

FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP IN PORTUGAL

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I can't believe that the World Championship are just a little more than a week away. Are we ready? Physically, I think we are. Logistically, we're definitely a little behind in terms of getting our gear cleaned, inspected, and packed but we're well on our way. This will be another mad rush to get everything done on time while still managing to take care of the rest of our lives and get enough sleep. But, as is always the case, we'll pull it off.

The team for this year's World Championship will be the same team as last year: Jen Segger, Aaron Rinn, Aaron Matzke, and myself. In 08, we placed 6th and were thrilled with our result given the depth of the competition. We had a solid race with limited mistakes. This year, we obviously hope to break the top 5 but there are so many unknowns in the sport that we simply don't know what will happen. We'll focus on managing what's within our control like preparing well before the race, managing sleep during the race, supporting each other continuously in the heat of competition, making sure we move as fast as navigation permits, staying efficient in transition areas, and making

sound strategic decisions. All the other stuff, we can't control like the speed of other teams, the weather, a mechanical breakdown (although we can make sure everything works well before the race). If we focus on ourselves, we have a good chance of achieving our goal. But, even if everything is perfectly prepared, disaster can await you around the next corner. How well your race is going can change hour by hour. You just have to be ready for the unexpected and be adaptable.

This year's World Championship has a unique format where, in addition to mandatory check points, we'll also have bonus check points. All teams will race the complete 5 days trying to accumulate as many check points as possible. As a result, teams will not complete the same course so it will be hard to tell in what place we are during the 5 day battle. If we come into a transition area in 10th place, we won't know if the teams in front of us got more or less check points. And, we won't know if teams slightly behind us will have more check points. This will mean that we'll have to rely on ourselves more for motivation and pacing since we won't know how well we're doing. We don't particularly like this race format as we believe all teams should do the same course to determine the best team in the world. Still, it will certainly be interesting and will involve more decision making along the way, Should we or shouldn't we go for a certain bonus check point? If we do, will we make the cut-off time? Having to make these decisions throughout the race is one of the reasons the race directors point to when explaining why they include bonus check points. They think it adds strategic decision making. They have a point but I think there is plenty of decision making without bonus check points thrown into the mix. And, by making all check points mandatory, it removes the element of luck since some bonus check points might be easier to obtain than others without being able to tell from looking at a map. For example, a trail on a map leading to a check point may be overgrown once you get to it. Those who choose to go for it are disadvantaged while those who chose not to go for it, are luckily advantaged not knowing the trail was much harder than appeared on the map. Still, regardless of the race format, one thing is for sure. The World Championship will regroup the best teams in the world that will go head to head in an incredibly fast race through the stunning landscape of Portugal, steeped in history.

Although the team is spread out along the west coast, we talk regularly on email and have weekly phone conferences to iron out the details of the race and share each other's training exploits to raise the bar for our next training sessions. Aside from some more packing, we're ready and look forward to another extraordinary adventure across the pond.

