

A Surprisingly Enjoyable Endeavor

2016 Osprey Packs Castlewood 8-Hr Adventure Race Report

By David Frei, Alpine Shop

One might think that someone that has won this race many years in a row (*editor's note: David's teams have won this race in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2014, and 2015...8 wins out of 10 events.*) might not have much fun or interest in competing again when they have absolutely no chance of winning this year. Never underestimate the joy of a challenge and the adaptability of the human species.



*Team Alpine Shop at the start line of the 2016 Osprey Packs Castlewood 8-Hr Adventure Race.
L-R Jeff Sona, Carrie Sona, Mary Piper, and author David Frei.*

I must admit that the first road run up the hill was a bitter pill to swallow. On the downhill, I found that by holding on to Jeff's pack for balance, we could move along nicely.

The paddle went well with Mary Piper motoring away in the front of the canoe. It was quite impressive seeing such an armada of boats strung along the length of the river. She is quite an athlete.

While getting ready to go out on the first bike, we saw the talented Michael Garrison and Yvonne Deyo biking back into the TA. They had forgotten to punch number 5 at the TA and did not realize it until arriving at control number 6. Mike came from Indianapolis to

do this race. I have competed against him many times all around the country. Yvonne Deyo was my original race partner from 17 years ago. They joined us for the bike up the Flint Quarry trail.

On the way from 6 to 7, I decided to take a big shortcut and push our bikes through the woods and up the spur. Originally, I was unsure of the wisdom of this as we had to push up steep rocky terrain and over a line of small broken cliffs. When we got to the decision point, there was slow traffic ahead and I said to myself, *Heck with caution! Let's race like we always do!* It did not go well at first. I was wobbly and fell over on the unevenness. I found that by yanking the bike forward and then holding both brakes with each step, I could use the bike as a walking stick. It wasn't speedy but it worked pretty well. I even marveled at how much fun it was to figure this out.

We arrived at the picnic table to meet the Andrei Karpoff ringing a bell and shouting in his heavy Russian accent "go into the woods, find controls".

The order in which to get the controls looked pretty obvious to me, the only choice was whether to go clockwise or counterclockwise. I even overheard Mike Garrison saying the same thing. It took me a little longer than usual in TA as I had to strap on active ankles (they are the bomb if you have any ankle issues). I noticed Mike and Yvonne just kind of hanging out but didn't think much of it. When all six of us started heading out, doing the course in a counterclockwise direction, it dawned on me that Mike and Yvonne had decided to join with us and do the rest of the course together for old time's sake. My first thought was that they should do their own race and finish best possible. My very next and more powerful thought was joyous. How touching and nice of them. What a wonderful AR community.



*Teams Alpine Shop and SOS trekking in West Tyson County Park.
L-R Mary Piper, Mike Garrison, Jeff Sona, David Frei, Yvonne Deyo, Carrie Sona.*

The navigation went very well and we made up quite a lot positions on this orienteering course. It did help that I was the meet director for orienteering courses in this very park starting in 1983.

The steeper and rockier downhill would have been extremely difficult had it not been for having a solid hand on Jeff Sona's pack. It actually became a surprisingly fun challenge to get around the course as fast as possible, skillfully receiving and using a little help from Jeff, Mary, Mike Carrie and Yvonne at crucial moments. I even got a little help down a tricky section from another team (thanks Sally Struckman). I am not sure if I ever concentrated so hard before. That can be a lot of fun.

The woods were alive with so many people running in every direction. Even though we were racing as hard as we could, it almost felt like a social event. I hope that everyone got a little of that same feeling.

We returned to the same Russian still ringing his bell but now chanting "Bike downhill, don't crash, very dangerous". And that we did, passing some more teams. Mary was scared of some of the gnarlier sections; she used her strength and cyclocross skills to quickly run past them.

We stayed together to the end. Our finish was strong enough to get Mike Garrison and Yvonne Deyo the win in the two person co-ed division. We finished in under 5 hours, which I, and the race directors had predicted to be the winning time before the start.

I hope that this story does not sound pathetic or make people sad. It truly was "a surprisingly enjoyable endeavor".



*Finish line of the 2016 Osprey Packs Castlewood 8-Hr Adventure Race.
L-R David Frei, Mary Piper, Carrie Sona, Jeff Sona*

People compete in sports for all kinds of reasons. All of us search for some kind of meaning and joy in our past-time activities. For me, the appeal of adventure racing is that it is a fast paced simulation of the challenges, struggles and joys of life.

You work together in your small community unit (team) to help each other achieve shared goals.

You occasionally ally with other community units to help your cause, though this gets tricky as their goals can conflict with your goals.

You have to manage risk versus reward in your navigation approach.

You never have enough information.

Things invariably go wrong. Sometimes things go very, very wrong.

But the most important thing to learn is that if you stay focused, and keep fighting, you can still do very well and have fun despite your setbacks.



*Finish line of 2011 Castlewood 8-Hr Adventure Race.
L-R Carrie Sona, Doug Nishimura, David Frei, Jeff Sona.*