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# ADVENTURE RACING

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

Race Reporting by Nicholas Mulder

Tuesday, 4 December 2007 (18h39)

The final few teams



## ESTORIL PORTUGAL XPD RACE 2007

participating in the Estoril Portugal XPD arrived this morning in the coastal town of Cascais, Portugal. Many of them are now quickly doing some final shopping for food and spare parts, packing crates and assembling their bikes under glorious blue skies and very mild temperatures. The weather could not in fact be better, with day time temperatures approaching 20°C. Night time temperatures remain cold, about 12°C, whilst only a few minutes of light drizzle have fallen in the last few days. The mild temperatures in the Estoril region of Portugal have taken many teams by surprise, including Team Cyanosis from South Africa.

Team Cyanosis' Donovan Sims (late replacement for Nicholas Mulder who is recovering from a stress fracture) was one of the later arrivals, joining Ryno Griesel, Susan Sloan and Arrie De Swardt, who have spent the last three days acclimatising and making final preparations. The team is in very good spirits and looking forward to the race. Team member Susan Sloan is particularly looking forward to the unique format of the Portugal XPD, "It should be fun, no long slogs, lots of decisions. Exciting."

The Estoril Portugal XPD is unique amongst the thirteen races that make up the Adventure Racing World Series. Its race format has been described by some competitors as "a non-stop, four day, multi-discipline rogaine". Whereas other races in the series may feature a single, continuous course covering 400 to 500km, the Portugal XPD requires teams to visit as many check points as possible on different stages of the course within specified times. Teams who do not reach the end of a section and begin the next section by a specific cut-off time, risk the loss of all their points accumulated by visiting that stage's checkpoints.

As the race winner will be the team who has the most accumulated points after approximately 12 stages (each CP will count as 1 point), strategic decision making and technical navigation will be a vital ingredient for success. Teams always have the option of progressing straight from the start to the finish of any specific leg, missing some or all of the optional check points of a stage. Teams may be more inclined to do so when navigation becomes technical, when they decide to take some off to sleep, or when a particular sporting discipline is not to their favour or liking. For the teams aiming for a win, a delicate balance of sleep strategy, daylight and night-time visibility, the weather as well as their own physical and navigational abilities will all play an important role in deciding on how many, and which of the check points they should visit in the mountains and valleys of Portugal.

The constantly undulating scenery of the Estoril region of Portugal should prove taxing for many teams. The race will feature mountain biking, trekking, paddling, caving, rope work, but also roller blading and trikke biking. The last two disciplines should give non-European teams a fair challenge, due to the scarcity of these adventure racing disciplines outside Europe. Hopefully teams have taken time to train on their roller blades, but they will not see the trikke bikes until race registration and skills testing on Wednesday. The trikke's can be envisaged as a type of three-wheeled push scooter, but with pivot joints that will allow racers to generate speed by 'slaloming' on flatter terrain. Luckily the bikes do come complete with brakes, which should be well worn by the time teams reach the bottom of some of the steeper descents.

Thirty-six teams from fifteen countries will be lining up at the start of the 2007 edition of the Portugal XPD. Apart from South African Team Cyanosis, racers have arrived from as far afield as the U.S.A., Russia, Spain, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, Brazil, Finland, Poland, Ireland, the U.K. as well as from around Portugal. There will be a short prologue event in the town of Cascais on Wednesday night (2030 GMT), which should take less than two hours. The following morning, teams will be set off from the start from 0700 GMT at intervals dependent on the prologue results. Teams will thus aim to give themselves a good position on the prologue, so as to maximise their

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Ultra distance runner



possible time window for visiting check points on the first stage of the expedition race.

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

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