



BREAK Fiona and pals grab a selfie

MY HEB RACE

There were incredible highs and a few lows as my partner Gordon Lacey and I competed in our first adventure race together.

I loved the smooth tarmac roads that offered fast cycling and the kayaking in sheltered bays and though clear waters.

I was stunned by the views from hill summits over beautiful scenery and the superb beach ride on the edge of South Uist.

Cycling 2km across the tidal causeway to the island of Vallay created memories that will last a lifetime.

The biggest challenges included the tough boggy terrain of The Hebridean Way towards the end of day two.

Days of wet weather had made going slow and arduous and I walked while pushing my bike for some five miles.

And navigation in a wild land that is filled with myriad lochans was never easy.

The weather was changeable, with strong winds and torrential rain, mixed with calm periods and warm sunshine.

It's worth thinking about who you choose as your team mate.

Gordon and I didn't always have the same goals or energy and a hillside argument about trying for two checkpoints, not just one, cost us a lot of time.

However, there were advantages of being in a pair, especially when you need a push to get you back to base after a full day of racing.

It's also far quicker for two to fix a puncture and the shared experiences make for great post-race chat.

In the end, and with great surprise, we finished in third place in the mixed pairs.

We were some eight hours behind winner Craig so there's room for improvement next year.

As novices we felt included and the race was achievable for all kinds of people. Sign up for 2017 at www.theheb.org.

KIT OF THE WEEK

Vango Galaxy 300 tent, £280

The three-man Vango Galaxy is quick and easy to pitch and has a great stand-up height porch area.

The sleeping area is at the back of the tunnel tent and separated by a zipped divider. The tent has a clip-in groundsheet for the porch.

Vango have used their innovative TBSII Tension Band System for stability in adverse conditions. Weighing

5.6kg, it's aimed at campsite campers or short-distance trekkers.

■ www.vango.co.uk



Adventure pushed us to edge of glory



TEST OF ENDURANCE Racers have to cycle, run and walk on tough terrain and kayak in The Heb



FIONA RUSSELL

THE HEB: RACE ON THE EDGE

More than 80 people from across the UK headed to the Outer Hebridean islands to take part in a new Scottish adventure race earlier this month.

The Heb: The Race on the Edge comprised two days of cycling, running, walking and kayaking in the stunning island landscapes of Benbecula and the Uists.

Uniquely, the event course had been designed to offer both experienced and novice adventure racers a challenge.

Paul McGreal, of organisers Dirty Events, said: "We knew there were many people who would like to try their first multi-day adventure race and that there were many experienced racers who would love to race in a beautiful area of Scotland."

"Our goal was to create an event where everyone felt challenged and rewarded."

All competitors, racing solo or as a pair, were required to complete the cycling sections on road, trail and beach.

The kayaking sections, which required no specialist expertise, were also mandatory and on sit-on crafts.

However, racers could choose the number of running and walking checkpoints they did.

Time penalties were issued to those who did not reach any of the 11 points on hills, mountains and tiny causeway islands.

A checkpoint on the last hill climb on South Uist was also mandatory before participants raced to a beach finish line.

The overall winner was Craig

Two days of cycling, running, kayaking and walking with the wild and wonderful Outer Hebrides as a backdrop was challenging and rewarding experience for hardy racers



ACHIEVEMENT Racers negotiated hills, bogs and beaches in The Heb

Mattocks, of Peebles. His time over two days totalled 16hrs 25mins and he ticked off all checkpoints.

Craig, 43, said: "My aim was to get out and enjoy the challenge, tackling all that I could at my own pace. I had no ambitions about a position in the race, simply to give it my best and feel satisfied with my efforts."

"I loved the incredible setting of the race and despite very mixed weather I was in awe of the landscapes of the Uists."

"However, I did have a sense of humour failure when it came to a rough and boggy section of mountain biking trail on day one. That was very tough and I couldn't seem to stay on my bike to ride it."

By the end of the first day, he was second, 10 minutes behind Craft-sponsored athlete Sean McFarlane, of Dollar, Stirlingshire.

Craig said: "Being so close behind Sean as we started day two did drive me on. But I could really only go at my own pace."

Being a keen hill runner with

kayaking ability and triathlon experience helped Craig. Yet he was still surprised to triumph over Sean who finished 15 minutes behind overall.

Craig said: "To be the winner feels fantastic."

First woman home was adventure racing novice Amy Goodill, 33, of Glenrothes, in 20hrs 53mins.

She said: "It was exhausting and challenging in so many ways but I thoroughly enjoyed myself. I have never done anything like this kind of race before so I just went for it."

"I was completely exhausted for that final run and walk. I still can't believe I was first female home."

Other results included Jim Cunningham, the oldest racer at 60, in 22nd overall.

The first female pair were Catriona Morrison and Caroline Wallace in ninth overall. Robbie Lyall and Derek Wilkie were the first male pair home in 13th.

In 29th were the first placed mixed pair, honeymoon couple Polly Weston and Steve Lock.

Advice and ideas

Join me on my adventures in Scotland's great outdoors by checking out my award-winning website at www.fionaoutdoors.co.uk – you'll find lots of great information about walking, cycling, running and other outdoor activities, as well as kit reviews.