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# Elizabeth's adventures...

Adventure racing, triathlon, mud, hills and mountain bikes

THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2009

## The final countdown



### About Me



Elizabeth A

Got into adventure racing in 2003 and since then have been trying to learn to kayak, mountain bike, swim and have plenty of fun along the way. I've set up this blog to share my photos and adventures with friends and family, as well as track my big goals for racing in 2009. (I've entered them because they're far away and therefore easy)

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[Races, Goals and Dreams for 2009](#)



I feel like I can hardly remember this last stage now. Just snippets of drifting in and out of the land of 'awake' and spending many, many, many hours on my bike. It started with a short trek, followed by the most gruelling kayak portage I've ever experienced. Going downhill was never going to be great for my knee but with the weight of a kayak and the uneven rocky trail it was just way more than I could take. If the others hadn't come and helped I doubt I would have been able to finish the race at all. It was as much as I could do to get down to the river carrying my backpack and the paddles. This was definitely the lowest point for me in the race and it was with tears streaming down my cheeks that I eventually got into the kayak. This time it was Philip's turn to keep me awake on the paddle. Sadly, neither of us had the brainpower to play 20 questions. Or anything else really so it was back to singing.

Meanwhile, Lizzie was using her jedi powers to navigate the river and find the checkpoints in the dark (and rain), going only on our estimated speed and a compass bearing. Awesome work, I don't have a clue what my 'normal' kayak speed is and even without days of sleep deprivation I would have struggled to navigate. Towards the end of the section we must have got overexcited and overshot the mark a bit. This led to an enforced landing where Lizzie and Philip had to get out and find the nearest town to work out where we were - whilst Dan and I shivered inside a bothy bag, glad it wasn't us having to go anywhere.

And finally morning came again, we got out of the kayaks at transition. With the sunshine, my knee stopped hurting and I could put a smile back on my face. It felt strange to be coming back to civilisation again, riding through bustling market towns rather than remote mountain tops. The next day and night lasted forever. We slept in a cafe, we slept in someone's garage. We saw other racers, towns, dogs, hills, photographers (and a giraffe once) all the time struggling not to fall asleep on our bikes. And we saw Pyro again, finally after days of him being ahead of us with the press coverage for the top teams.



## Ironman

Half Ironman - done (Aberfeldy)

Run the Red Cuillin on Rum, after paddling there!

Trekking in Patagonia

Everest Marathon

Cycle the Manali-Leh Highway (India)

Kayak round St Kilda

Visit Greenland

Race across the alps (running or biking???)

Take part in an expedition adventure race

Swim the channel (maybe in a relay)

Visit Orkney

Deerstalker-done!

Glen Affric Duathlon-done!

Cairgorm mountain classic 15 June-done!

Open 12-done!

Open 24 - done!

Durty Triathlon-done

Scottish Coast to Coast -done!

Paddle into Fingal's cave

Traverse of Cuillin Ridge

Learn to roll in a kayak (got the new 2\*)

Big Ben Nevis Triathlon

A century ride! -done!

Swim three times a week and get faster-done!

## Blog Archive

▼ 2009 (81)

► December (4)

▼ November (6)

Night orienteering

The final countdown

Stage 3 - enter the sleepmonsters

Stage 2 - a true adventure

A Portuguese Rat Race



It was great to get his enthusiastic welcome and feel once again like we were part of the race. A lovely American lady at the assistance area felt sorry for us unsupported teams and washed our bikes while we drank espressos and Team Accelerate donated us some bike oil. Racing without a support crew had been tough, making us all the more grateful for small kindnesses like this.



### The arrival

- ▶ October (6)
- ▶ September (10)
- ▶ August (4)
- ▶ July (10)
- ▶ June (10)
- ▶ May (6)
- ▶ April (10)
- ▶ March (7)
- ▶ February (3)
- ▶ January (5)
- ▶ 2008 (2)

### Blogs I like to look at

**The Corbett Round 2009**  
Number crunching instead of bones...

### Fond memories of the Heb...





At 4am we reached the final leg of the race. A 400m swim- wade across a bay followed by a coastal trek towards the finish line. This year I've discovered a new love of open water swimming so despite the dark (and having to pull on a stinking, wet wetsuit which had been festering in a bag for a day) I was excited by the prospect of the swim. Or maybe just the prospect of no longer being on my bike! Dan and Philip were less enamoured with the thought of an early morning dip but got through it all the same. I was relieved to see some kayaks as safety cover. For most of the race we did our own safety checking (true adventure stylee) but 124hrs into a race, at 4am, probably isn't the time to let someone drown through extreme exhaustion.

Our coastal trek to the finish was calm and gave me a chance to look out to the waves and contemplate everything we'd been through. Even with only 3hr to go we decided on another micro-sleep just to get us to the end and we wrapped the bothy bag around us on the sand. Thank goodness Philip woke us up after 10min, otherwise I think we could have happily continued sleeping for the next three days and missed the finish.

It was great to watch as Team Helly Hansen trotted past, about a mile from the finish and still looking strong. We were sure yet whether they'd won but it was great to see another British team doing well. Emotions were high when they reached the finish line to find that, after years of trying and at least 4 DNFs at previous world champs due to injury and accident, they were the first British team to be AR world champions. Truly inspirational!

They weren't the only ones who cried at the finish line. We finished at 9.30am on Saturday morning, a long time and a lot of things learnt since the start line on Sunday. For me, it's the hardest thing I've ever done and also the most exhilarating. I thought I'd now be enjoying a good long rest and not thinking about adventure racing at all but instead I'm hooked on looking up the next races and reliving our Portugese epic adventure! I hope that for anyone reading this it has sounded exciting rather than just gruelling. Looking back, it was tough, but at the time it didn't really feel like it. It was just the way things were and we all helped each other get through the low points so we could look forward to the next bit of adventure. I can't wait for my next one...







Posted by Elizabeth A at [12:02](#)

2 comments:



[trio](#) said...



Sounds so hard and so amazing! Plenty of rest now then?

[29 November 2009 12:52](#)



**[Elizabeth A said...](#)**

Have been resting loads then rode my bike into town on Saturday and remembered how much I LOVE riding my bike. Back to exercise soon I think, TV really is rubbish!

[30 November 2009 02:13](#)

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