

## **2024 Wilderness Traverse Race report.**

Friday at Camp Pine Crest, we checked into the cabin: The Cougar Cabin which we thought was pretty funny. We spent some time organizing gear; I spent my time trying to pare down Connie & Peggy's packing. You'd think with the amount of food, we had we were going to be away for a week! This was the first time racing with Peggy officially, we have in past somehow met up during the race. I was very much excited to have Connie & Peggy on the team, both are incredible positive and strong women, any team would be lucky to have them! After which we proceeded to check in, which took a little longer than usual with the research study, and off to dinner where we scrounged what was left since we arrived 15 minutes before dinner ended. Back at the cabin we finalized gear, tagged our canoe, and set in for sleep. It's a bonus staying onsite, not having to pack up and drive in the morning. I am not sure any of us slept very well, I definitely don't, even without getting the maps the night before as in previous years, the nervous energy is very much present. Having taken last year off, I was excited to back racing the Wilderness Traverse, and eager to do well, I have been training a lot all summer and felt ready, but you never really know. Adding in the additional pressure of the fundraiser, and trying to do well, this was a recipe for no sleep...

The early morning started with the quintessential (Don't You) Forget about me, Breakfast Club Theme song, followed by Don't Stop Me Now. We wrangled our gear to drop off, I picked up the maps, while Peggy & Connie got the breakfast, Admittedly I rarely feel like eating race morning, but I forced down some breakfast sandwich, and smoothie, and fruit.

We listened to race briefing feeling good about route plans, as well as the news we were over \$12,000 for our Outward Bound Fundraiser! Usual race nerves followed as we waited to get started.

### **It begins, race start 10am Saturday.**

#### **2km Prologue**

The conundrum... Connie: Fastest runner, not the navigator. Tracy: not a runner, can navigate... We sent Connie, it was mad dash at the start, she stuck with the group, & read the map, and found the prologue Cp's. Admittedly, this section took much longer than Peggy and I thought it would, as did several other teams. After 15 minutes many teams were still waiting for their runner. A quick glance around showed some anxious faces waiting for teammates to appear.



## 5km Trek.

As a team we moved through Camp Pinecrest finding CP's 1 & 2 without incident, we moved at a solid pace. These first two sections took about 1 hour 40 minutes, which was well within our anticipated time.

## 21km Bike

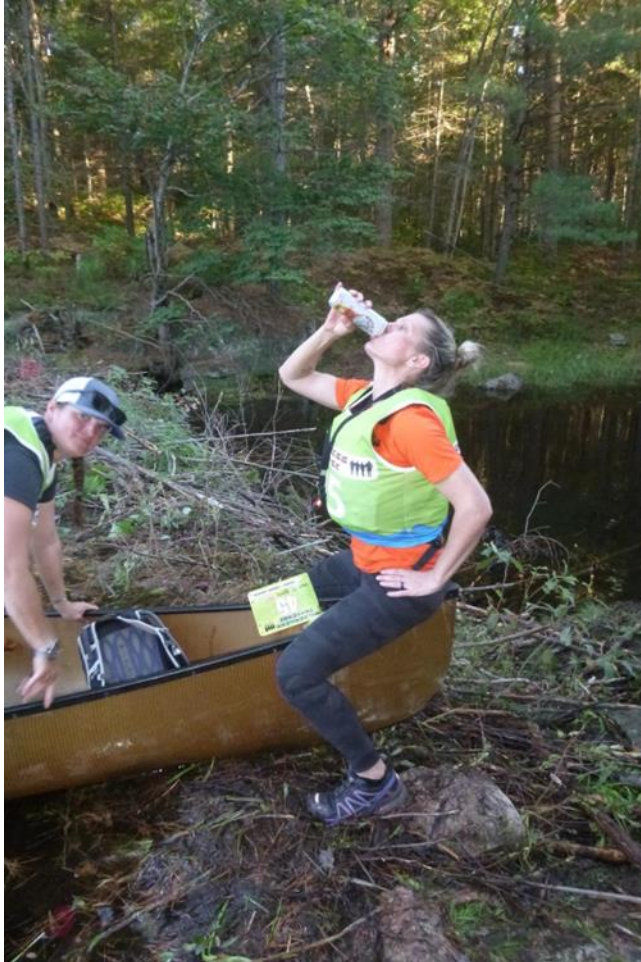
On to the bikes we set off from TA1 on bike down the road to the trail section entering Torrance Barrons, the trail was great! Until it wasn't there, we turned a corner and I am certain no less than 9 teams were standing around with bikes looking puzzled. We continued what we thought was the trail, until it really wasn't, or was it? As an experienced Wilderness Traverse Racer, we know that sometimes Bob's courses can get a little... rustic. We continued on confident the trail was just a little further, until there was no where to go, water and swamp on either side, there was no way out. After bike whacking for what felt like hours (it really wasn't it was like 40 minutes) we had two choices: go back to what felt a like a far distance, and try and find the trail again, or hike it over another ridge, rappel our bikes down a steep cliff, through a swamp (where I ended up over waist deep) , and get to the trail to the south, we saw another



team discussed briefly, and chose the latter. Once through the swamp, we scaled the ridge, and ta da! The trail was there! The rest of the ride we stayed on the trail and found CP 5, and traced back to get CP 6. The riding was incredible, fun rocky sections, with some mud, a Wilderness Traverse Must! We wheeled into the TA2, to transition into the paddle/portage and departed at 4:30 ready for the paddle into the night.

