

## **Urban Max Challenge – 21<sup>st</sup> November , 2009**

### **The start**

We grabbed our clue sheet in the middle of a wild scramble just after 9am at the King Street Wharf 8 centre along with 400 other teams – around half social (10 checkpoints out of 16 required) and half racing (14 out of 16 checkpoints).

### **Checkpoints 1 & 16**

I knew about the gilt painted tree in China Town so we just took off running south along Sussex Street. Suddenly Nick stopped and accosted an American girl arriving at a backpackers hostel & asked if she had any foreign currency on her. They didn't understand this new local custom until Nick asked if they had seen the Amazing Race. "Ahh yes" Anything will do – dollars, pesos, anything!! says Nick. "Well all I've got is an American dollar" That'll do!!! & Nick throws \$6 at her (good exchange rate that one). We resume sprinting & arrive 3<sup>rd</sup> at the gilt painted tree with our \$1 note in hand. A good start.

### **Checkpoint 6**

I figured if we got to the special bus next that would take us out of the city towards Centennial Park as well as being another checkpoint & would mean we didn't have to run anywhere. We arrived at the special bus stop in Elizabeth Street near the War Memorial with a minute or two to spare.

The activity was to solve a wooden puzzle by interlocking three pieces to form a cross. Nick wasn't getting this & I was worse and we had got to Oxford Street already with our hopping off point being Paddington. In desperation we said to some fellow competitors if did they did the puzzle, we would swap them for a clue that we had solved. Agreed! They couldn't read French or Italian so they didn't know what Checkpoint 15 was "quai huit terminal d'expedition". I said it's the finish line – there is an activity back where we started! Great – so do the bloody puzzle.... in a hurry.....then he forgot how to repeat it!!!!!! Paddington is approaching.....que faire...what to do. At the last minute he does it, the bus grinds to a halt & we're off & running again.

### **Checkpoints 10 & 4**

Not opening until 10am Paddington Bowling Club checkpoint was the next target & it was 9.53 so looking good for a 5 minute run but wait there's a Big Issue salesman Grab him...where's \$5...great...let's go ..look the clue up at the Bowling Club...gee it's getting hot....hurry up...run!!

(We later spoke to a Big Issue sales guy who said it was only 11am & he was just about to break his all-time full day's sales record)

I managed to burst into a conversation with a few old dears one of whom was startled / horrified as I blurted out "excuse me ...where's Paddo Bowling Club"

They still hadn't recovered from the shock when a youngish girl says "down Jersey Road" & so off we flew..... until Nick barges into the local hairdressers "where's the bowling club !?"..at which point this pleasant young girl starts describing in agonising detail of where it is. "C'mon Nick this guy

running down the street said follow me....so we're off .....& make it with 2 minutes change. Just enough time so that we can sign in & become temporary members (like for about 3 minutes). And of course what's the Big issue clue – inside back cover is a picture of the boar outside Sydney Hospital. Beautiful....we'll get it on the way back.

The task? Send a bowl down & hit either of two milk crates placed together. Talk about easy! Except everyone was driving them down & not understanding about bias. Nick misses & I get caught in the frenzy of hurled bowls & also send down a wide drive. Just a minute let's stop & do a nice forehand draw shot with a little weight. Steady, aim....bowl.....  
....rolling.....rolling. C'mon Nick let's go – it's going to hit dead centre! We're running before it hits.

### **Checkpoints 5 & 12**

Running uphill towards Centennial Park in the sun is starting to take its toll. So a bit of walking, a bit of clue reading, a bit of running & a swig of water later we reach our next objective – the Reserve on top of the Reservoir. But no clowns (just us two). Looking.....looking.....no clowns!! (We later discover half of Paddington is built on the old Reservoir and that the actual site was way back near Paddington Town Hall). Our only failure.

Anyway it's a downhill walk / run into Centennial Park where we find the Information Kiosk near the Restaurant. "Excuse me...puff.....where would...pant...the "Education Precinct" be?? Just keep going round there love, it's at the end of Dickens Drive". We're off..... but I nearly crash into another guy arriving yelling "Hi we're after the same information!"

We arrive to be confronted with a blind bicycle ride – one person rides blindfolded around an obstacle course while the other gives directions. Hit an obstacle & you go back to the start. So off we go

....."Don't pedal Dad- you'll crash into those in front of you...just sit on it & walk. ok.....watch the fence! Turn left!

Now when someone is facing you their left is your right & vice versa...so into the fence I go

..... WHAT ARE YOU DOING NICK!?!?

.....sorry Dad...keep going....STOP, YOU NEARLY HIT THE OBSTACLE!!

.....WELL TELL ME WHERE TO GO!!

.....ok now your going better,...don't worry about the bush.....

.....oh thanks Nick, how about I follow your voice

.....ok steady turn left...no not too much turn the other left..

.....THE OTHER LEFT!!!??

.....it's fine Dad- you made it....Well thank God for that.

### **Checkpoints 4 & 9**

We're off again uphill...time for a walk, check & re-group to find those elusive checkpoints. Some fellow competitors are making there way uphill as well.

