

The Epic Race

by José Lopes • Photos by Paulo Calisto

Adventure Racing World Championship (ARWC) - Estoril Portugal XPD Race 2009

Experience, endurance, navigation and strategy were the most important qualities for success in the 7th edition of the ARWC held in “Lusitania” – The Land of Light. Traversing one of the most demanding territories in Europe, the racers finish the World Champs in the Wild West Coast of Portugal, at the holy grail of Surfing; the Baleal Beach at Peniche. Surprising everyone with a strong finish and a sharp strategy Team “Helly Hansen – Prunesco” from Great Britain were crowned as the 7th Adventure Racing World Champions !!!!

After 128 hours of non-stop racing and over 900Kms run on foot, mountain-bike, roller-blades and kayak, the 2009 Adventure Racing World Championship - “Estoril Portugal XPD Race” turned out to be the supreme challenge to endurance and strategy. Out of the 59 teams coming from 25 different

countries that left Estoril on Sunday 8th November, only 40 were able to classify, representing a rather low withdrawal rate, considering the length and the harshness of the track.

Requiring an extreme endurance capacity, this four-member team challenge (of which at least one must be a woman) set out searching for the most astonishing landscapes in Portugal. Starting at the Estoril Coast and taking the caravan out to explore the tracks of the Lousã, Açor, Estrela, São Mamede and Aire e Candeeiros mountain ranges. Along the way, the racers have crossed the Schist Villages, the river Zêzere, the Natural Parks of International Tejo River and the Castelo de Bode dam. After swimming across the Óbidos lagoon, the finish line was set on the beach at Baleal, where the last survivors arrived on foot and mountain bike during the morning of the 7th day.

Averaging 37 years old, the British Team “Helly Hansen-Prunesco”

surprised everybody with a sharp strategy and a vigorous final sprint and conquered their first world title in adventure racing. Team leader Tom Gibbs – an Airbus designer – revealed the team’s strategy; “We came to Portugal with no major expectations and therefore put little pressure on the team. Our strategy turned out fine and it was all decided on the final hours of the race,” North-Americans “Nike/Beaver Creek” finished 2nd and Swedish “Lundhags Adventure” in 3rd with a small difference. These two teams both with Kiwi reinforcements, led the race at different stages, with the Swedes dominating the first day at the Estoril Coast and Nike taking control after the second day at the Schist Village of Fajão to lose it at the Templar Lands on a Friday 13th... weird !!!

The kiwis of “ORION HEALTH.COM”, former World Champions resisted most of the race to the strong pressure put on them by the challengers but were not able to recover from a dramatic episode

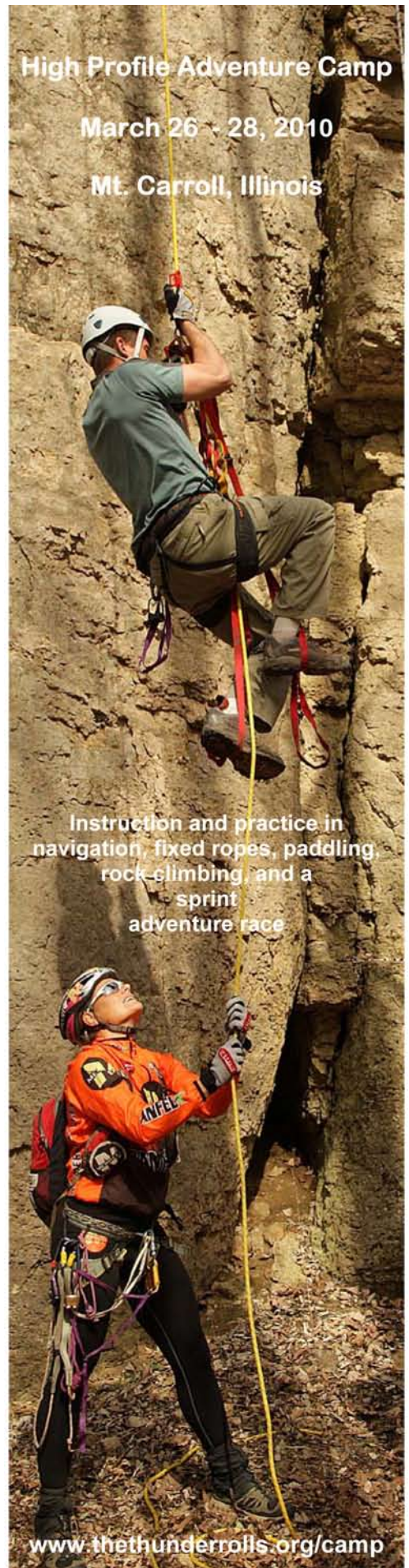


earlier in the final stage and got to fourth place in front of the best Eastern Europe team, the poles from “Navigator RaidLight” who made the most balanced race out of the TOP five. Out of the six home teams that started, only three were able to finish. Far behind the leaders, these teams only goal was reach the finish line. José Marques, leader of the current Portuguese National Champs team “Extreme Challenge/ IGEOE” (23rd place) was content with the result; “The team worked well even in the most difficult moments. We could have done better as we were close to Top 10 for a while, but fatigue caused a navigation error that cost us 3 long unrecoverable hours. Even so, we are happy with the result and shall do our best to be in Spain for the next world cup”.

If fact, that was the general feeling among the racers; the joy of the accomplishment and they will to come back for the next challenges. The enthusiasm was contagious and Alexandre Guedes da Silva, president of the “Associação Portuguesa de Corridas de Aventura (APCA)”, said ;“We couldn’t be any happier

as we were able to set an international landmark. The quality of our organization was recognized and competition-wise nothing like this had ever been seen before! It’s awesome and the “return” is already scheduled for next Spring at Pampilhosa da Serra, for the ARWS Portugal XPD Race 2010”.

The 7th ARWC Estoril Portugal XPD was organized by APCA under license of Southern Traverse, PLC and supervision of the Portuguese Orienteering Federation. The event prime sponsors were Turismo Estoril, EPM and the ADXTUR – Agência para o Desenvolvimento Turístico das Aldeias do Xisto and had the support of the municipalities of CASCAIS, LOUSÃ, PAMPILHOSA DA SERRA, ARGANIL, MANTEIGAS, BARCO, FUNDÃO, VILA VELHA DE RODÃO, NISA, CASTELO DE VIDE, MARVÃO, MAÇÃO, VILA DE REI, ABRANTES, TOMAR and PENICHE. Thank you to the more than 60 volunteers from 10 different countries – Portugal, Australia, Denmark, France, Brazil, Norway, Sweden, Slovenia, Great Britain and the United States.



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