinct track since it's only drawn in! I see the junctions just to the north-west of the control on the map and realise I'm still on course so smash it in to #4, then smash it again to the TA. Know where I am when I pass a big track on my left so take the next right into TA. Spot on.

Off on the MTBO - what should be the make or break for everyone for the day. Look at the map for about 30 seconds deciding what seven I'll get on the bike, go for the farthest ones: 2-13-1-5-7-10-8 looks like a good loop. Since it's MBO all the controls should be on the track right? Neatly fold away the descriptions that I fail to see so I can fit the map on my board. Hooray for stupidity!

Take a few seconds deciding whether to head west or east to start, decide on west. A couple of hundred metres out I spot Oscar coming in the opposite direction (how'd he get here so fast?) and figure he's somehow either finished the course already or lost. The second turns out to be true as he turns around and follows me. I take it easy to start as I don't want to make a monumental stuff up. Took the correct turnoff to #2, losing Oscar on the way as he's learning to read a map. Find #2 easily then spot Oscar coming in on my way out - now's my chance to lose him. At #13 I see the control circle is centred on the creek on the west side of the track so that's where I look. No joy - control must have been stolen I decide. Oscar catches me. As I'm heading back to my bike he's heading to where I just came from. I tell him it's not there, look up and spot the control in the creek on the other side of the track. Sigh. We both race out and get there, except Oscar's forgotten his control card. I race back and take off and turn right at the junction - now I can lose him. After some slow going on the track I hear someone bouncing along behind me. Oscar again. I just can't lose him! I make the right turn, then a bit later almost miss the right turn onto the single track up the hill but get onto it just in time, then crash over a log and land on my face. Map board comes loose. Damn it. Oscar goes past. I start again only to get a stick through my derailleur, which then gets caught up in the wheel. Not this again! Get it all loose only to have the gears not change properly and later find out I've lost 9th as well. Oscar has by now disappeared into the distance. Shame, I was making ground on him as he was walking up the hill. After collecting #1 I follow the track north then east, catch Oscar then pass him as he's got derailleur issues too. I make a run for it, turn onto the track for #3 but miss that one as I'm leaving it for later (didn't see it on the way through though), then ride over to #5, almost past the indistinct track leading to #7, where I spot Wally then Michael coming the other way, single track slowly to #10 because I'm following the bends to make sure I know exactly where I am. Thankfully the sun was out so I just used it to check for changes in direction. Catch the track to #8, again using the sun as a bearing, then smash it back to TA.

Into the foot gear I run over to #9, spot Oscar on his bike coming the other way, follow a pair to #6 where we spot Wally. Cut through the bush to the track leading to #4. Wally decides not to lose sight of me but then after 4 I go bush to the main track to collect #3. Wally must have a different plan. Back up to #12, spend a bit of time messing around because I figure it's on the saddle but can't see it clearly. Head east when I see some tape over there but it's not there, back to the track and I see it off the other side. No biggie. Follow the tracks to #11 then back to TA. No Wally and no Oscar so I don't know if they're in front of or behind me.

A pair leaves just in front of me but I dearly want to hit the single track ahead of them in case they're slow. They miss the single track so my wish is granted. Decide not to smash it along the track so that I can look carefully for controls. Don't see anyone for a while until I catch Jacko and Cass. Ask if they've spotted any controls yet. They haven't. Eventually I see the first one and it's so visible that I decide I can pick up the pace a bit. Stop at the gravel pit to see where I am on the map (if still on the map) - that's no help but a pair, or perhaps some random riders - almost smashes into the back of

me then hoons off into the gravel pit. I follow, back onto the single track. Pass Juffy then Jen just near a control, then pretty straightforward until near the end where we come across some double track. Follow this for a bit but it turns onto what looks like single track so I follow this. Shortly afterwards it joins to more single track, with the arrow pointing down this new route in the direction I'd just come from. I get worried that there might be a control there but can't afford to waste time searching so continue on. Find three controls in the end, which seems to agree with everyone else so I'm happy.

