

NYARA Race Report April 2016
REV3 Epic 26 Hours
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April is upon us, which means Mark and Mike from Rev3 Adventure have been wandering around the Shenandoah Valley for the past few weeks setting up this year's Rev3 Epic Adventure race. This year's course cost me a great deal of gear. Before the end of the race the woods in Shenandoah would eat two compasses and a bike computer. In the end though we got our revenge and came out on top with a first place finish.

Our squad this year consisted of the Brothers Courain (myself and Aaron), Eric Caravella, and the newest addition to our team and to AR in general, Vanessa Peck. Vanessa was extra helpful because she hopped on board with really short notice, so huge thanks to her.

The Epic course this year got a haircut because of low water conditions. Twelve miles of canoeing were canceled which for a 6'3" is no disappointment at all. Here is the course rundown...

- 15K river paddle
- TA1
- 15K trek to the bikes +Rappel
- TA2
- Roughly 30k on the bikes up to Veach Gap (our favorite slog in VA)
- TA3
- 16K bike/foot Orienteering course
- 6K screaming downhill section back to the park
- TA4
- Finishing off with a bike orienteering course + Secret Bonus Point

Our Big competition in the 4 Coed category would be our good friends on The REV3 Redliners and the ever intimidating Canada AR, a group of super humans from the frozen north. I've already had my ass handed to me by Jason Urckfitz at the CNYO Snowgaine this year so I knew we had our work cut out for us.

The rules were straight forward with one opportunity to be really sneaky in the planning stages. The final orienteering course at Shenandoah River State Park could be done at any time using any mode of transport. You could pick off points on the canoe, you could do it all by bike or foot, you could even split up the course and do some of it before you left for the initial river paddle at the start.



When the race started we ran the short prologue and opted to run into the park and pick off points P&Q and avoid the canoe rush at the start. We nabbed the two points while leaders put some distance on the canoes but we were hungry to catch up so we motored forward through a throng of canoes toward the first TA. At the TA we had to drop off Aaron and Vanessa on one side of the river and then paddle across to drop the canoes. Eric and I then had to jump into the miserably cold river and swim back to our team (Side Note: I thought Adventure Racers were the toughest athletes on earth... that's no longer my view. If you are a Cold Open Water Swimmer, you must be made out of steel because that was the worst 10 minutes of my life).



We must have made up a few minutes on the leaders during the paddle because folks at the TA said they were only a few minutes ahead. Hot on their trail we ran through the 6K road section and started our climb up to Buzzard Rock, a local climbing spot where we had a really tremendous rappel waiting for us. We showed up at the cliff edge and as we rolled in Canada AR and REV3 were just taking their gear off. We were closing the gap. We zipped down our ropes, scrambled back on trail, and proceeded on foot to the turning point of the race, CP 7.

We opted for a pretty hard line down 900 feet of vertical towards a swampy flat area on the south side of a stream. The checkpoint was hung in a short, thick forest of small trees with almost no landmarks to help orient ourselves. We chose to take a bearing off of a pretty obvious reentrant about 300m from the CP and hope and pray that we saw it as we walked by. We nailed it. Next stop Bikes at CP8. I guess somewhere in that 1000m² area Canada and REV were still looking for the CP while we snuck out and hit the TA. We asked the folks who had been through already and the answer was "one two man team." We had the lead and we planned on holding onto it.



So we didn't know this, but Vanessa had planned on crushing the bike leg and very quickly put all of us to shame as we literally ate her dust as she disappeared up the green mountain ridgeline. Deciding she didn't want to embarrass us too badly, she let us catch up and we made our way through the bike course. We traded spots back and forth with two 2 man teams, US Military Endurance Sports, led by

Dave Ashley, and our new friends from Lost and Wandering in the Woods who, despite having antique mountain bikes, were putting on a hammer fest through the dirt roads of the bike leg. Now even though we tell ourselves ever race that we won't have any problems with food or hydration, the long bikes tend to make you forget that you're behind. As we pushed our bikes to Veach Gap on the Massanutten ridgeline it became clear that we weren't at 100%. Stomachs were turning and I was feeling faint so we had to take a couple minutes at the TA to settle ourselves before the big Orienteering course. Vanessa gave me some grape flavored baby meds that help your guts settle down and I was back on my feet slogging down the ridgeline toward the O course.

Along the way CPs 16 – 18 were available for pick up on either side of the ridgeline. CP 16 was misplotted and luckily for us Aaron has eagle eyes and grabbed it. Unfortunately this screwed up our plans for 17 so we had to bag the point until the return trip when we could get a better hold on our location. At 18 the trail split (high and Low). We went low, which was the wrong move and ended up doing a bike whack through a super steep hill side to get back up to 18. Eric (who seems to always be in Beast Mode) dragged two bikes through the woods. It's at this point where the mountain laurel ate my first compass, but a good navigator always has a spare... that works, and isn't falling apart (oops).

We dropped our bikes at CP 18 and dropped down the hillside into the foot section of this O course We opted for a clockwise loop that ended in a calf crushing exit up a steep hillside in the end... whatever, let's do this. No sooner did I pull out my second compass and it literally fell to pieces (thanks Amazon). Eric and Aaron save the day and set me up with all the directional tools they had. We nailed all the CPS, climbed up to the ridge and quickly started feeling terrible again. It didn't matter though because we were on our way back to the car, and the car has food, and that food was Chef Boyardee, and Chef Boyardee is borderline magic

We were at the TA at dusk and we were able to down some food and lighten up our packs before heading out to grab 20 more CPs plus some mysterious bonus point. The trails at Shenandoah River State Park are awesome. Fast, smooth, and groomed we are able to really fly. We took a clockwise loop through the park, picking off the riverside points first and working our way into the woods second. Point I gave us our first clue for the secret bonus. We would be triangulating the coordinates from different CPs scattered in the woods. There were three and I was our first. We planned a big bike whack from J to M and got totally rocked and rolled by the ultra-thick vegetation lining the reentrants that we were traversing. The sapling trees decided to eat my bike computer and Eric ended up looking like he was in a fight with all of the cats in VA but we made it out alive and quickly proceeded to cancel all other forms of bike whacking for the rest of the race. We worked our way through the roads and trails in the dark and got our second piece of Bonus information at CPB. With two lines now we were successfully able to totally skew the location of the bonus CP and set ourselves up to waste a bunch of time searching for a flag that was 200m behind us... nice. On our way towards the Bonus we passed Canada going taking an opposite loop of the course. Up till then we were pretty sure that they were going to catch us at any minute but seeing their progress sealed the deal for us. We hit the bonus location, failed, replotted, and finally grabbed it. We made our way back to the finish line after 14 hours and change. We were the first ones in followed by USMES a few minutes later. For the first time ever we would be able to drive home from the epic with a good night's sleep. Thanks to Eric, Aaron, and Vanessa for being such stellar

teammates. Thanks to Mike and Mark from REV3 for all their hard work. Thanks to Montbell for Keeping us warm with some ultra-warm and ultralight fleece, #lightandfast. And thanks to Denise Mast for getting us all signed up.



Next Stop, Cowboy Tough

