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# ADVENTURE RACING

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### XPD Portugal, Estoril: 6-9 December 2007

Race Reporting by Nicholas Mulder. Cascais, Portugal

Reports from the Rio Tejo  
Saturday, 8 December 2007 (22h30)

It is turning out to be an extremely long river paddle for teams on the River Tejo, on day 3 (Saturday) of the Estoril Portugal XPD adventure race. By 1900 GMT, no teams from the upper half of the leaderboard had reached the end of the 56km river paddle, situated at the Rainha Palace near Azambuja. Four Portuguese teams, all of whom have skipped numerous checkpoints in the last few days and were thus able to start the paddle early this morning, have finished the epic distance. These teams had visited all but one of the check points on the paddle section, that being located 2km up a side tributary of the River Tejo just outside the finish.

I was lucky enough to take a ride up the Rio Tejo and see some of the teams paddling as night fell on what has been a lovely day with blue skies and warm temperatures. The speed boat was manned by 'Bombeiros Voluntarios', the volunteer fire brigade from the nearby town of Azumburja. The trip was technically a rescue mission as we were towing a replacement sit-on-top craft for team #11, GDU Azoia of Portugal, whose own craft was repeatedly taking on water.



Team Oure of Denmark were closest to the end of the section, slightly less than an hour away. They had just passed Clube Pracas da Armada of Portugal. Oure were paddling strong, obviously eager to get as far down the river as possible before darkness enveloped them. Clube Pracas meanwhile were also looking good, they are the highest ranking Portuguese team, filling 7th place on the leaderboard as of earlier that morning.

A further kilometre back we came across two teams paddling within sight of each other, Cyanosis of South Africa and Sleepmonsters / Inov-8 of the U.K. These two teams had set off on the paddle at exactly the same time, but six-and-a-half hours of paddling had not been able to separate them. Both teams were also paddling well and were still in fairly good spirits, with Gill Watson of Sleepmonsters even finding time to pose for photographs.

Immediately afterwards we came across the weighed down GDU Azoia, who swapped their sinking boat with our replacement in mid-river. They were very relieved, having had to empty out their craft at least 5 times by that stage.

A few quick conversations with the various teams had also revealed that the tidal effect on the river had not played as important a role as had been previously expected. The teams were instead complaining of being frustrated by sandbanks and shallow water. At the point where we came across these teams however, the river was already very deep, allowing the teams to pick up speed easily. The best news for teams though was that the tide had once again turned and they were now starting to feel the positive effect of the retreating water.

Back at the Rainha Palace, a large bonfire had been lit by the various volunteer emergency crews and civilian units on standby for the race. The palace is in fact an abandoned mansion, with collapsed roof and floors and empty windows. A large wide crack running through the building is testament to the giant Lisbon earthquake that struck in 1755. The building was historically used as a postal sorting house, receiving post off ships from Portugal's various colonies before sending it onwards around the country. The bonfire should help warm up various teams as they emerge out of the cold.

It will be a long night for some teams, particularly those who squeezed in a few more optional checkpoints on the roller blading and mountain biking legs that preceded the paddle. With the race now on to visit as many checkpoints as possible for the top teams on the leaderboard, some of these teams may find themselves overextended at a later stage as section cut-off times start to be imposed. Any team missing a cut-off time will automatically lose all points from checkpoints visited on that section.

Following the end of the paddle (which is at the 448km mark) teams face another night trek, this being slightly shorter than previous night's, at 33km in length. The section is also more urban than previous treks, potentially giving teams the opportunity to find a cafe to buy food and drink, or a barn to sleep in along the way. The trek will take them to Meca, site of the last transition and starting point for Stage 5 of the race. Teams will receive their last set of maps here and proceed

TREKKING



ONE TEAM SEVEN CHALLENGES

"Run when you can, walk when you have to, crawl if you must; **just never give up**".  
Dean Karnazes  
Ultra distance runner



onto a 73km mountain bike leg that will finish in the historical town of Sintra, a world heritage site with royal palaces and a Moorish castle. Teams then depart on a 21km trekking leg to the Estoril coastline, where they will do a final 2km ocean paddle to the finish.

The cut-off time for teams to arrive here is 16h00 on Sunday, with the winner being the team having located the highest number of optional checkpoints. This battle appears to be down to three teams, all of whom had visited all checkpoints by the end of Stage 3. Team Alpine Pro of the Czech Republic is technically the leader due to their further progression along the course. Fellow countrymen, Team Tilak were last seen slightly over an hour behind them as they started the paddle, with Spanish Team Teva-La Pinilla a further distance behind them in third.

Sleep deprivation will undoubtedly play its part tonight as these 3 teams battle it out. Teva are probably the most rested, having slept significantly longer than the other two teams last night. It is now up to them to recover this time with a strong physical and mental performance through the last few stages.

Keep updated at [www.AR.co.za](http://www.AR.co.za) for all the latest news from the Estoril Portugal XPD.

Photos can be viewed at [www.flickr.com/photos/21332583@N05/sets/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/21332583@N05/sets/)