

ADVENTURE RACING

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XPD Portugal, Estoril: 6-9 December 2007

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ESTORIL PORTUGAL XPD RACE 2007

Fantastic Finish to Estoril Portugal XPD
Monday, 10 December 2007 (01h00)

The Estoril Portugal XPD adventure race has a winner. After 80 hours of racing, Team Teva-La Pinella of Spain have been crowned champions on Tamariz Beach in Estoril, Portugal. After having been in third place for much of the last two days, they have calculated their race to precision in order to move up the leaderboard, overtaking both Team Alpine Pro / Nutrend / Merida (Czech) and Tilak / OpavaNet / Merida (Czech), both of whom have dropped drastically down the results table.



The fourth and final morning of the Portugal XPD race started with early drizzle, but soon cleared, giving teams a bright blue sky when they finally crossed the finish line in Estoril at the end of a short ocean kayaking section. For most teams though, Sunday had started whilst they were still trekking towards the fourth and last transition of the race, in the village of Meca. From here, teams completed a 73km mountain bike towards Sintra. A 21km trekking leg through the Sintra mountains followed, before teams navigated down to the coastline at Cascais for the final paddle, completing a race well over 500km in length.

The leaderboard changed drastically in the early hours of the morning when numerous teams failed to meet the cut-off time of 4am in Meca. This included some of the top teams who had spent too much time on Saturday afternoon visiting a few additional checkpoints before embarking on the 56km river paddle down the Rio Tejo. The paddle turned out to be harder and longer than many teams anticipated, with paddling times of between 8 and 12 hours commonplace. This left many teams with less than 4 hours to complete the 34km trekking leg to Meca in the dark. The cut-off took its toll, with any late arrivals penalised their points accumulated at checkpoints for that leg. Among the victims were race leaders, Alpine Pro, who had significant problems on the paddle, including losing their maps of the river section somewhere along the river, as well as second placed Team Tilak. Teams Arena of Russia, Master Unit of Finland, Lima Salomon of Slovenia and Durasport of Slovenia also missed the cut-off, losing significant points that effectively knocked them teams out of the top 10 in the rankings. Fourth placed Salomon Navigator of Poland would subsequently miss the 12 noon cut-off at Sintra and face the same fate.

The miscalculations of 5 of the top 10 teams brought a swath of new names to the top of the leader board. Team Teva, who had been racing consistently in the top 3 since day 1 now moved into a clear lead, but it would remain unclear until the finish cut-off and calculation of points as to which teams would fill the minor placings. In the end, these positions would go to Team Clube Praca da Armada of Portugal (2nd) and Team Oure of Denmark (3rd). Both teams have shown a very conservative strategy throughout the race. Whilst some teams went out hard on day 1 and burnt themselves out, they hung back, conserving energy that would allow them to visit more checkpoints on the third and fourth day of the race. They also ensured that they did not overextend themselves by visiting too many checkpoints on the early days and thus getting uncomfortably close to any cut-off times. Clube Praca maximised this strategy by starting stage 5 almost 2 hours ahead of the next highly ranked team. This allowed them to visit a significant number of optional checkpoints on the final day, whilst later teams with less time available proceeded directly to the finish, bypassing valuable point scores. Their strategy was pivotal in their rapid movement up the field into second place.

For Team Cyanosis of South Africa, the final day brought a new lease on life. After grabbing a quick bite to eat at a restaurant on the final night's trekking leg, as well as a 1-hour sleep at the transition at the start of stage 5, the team felt re-invigorated and were soon cycling in the morning dawn at top speeds, passing a number of slower teams at various stages. Throwing caution to the wind, the team decided to continue skipping optional checkpoints to ensure that they did not fall foul of any cut-offs. They were thus one of the first teams to arrive at the start of the 2km ocean paddle at 2pm, well ahead of the finish line cut-off of 4pm. They were able to take a leisurely paddle across a very flat ocean, stopping off at the final checkpoint for an underwater checkpoint, before heading for the finish at Tamariz Beach in Estoril. After viewing the final scores, the team were elated at their final 5th position (4th being taken by Team Feed the Machine of the USA), which had improved from 11th the previous day. Team member Ryno Griesel commented that the team had raced very hard for most of the race, but struggled with sleep deprivation on the second night. They had felt superb however on the final morning and had

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



worked even harder to ensure that they completed the entire course within time and with all compulsory checkpoints (1 of only 11 teams to do so). Their early finish was to prove an extra boon as well, when Team Sleepmonsters / Inov-8 of the UK also finished just under an hour later with an equal number of checkpoints. Cyanosis' better finish time however, relegated Sleepmonsters to 6th place.

For the rest of the teams, the crossing of the bay to the finish proved to be a fun-filled social affair, with most of the field finishing within the final hour. Teams waited on the beach after finishing to welcome fellow competitors home and to celebrate race and personal victories. The faces of every racer to cross the line showed a multitude of emotions, elation being chief amongst them. They were also treated to various spectacles as later teams attempted to surf the waves onto the beach, the vast majority of attempts proving spectacularly unsuccessful.

The final glory however belongs to Team Teva-La Pinilla, made up of team captain Antonio de la Rosa, Aurelio-Antonio Olivar, Francisco Varela and Fernanda Maciel. The team showed superb strategy throughout the race, pacing themselves early on. They also ensured they had sufficient sleep, particularly on the second night when they slept for a further few hours whilst Team Alpine Pro extended their lead and Team Tilak passed them in transition. They produced a strong, fast paddle leg down the Rio Tejo paddle on day 3, ensuring they were off the water shortly after night fall. Their navigation appears to have been near-faultless, their transitions calm and unhurried. They have put together a wonderful performance to become winners of the 2007 edition of the Estoril Portugal XPD.

Top 6 results list:

1. Teva-La Pinilla (Spain) - 24 compulsory CPs, 46 optional CPs.
2. Clube Praca da Armada (Portugal) - 24 compulsory CPs, 42 optional CPs.
3. Oure (Denmark) - 24 compulsory CPs, 41 optional CPs.
4. Feed the Machine (USA) - 24 compulsory CPs, 41 optional CPs.
5. Cyanosis (South Africa) - 24 compulsory CPs, 37 optional CPs.
6. Sleepmonsters / Inov-8 (UK) - 24 compulsory CPs, 37 optional CPs.

Keep updated at 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/