“Hi, want to trade a clue?”.....Sure!....What’s the anagram for Checkpoint 14?  
.....“It’s Level 3 Harbourside Shopping Centre”. I’ve been there says Nick triumphantly ...it’s got a laser paintball gallery....beauty!!

More re-grouping/walking....now..... what’s Bobbi’s “where you can a detailed lesson on what goes up must come down”. Could it be a lift manufacturer...no...what about a pole dancing studio! Time to phone a friend... Hey Caroline is there a pole dancing place in the city called Bobbi’s.... Yes there is!!.... Thanks bye!! Oh bum what’s the address – Castlereagh Street is a long bloody street.

Telstra 1234 – they’ll know.....(in a male voice) “Excuse me ....what’s the address of Bobbi’s Pole Dancing Studio....no we don’t need the phone number...level 4.# 203 Castlereagh....beautiful....thank you... bye.

Back to the reservoir...looking...looking...where are those clowns. Forget it Nick there’s a bus!!!

### **Checkpoints 2 & 9**

Never has an air-conditioned bus ride towards the City been more appreciated. What luxury, we can work out some more clues & watch those poor souls running towards Centennial Park. So we’ve got Sydney Hospital...Bobbi’s....Harbourside ...the finish line activity... that’s a total of 9 checkpoints & we’ve bought a \$20 Red Cross pass which allows us a free checkpoint. That’s 10!!!.

All we’ve got to do is get to the City & then head for home. Oh this is easy!!!

Right Nick I’ll get to Sydney Hospital & you get some water!!  
...but we’ll get disqualified if we’re more than 50 metres apart!!  
..oh yeah, I forgot but boy I’m thirsty

No marshalls at Sydney Hospital...just clip your passport card & run like crazy to Bobbi’s.....c’mon Nick up the stairs to level 1...NO DAD IT’S LEVEL 4.....No it’s ok it’s level 1.....NO DAD,IT’S LEVEL 4.....NO NICK LOOK HERE WE ARE – LEVEL....puff.....1!!

Welcome to Bobbi’s pole dancing studio...we have two activities for one of your team. “Go Nick, you’ll be fine”. “The first is a spin like zis.... & next you climb to ze ceiling like zis, touch & hold your position until we say ok.. Now when you combine sweat, sunscreen, 400 teams & a metal pole you have a real challenge. Go Nick.....nice spin.....good one. C’mon go up, try again... keep going!!!!

“If you wish you can help your partners up to ze ceiling” Ok Nick let’s do it.. He’s up.... Look no hands from me...We did it!!! (only later did Nick say he found a tiny gap near the pole top to hang on with literally his fingernails).

Off to Harbourside!!

## **Checkpoints 14 & 15**

So off we go, feeling pretty confident. Then Nick finds out that the young couple striding towards Darling Harbour just in front of us also have 8 checkpoints completed and a Red Cross free pass. A foot race is on!!

We both run down Bathurst Street, round Darling Harbour & arrive at Level 3, both find the laser paintball & both find nothing!! Looking....looking... then a marshall rounds a pin ball machine..."Over here".

It's a shooting gallery... two practice shots for everyone, then two shots at a target, score 2 points for each hit, 5 points per team (out of possible 8) to complete the task. Ready aim....fire... four bullseyes us & 3 from the other team. Good enough... where's the checkpoint passport Dad, WHERE DID YOU PUT IT DAD!! We're off together to the finish.... 4 lunatics running down escalators along the shopping precinct...neck & neck... running...puffing. Then the girl on the other team asks for a break!!! Success, we've got them!! Head to the finish!!! Over the Pyrmont Bridge in the belting sun... I wish we'd found that water Nick... are you sure this is the way Dad.....just run.

The finish.....but first we have to do the last activity next to the finish line... a jumping castle obstacle course. Both go through together on different sides. Under things, over things, around things, bouncing, up the wall with the rope for the slippery slide (more like a slippery crash & tumble for me). I emerge puffing & panting thinking I didn't do too bad until I see Nick putting on his second shoe....

To the finish.....we've done it!! We're the third team back but the first all male social team in 2 hrs 31 mins – 8 minutes behind the outright (mixed teams) winner.

## **Post Race & presentation**

Hey that was fun but we missed the kayaking next to Boy Charlton Pool. Let's go home, get a drink & drive down there before the presentation. So we did that but it was hard to get the rush mentality out of the head so we surged up and down the harbour, got a bit wet & headed back to the finish (this time in an air-conditioned car!)

There were certainly a lot of stories out there (go to the driving range and hit a ball more than 100 metres, go to a restaurant & have your photo taken with the owner). The best race team (4 more checkpoints than social) was a female fitness instructor & her friend who finished just 12 minutes behind us – just amazing.

Anyway..... to the presentation (of some sporting goods – Nick got a new back-pack & I got some powdered Gatorady stuff)....

"First Place...all Male Social....is the team of.....Beauty & the Geek! How'd you get that name boys?? "Don't look at me" says Nick...."you're a worry Dad".