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# ADVENTURE RACING

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

Race Reporting by Nicholas Mulder. Cascais, Portugal

## ESTORIL PORTUGAL XPD RACE 2007

### Heavy Mist on Day 2 of XPD Friday, 7 December 2007 (22h30)

The second day of the Estoril Portugal XPD has seen a reworking of the leaderboard. New names are making their way into the top 5 as some teams struggled through the first night, whilst others began to skip optional check points, saving their energies for later in the race. At the end of stage 2, some 212km into the maximum 580km distance, only 9 teams had visited all checkpoints to date. Team Alpine Pro / Nutrend / Merida (Czech Republic) were at the top of the leaderboard, with a 1 hour lead over Teva / La Pinilla (Spain). Team Tilak / OpavaNet / Merida featured third, followed by Arena (Russia) and Cyanosis (South Africa). Both Arena and Cyanosis had made large jumps up the leaderboard overnight as other teams opted to skip some of the optional check points.



One team who have now decided to go for a conservative approach is Master Unit of Finland. They skipped one of the checkpoints on the trekking leg in the Montejunto mountains, avoiding the additional climb and time on their feet, and allowing them to progress further along the course in slightly better physical condition. In the subsequent 65km mountain bike leg (Stage 3, Section 1), they were to skip a further checkpoint that required some steep climbing and a bike portage down a rocky singletrack. This allowed them to start stage 3 / section 2, a 45km trekking leg well before dark, lessening the potential for costly navigational errors in the dark.

The first victim of the 2007 edition of the Portugal XPD is Team Motorola SOS Mata Atlantica (Brazil and USA), who were consistently near the top of the leader board on day 1. Jose Pupo has decided to withdraw due to exhaustion, whilst the remaining three team members, including defending champion Paul Romero, continue on unranked. It had been a tough morning for Motorola, who already appeared to have had a tough preceding night. The team set off on the mountain trekking section at approximately 8am, leaving on a straight-forward loop that included a rock climbing leg, an abseil and a downhill trikke section. Near 2pm, they arrived back at the transition holding their bikes and trikkes (via the neighbour's garden patch and over the surrounding fences), only to walk straight past and back up the climb up the mountain. Information is unclear at present, but it appears as though they still had to visit the optional rock climbing checkpoint a couple of kilometres up the road, which they must have passed by within a 100m earlier that morning. It will be interesting to get clarification later tonight and see whether this was a navigation error as a result of the heavy mist hanging over the mountains this morning.

Motorola is not the only team struggling with missing checkpoints. Team Solomon Navigator (Poland) have also missed one CP to date, but not as a result of any pre-planned strategy. The team were unable to locate CP 15 on the 93km bike leg at the end of day 1 (Stage 1, Section 3). They are thus slightly disappointed with their performance to date. They were however full of praise for the maps produced by the race organisers, noting their good quality and remarking that their high-resolution detail made it easy to navigate with high accuracy.

Race strategy, particularly concerning the various options surrounding the missing of certain optional CPs came to the fore again in the first section of Stage 3, a 65km bike leg. Checkpoint 40, just outside the transition village of Chãos (pronounced Shaa-ouz - hold your nose closed to get the right intonation) has created quite a few options. It is the last in a sequence of optional CPs and the site of a 8m abseil into a cave in the side of the Serra dos Candeeiros mountains. Many teams, such as the all-girl team of Arena, have elected to skip the CP, avoiding a long steady climb halfway up the flanks of the mountain and thereby also unburdening themselves of heavy abseiling equipment. It is a tough call however, as this checkpoint is only 1km from the end of the mountain biking leg and will be tantalisingly close for many teams.

Team Arena, presently ranked 4th, have impressed quite a few teams, amongst them Team Cyanosis, with whom they have had a constant battle with since the latter stages of day 1. They have been described as 'extremely strong' and 'fantastic navigators' by one of Cyanosis' own navigators, Arrie de Swardt. Team member Donovan Sims noted that their egos were taking a beating. Arena has also impressed the rope work marshals and assembled reporters on the 30m abseil in the Montejunto mountains, with high-speed abseiling jumps more appropriate in a New York SWAT team exercise. As for Cyanosis, they are in good spirits after a physically tough first day. They made a 1-hour mistake in the mist near the Montejunto abseil this morning, losing



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"Run when you can, walk when you have to,  
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Dean Karnazes  
Ultra distance runner



contact with Arena, but are keen to keep improving on their current position.

We are now awaiting the arrival of teams off the 45km trekking leg of Stage 3 / Section 2. The navigation in this terrain is apparently quite tough (even tougher than last night's monster trek) and any team expecting to visit all 6 checkpoints could potentially be out there for 6 or 7 hours, presuming they make no mistakes in the dark and misty conditions, which are producing infrequent light drizzle. Some of the top teams, such as leaders Alpine Pro will probably aim to visit all CPs, but their broad dispersion across tough terrain suggest that most teams may skip at least one, but more likely two CPs as they are quite far removed from the others. Such shortcuts may reduce the section length to about 35km or less for these teams, resulting in times of approximately 5 hours for the trekking leg. Any teams successfully obtaining all 6 CPs will surely make a good leap up the leaderboard or cement their position on top. This will be a watershed night for many teams.

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