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# ADVENTURE RACING

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

Race Reporting by Nicholas Mulder. Cascais, Portugal

#### Going the Extra Distance on Stage 1 Friday, 7 December 2007 (21h30)

By the afternoon of Day 1, it had become apparent that many teams 'were playing it safe', when it came to navigation around the course of the Estoril Portugal XPD. At various check points on the first 94km mountain bike leg (section 3 of stage 1), teams would often approach the flag marker from various directions, due to the numerous route choice options that Portugal's track and road infrastructure, as well as the XPD's race format provide. On many of these occasions, teams had the option of taking more direct farm and gravel roads, or taking longer route choices on tar. In most instances, the tar was obviously the faster option for the cyclists. However, as almost all checkpoints were on the more remote tracks, team navigators would eventually need to take their teams onto the more navigationally challenging routes. Team navigators with more experience and confidence appeared to favour these direct routes, but many teams chose options that allowed them to approach the check point from the nearest possible tar road.



There was a serious crisis of confidence however at CP11, where a check point was placed on a small vehicle track that followed the coastline, the track terminating a couple hundred metres later at a river mouth. Various media and journalists were all present on the far side of the river mouth to capture the spectacle of various teams crossing sand and water to take the most direct route to the next check point. They were sorely disappointed however, first when it became obvious that a large sandbank lay across the river mouth and teams would be able to cross without even getting their socks wet, and secondly, when none of the first 10 teams in the race chose this route option. Instead, teams at the check point, just out of sight of the river mouth, immediately opted to do a u-turn and make a significant detour inland (4km additional length with about 100m of climb) and across the river at a bridge. It was finally left to the Portuguese team of Clube Pracas da Armada, then lying approximately 12th, to lead the way. They easily scrambled down the rocks to the sand bar and crossed to the other bank, saving approximately 20 minutes of cycling and moving themselves a couple of positions up the field.

A wet river crossing is not fun for teams, especially when the temperatures are cool or cold. It takes hours to warm up again, whilst wet shoes can leave your feet cold for even longer. Although a navigator's decision to avoid getting wet on a river crossing is comprehensible, the decision not to cycle a further 200m down the track in order to have a quick look at the river mouth before making a final decision is not. Teams may end up travelling a lot further than the 580km that will be required to visit all the checkpoints on this race.

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/)

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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