### 35 km Paddle & Portage – 2500M of portaging over 11portages, and countless beaver dams...

The Paddle was so enjoyable, you almost forgot you were in a race. With the warm late afternoon sun, and super calm lakes, we had a wonderful afternoon with some idle chit chat, and an easy paddle. After the first 2 portages we had our system dialled, we exited and entered the canoe with ease, you can see the ease with Connie enjoying an adult beverage while portaging 😊 while I carried the canoe, Connie &



Peggy had the gear, we moved easily through the first several portages to CP 10, we could see a team behind us, but that was all, no other teams in sight. Shortly after CP 10, night set in, with headlamps on, we moved through the 200m portage that would bring us to the river section of the paddle, this included several short portages close to one another. At the Hunt Camp/rail track portage, team 31 caught up to us, and we were generally within 100m for the remainder of the paddle. Throughout the paddle random breakouts into song would occur “Don’t Stop Me now” seemed to be the theme song of the race. Which was Fitting. Also, during this time, we came upon Team 41, who was also within 100m the remainder of the paddle. Some of the remaining portages we rough, carrying the canoe over slippery rock fields, in the dark is no simple task. The night paddle grew darker, the expanse of stars, over the black sky and calm water made this one of the most enjoyable paddles ever. The main challenge through this section was the fog over the water, which made navigating the winding river challenging, as we didn’t know what way to turn until we just about on shore! Nearing the end of the paddle the

numerous beaver dams were really starting to get to us, as we watched the team ahead slide over the last one, we made the last-minute decision to do the same... full speed paddle over the dam. As it turns out, this was not the right decision for us, and the next thing we knew we were tipped over and swamped the canoe. As Connie’s pack floated down the river, we regrouped, emptied our boat, and fetched Connie’s pack. Just like that, we were back in action 😊

Fortunately for us we were only 15 minutes to the TA, where we had our dry clothes waiting.

### TA3 to 21km night Trek

Another quick transition, in under 30 minutes, which was really great since we needed to change out of all our clothes. There was warm water here as well, so I filled up my thermos for the soup, and Connie and Peggy dumpster dived in trash for cups for coffee. We set off, our plan was to follow the south shore, and attempt the Five Winds ski trails routes which were marked with yellow blazes. We were fairly

successful in keeping on route, with a few systems in place, to ensure if we lost the blazes we would go back and find them. The pace was slow and methodical, I have been lost on overnight treks, before, and was trying to avoid that. At one point though probably around 4am, my internal compass decided it was time to have a little fun with my exhausted brain, and had me convinced, that we had somehow turned around, and was following the route back... I watched, and trusted my compass which was heading correctly (generally east) despite my brain insisting we were going the wrong way...

Some time around day break we came to our decision point, do we carry on south with the yellow blazed route, which had been pretty slow going? Or bushwhack using the river as a handlebar? Tired brain said blazed route, which took us further south than we would have liked, across one swamp, and to the train tracks. We had now also lost the blazes, time to regroup again. The blazes were even harder to find during the day, as all of the leaves were yellow! We took an east heading which was sure to come across the train tracks. Once across the tracks, we found another trail, not on the map, but given its direction north, on the east side of the tracks it was likely leading back to hunt camp from earlier. So, we started on it. After about 300m, low and behold, yellow blazes.

We were back on route, found the portage to cross the river, and continued to CP 12! Which involved a short swim from the team. Key take away from losing 2 trails this race “marked trails just don’t disappear. Its not the trail its you, go back and find it”

At CP 12 at 11am, making the 5km trek to the TA before 12 noon was simply not possible. We would be routed onto the Challenge Course for the finish. We arrived at the TA just before 1pm, an hour behind the Challenge course cut off.

### **Bike to the Finish**

We quickly transitioned to the bikes and rode to the finish. This was uneventful ride to finish on roads where I managed to eat an entire pack of Skittles on the 10 km ride. With a finishing time of 27 Hours 36 Minutes, The Breakfast Club achieved our very first 1<sup>st</sup> Place finish, after racing the Wilderness Traverse for 10 Years. The whirlwind didn’t stop at the finish line, with awards starting in less than 20 minutes, and me having to complete the post race follow up for the research study, (in which my brain didn’t seem to want to cooperate), we raced back to cabin, donned our Breakfast Club Gear, and headed to awards... and FOOD. The value of a warm meal after a long race cannot be underestimated.

Overall, the team felt vey good about the race, the choices, and the outcome. As usually we had wonderful type 2 fun, and look forward to seeing everyone next JULY!

Post Note: Peggy is still singing “Don’t Stop Me Now”

\*\* As of right now we are Just shy of \$13,000 For Outward Bound Canada 10/8/2024