After the Crumpler challenge at the previous event, I decide that the short activities can be done in bike shoes. Spot the control challenge was fun, except I couldn't immediately see the first one. I see some girl heading off into the bush but decide that following her isn't logical because the controls must be within the brewery complex. After standing around for half a minute not seeing controls I decide to follow the pink tape to where the clues are meant to be. The tape leads me into the bush and then stops. What to do now? Am I meant to be able to see the next bit of tape from here? About four other people follow me in. I go back to the start, then spot the first control. Sigh. Race over there, punch it, then onto the next one, where Jen is writing something down. Crap. I didn't even look at the first one. Easily around the rest of the course, randomly remembering and writing stuff, then back to the first one to see what is written on here. Have all the clues, now what to do with them? Head back to John's dad at the start, where he asks Wally, random girl and I what drink the clue relates to. Girl and I have no idea. I tell Ray that I don't drink beer. He asks again. Wally states that it's amber ale, so he lets him go. Eventually Ray takes pity on us and lets us go too, especially so considering we'd heard Wally's answer so really, what else were we going to say?

A short smash fest over to TA4. I pass Wally on the junction but he hooks onto me for the ride to TA. Find some controls placed strategically around the vineyard. Find the first easily, then on the way to the far end of the vineyard I step through a plantation and twist my left knee. Short amount of "no not now" moment, but I can still walk so run off to the other end of the vineyard, then back when we realise random girl has found the second and I'd already spotted the third one from the start so over to there too.

Back on the bike and my aim is to smash it past Wally and Oscar (who's here too somehow, curse him!) before they can hook on. Oscar is slow in getting on his bike so we lose him, then Wally decides hooking onto me is going to hurt more than it's worth so I take off on my own. Make sure to carefully follow the road bends to #5 (have to carry my bike over the little ridge behind the road barrier but that's okay because my bike is so light) and am on my way as Oscar and Wally ride up behind. Smash it all the way to Lennard Road in 8th gear because I've lost 9th to a stick, then a slog up the hill to Evedon bush resort. Calf muscles start tightening on the hill up to Evedon. Problem solved by standing up and pedalling. Must remember to make sure I don't set them off by falling off my bike or by climbing over a fence. Take the north track around the big dam, slog up another tiny hill then off the bike because I can't ride uphill anymore. Find the dam, don't find the control, find Tooms so the control must be here. Ahh, there it is on that picturesque log. Fun times! Tooms tells me about the hill I have to ride up, or walk if I'm too weak. I continue on, spot the junction as marked on the map and figure that 95% of the field is going to miss it and turn right. I check the map and see that the track I want crosses the creek so I turn left. Up the bloody hill I ~~ride~~ walk, there's sort of a track here, at least I figure a car has been through once, then get to the gate leading onto

the main track. Hooray - I don't have to lift my bike over the fence, but the wire holding the gate closed is a puzzle in itself. I get it open, then close it and wrap the wire around about a million times so everyone behind will get stuck. As it turns out I don't think anyone else went that way so waste of time. Up the last hill but on gravel I can actually ride, then get the cheers from all the orienteers. I see only two bikes in TA and figure they belong to a pair.

Onto the O course, I had meant to eat beforehand but was in such a rush to get away that I forget. Bad move. Plan is to stay ahead of anyone behind me and maybe catch the pair if possible. I notice that there's no legend on the map and briefly wonder how all the non-orienteers will cope. Spike the first control then the second and third. This is easy, why can't I navigate like this all the time? Oh that's right - it's an M course. Crap. Make no major and not really any minor errors over the rest of the course although I end up walking the steep hills - can sort of trundle up the flatter ones and downhill. There's some funny circle thing marked at #6 that doesn't seem to exist in real life. 6-7 I realise too late that I'm heading directly for the mush marked on the map and after brilliantly navigating my way around the bit east of #5 too. Oh well, shoes were wet and dirty anyway. 8-9 I spot the pair leaving #9 so decide it's my job - no, my mission - to catch them. Running down from #9 then up the hill to #10 I see them walking and realise it's Woop Woop - now's my chance. I catch them at the fence just before #10 and mention that my day would be going better if I bothered to eat. Jake offers me half a bar. Bliss! We do the next three controls together (wasn't #11 Jeremy Hunt from Ex 1?), taking a wide berth around the bog south of 12, then I run away from them at the finish up the final hill for line honours. Yay!

Another enjoyable day from the Boundless team and a win too - hooray! Much harder, or perhaps it's just that I was pushing a lot harder that my calf muscles packed it in.