

Mahinerangi NZ Rogaine Champs – Eye Witness Account

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We drove up to the hash house on Friday evening with mounting excitement. In clear weather Lake Mahinerangi reached out into the plateau covered by rolling farmland, gullies, windmills. The course setters were resting on their laurels in the woolshed, giving nothing away except a cup of tea.

We had a comfortable night in our tent and joined the eager throng to collect maps and course notes at 9 o'clock sharp. First impressions? Don't be fooled by the 1 to 50,000 scale – there is a long way between checkpoints! The course notes were extensive and made planning tricky. Slow going in the north due to big tussocks, slow going in the south due to windfall in the forests, plenty of marshes to slow you down in other places. – Eek -we can't avoid all those areas!

We chose to travel clockwise around the lake and zig-zigged up and down to get most of the controls in the south west area. This worked well until leaving control 33 and heading for 50. Thick trees make following a compass bearing problematical. Eventually, miraculously, we came out on the track we had been trying to find beside a muesli bar wrapper, dropped by a careless rogainer but a sight for worried eyes none the less.

We were glad to get out of the forested area before dark. Some tricky navigation in the gullies around checkpoints 92 clearly had some other teams confused. By the time we hit the nasty "big tussocks" we were behind schedule so decided to save time by re-routing south to the hopefully easier country in the middle. This was the low point for us. Heading from 80 to 26 we picked up the wrong farm track, but were never quite sure where we were or should have been. The fact that it was between 2 and 4 am must have had something to do with it.

By dawn we were cruising along the road towards the eastern end of the course and picked up checkpoints rapidly until we left 70 and set out across the marshes to 54. Boggy ground, huge tussocks, hot sun, tired bodies. Guy's bare knees became so battered that he resorted to pulling on overtrousers, reducing the pain but exacerbating the heat. Eventually we reached the pine tree plantation, found a way through the fallen trees and thought we had the right clearing. But no checkpoint . . . trust Pete and his fiendish checkpoint placement!

With time running out we made a dash for the road, Number 25, the man-made object, and home! At least our timing was spot on.

And so was everybody else's! I was sure there would have been teams giving up hope of ever getting out of the big tussocks but not a single team was late in. Clearly this year's entrants in the NZRA Champs were a select group of the super tough! The winners pulled off a truly amazing effort to get all controls but one. Those of you who failed to show missed out on one of the toughest National Champs courses yet!