

ESTORIL PORTUGAL XPD RACE

The final stage...

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Today's stage took the race from the waters of the Tagus River, back across the mountains and finished on the coast in Estoril. The last teams finished the paddling section late in the night. This section cost the Czech team, Alpine Pro/Nutrend/Merida (23) their lead, they set off one hour before the other Czech team, Tilak/OpavaNet/Merida (22), but lost their maps in the river, and arrived two hours after Tilak.

Following the paddling section there was another long trekking section. This section was the undoing of the Finnish team, Master Unit (25), who made three orienteering mistakes, and didn't arrive in the Transition Area (AT)3 before the cut off time for the start of the mountain biking section. They decided they didn't want to be transferred, but preferred to quit.

Today a number of teams cut a fine line with the cut off times for sections. The mountain biking section closed at midday, Team TEVA-La Pinilla team arrived in Sintra only a few minutes before 12:00. The cut off time for the final paddling section was at 15:00. This meant the many teams had to take the quickest route possible on the trekking section, missing out the optional checkpoints including the one with rappel. There would have been spectacular views from this checkpoint over the Serra de Sintra mountains, the Palacio de Pena and the Moorish Castle – if it hadn't been so foggy!

The weather this week has alternated between good and bad weather, after yesterdays glorious sunshine, today was again started out overcast with drizzle. As the day progressed the clouds cleared and the sunshine was out by the time the teams got back to the water.

The centre of Cascais was bustling with Sunday trippers, who all watched in bewilderment as the exhausted, bedraggled teams ran through the centre towards the fishermen's beach. The spectacle continued as the

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teams peeled off their clothes and struggled into their wet suits on the square above the beach. In the middle of the paddling section there was another challenge, an underwater checkpoint where the teams had to copy a drawing that was placed underwater to validate the checkpoint.

Reaching the finishing line was the final challenge as there were sets of waves that caught more than a few teams off-guard and threw them off of their kayaks. Team Lima Salomon adventure team.si (21) made the most dramatic entrance, taking a nose dive off the top of a wave and then were catapulted onto the beach.

There were considerable changes in the classifications today, with several of the teams that had been amongst the leaders falling back, and teams that had started apparently slowly moving their way up steadily. Provisionally team TEVA-La Pinilla (03) have taken first place, followed by the Portuguese team Clube Praças Armada (02) and the Danish team Oure (18) in third place. These results will be confirmed once all the doubts about certain check points have been confirmed.

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