

## Brit's Surprise on Final Sprint



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Nordic teams were the early leaders, and the North American dominated the race. But on the final stretch of the Estoril Portugal XPD Race it were the British Helly Hansen - Prunesco that stormed in for the title. The best Portuguese team finished at Baleal

..in 23rd place.

After 128 hours of non-stop progression and over 900Kms run on foot, mountain-bike and kayak, the 2009 Adventure Racing World Cup -Estoril Portugal XPD Race turned out to be the supreme challenge to resistance and strategy. Out of the 59 teams coming from 25 different countries that left Estoril on Sunday 8th November, only 40 were able to classify, representing a rather low withdrawal rate, considering the length and the harshness of the track.

Requiring an extreme endurance capacity, this four member team challenge (of which at least one must be a woman) set out searching for the most astonishing landscapes in the country. Starting at the Estoril coast and taking the caravan out to explore the tracks of Lousã, Açor, Estrela, São Mamede and Aire e Candeeiros mountains. Along the way, the river Zêzere, the Natural Parks of International Tejo and the Castelo de Bode dam. After swimming across the Óbidos lagoon, the finish line was set on the beach at Baleal, where the last survivors arrived on foot and mountain bike during the morning.

Averaging 37, the British of "Team Helly Hansen-Prunesco" surprised everybody with a vigorous final sprint and conquered their first world title in adventure racing. Team leader Tom Gibbs - an Airbus designer - revealed the team's strategy; "We came to Portugal with no major expectations and therefore put little pressure on the team.



Our strategy turned out fine and it was all decided on the final hours of the race". North-Americans "Nike/Beaver Creek" finished 2nd and Swedish "Lundhags Adventure" in 3rd with a small difference.

Only three out of the six Portuguese teams that started were able to finish. Far behind the leaders most were aiming only to reach the finish line. José Marques, leader of the best national team (Extreme Challenge/IGeoE - 23rd place) was content with the result; "The team We worked well as a team even in the most difficult moments. We could have done better as we were close to Top 10 for a while, but fatigue caused a navigation error that cost us 3 long and unrecoverable hours. Even so, we are happy and shall do our best to be there for the next world cup"

Alexandre Guedes da Silva of the "Associação Portuguesa de Corridas de Aventura", said ; "We couldn't be any happier as we were able to set an international landmark. The quality of our organisation was recognised and competition wise nothing like this had been seen before!"

Photo - ARWC

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