

Greetings Fig racers, volunteers and interested others. The leaves are changing and I've pulled out my favorite fleece. Must be time for another Red River Gorge American Classic. I spent this past weekend doing my last bit of scouting, and I'm pleased to report that the course has turned out even better than I'd originally envisioned. I think you're going to have a great time out there . . . assuming you've been doing your hill repeats on the bike. If not, well, it's not too late to start.

Registered teams

We have 135 racers registered on 65 teams to date, with registration scheduled to close on October 31st. Some of the divisions are crazy-competitive, so I expect there to be a lot of energy out on the course. I've attached a team roster for your information. There are still a few folks who need to give me information about team/division changes. Please consider this your friendly reminder. If you did not provide your teammates' e-mail addresses when you registered, please be sure to pass this update along to them.

Volunteers

We also are blessed with a cadre of volunteers who have committed to come out and make this race happen. A huge thanks to all of them. I will be sending out a separate e-mail in the coming days with information about where to be and when. Plan on bringing everything you would bring to camp out for the weekend, and I'll be sure you have good food and company on the course.

Ever-mounting pile of swag

[Pedal Power Bike Shop](#) in Lexington is putting together some fantastic swag bags and a pile of gear for the door prize table. They're also having a great sale right now, so stop by and stock up. [Jack Link's](#) is sending along some of their new 2.2 oz. Sasquatch Sticks in Angry and Happy flavors (there's one to match your every mood on the course!), as well as some 1 oz. Steaks. Mmmm. Jerky. We've got some other gear to give away and some cool, locally-made trophies, too (they're carrying a map from the course!). Fun stuff.

Gear list

I've attached an updated mandatory/recommended gear list, and encourage you to visit the outdoor specialty store in your area for expert advice and quality gear.

Maps & UTM plotting

The primary race map will be a waterproof 1:30,000 USGS topo map, pre-marked with UTM grid lines, a product of mytopo.com. This single map will cover the entire course. You'll need to carry your plotter with you and "plot as you go." I suggest a fine-tipped Sharpie marker for marking on these maps. The standard AR plotting tool found at maptools.com has a 1:30,000 scale and sells for \$5.

You will also receive one supplemental map for the trekking leg that is a 1:24,000 scale with the CPs pre-plotted.

You're welcome to use maps other than those provided by me, including the OutrageGIS map and the US Forest Service map of the Red River Gorge. The newest USFS map is a waterproof map that is great for hikers. It provides lots of information about various trails and features in the area that are not on the topo map. However, be warned that it does not feature as many contour lines as a topo map. I personally would not use it for orienteering in the Gorge. It makes sheer cliffs look like gradual climbs. It does, however, feature a great deal of helpful information about landmarks and trails in the area.

Distances

You will be biking a total of about 38 miles, half of which is paved and half of which is not paved (gravel, dirt, creekbed). Only a very short stretch (measured in dozens of feet) is what I would consider not rideable. No cyclo-cross bikes are allowed. You will be trekking a total of about 12 miles, assuming you don't get lost. You will be paddling a total of about 6.5 miles. You'll have a fabulous rappel.

Flagging

You will encounter flagging on the course. You should not assume that I put it there as a "hint" for you. I don't do that. If I put flagging on the course, it's for a specific reason and I'll let you know about it.

Mapping

Undoubtedly, you will encounter paths, roads, buildings, and other human improvements that are not depicted on the topo map. Conversely, the map may well depict human improvements that are no longer in existence. Be sure you know where you are at all times and you'll know where the map is dated. If I think there are errors on the map that are not obvious and on which you are likely to rely to your detriment, then I'll let you know about them. This is a gray area, of course. What's obvious to one person may be less so to another. I try to use an "adventure racer with average navigation skills" standard, but I recognize that's a nebulous concept.

I'll tell you that I draw a distinction between *dated* information and *erroneous* information. Here's what I mean by that: *dated information* = the map depicts an unimproved road running along a creek that is now just a footpath, while *erroneous information* = the map depicts a trail running over the high point of a knoll on which a CP is located when, in fact, the trail runs along one side or the other of the high point. I'm much more likely to point out erroneous information than dated information. I expect you to understand that human improvements come and go, and that you should rely on natural features whenever possible. If there's an obvious natural feature by which you might locate the CP, then I see no reason to give you extraneous information about changes in human improvements.

Also, if I'm trying to move you quickly through an area and I know there's a trail that isn't on the map, I'll let you know about it. Likewise, if I know that a trail depicted on the map is no longer there and I want you to avoid it, I'll show you an alternate route. If the obvious route between CPs looks like a 5-mile bushwhack and you're given one hour to get there, it's a pretty safe bet you'll stumble upon a trail or road that wasn't on the map - if it's going in the right direction, take it!

Lodging

Included in your registration is camping Friday night at Red River Gorge Campground. This is a primitive campground with port-a-johns. It's huge and so you should be able to find a quiet spot. Nonetheless, there will undoubtedly be late-night activity going on. If you prefer something quieter and more comfortable, you might try the Travelwise in Beattyville (closest to the start/finish) or Hemlock Lodge at Natural Bridge State Park or Li'l Abner's Motel, both located near the Slade exit. Beattyville is 20 miles from Slade and the campground is 7 miles on the other side of Slade (27 miles from Beattyville).

Friday night

You'll check in between 3 and 6 p.m. at RRG Campground. Dinner will be barbecue sandwiches, cole slaw, chips, and brownies. Dinner starts at 6 p.m. There will be a pre-race briefing at 7 p.m. The briefing is not mandatory, but it *is* highly encouraged. I'll do my best to ensure everything is spelled out clearly in your passports and race rules, but anything communicated at the pre-race briefing becomes part of the official rules. I'll have someone take notes that you can review Saturday morning, but it's going to be an awfully busy morning and I won't be able to re-hash the whole briefing or answer questions from dozens of racers. Make it for the briefing if you can. Door prizes will be given away at the briefing Friday night.

Regardless of whether you make the briefing, you *must* check in Friday night at RRG Campground. It is located at 2270 Star Gap Road, Stanton, Kentucky. 606-663-8888.

Saturday morning

Starting at 5 a.m., you'll stage your *boat and paddling gear* in the designated area at the boat ramp in Beattyville, off Water Street. You can stage additional food, liquids and clothes there, as well. If you are renting a boat, you'll be able to stage your paddling gear with your boat at this time. Racers in canoes will be given canoe paddles and racers in solo or tandem kayaks will be given kayak paddles. You may bring your own paddles/PFDs and stage them with your rental boat. I have attached a list of teams for whom I

have a boat reserved. Please let me know if you thought you reserved a boat but are not on this list. Also, please let me know if you rented a boat but will be bringing your own paddles and/or PFDs. You do not need to write me if you need a rental paddle/PFD. Only let me know if you're bringing your own, please.

Race start/finish

After dropping your paddling gear at the boat ramp, you'll proceed to the Kiwanis Community Center on Happy Top Road in Beattyville. It is just minutes from the boat ramp. Park in the designated area. You will not return here until the finish of the race and you will not be staging any gear here.

Sunrise/Sunset

We will be in Daylight Savings Time (which begins 11/1/09), and so sunrise will be at 7:12 a.m. and sunset will be at 5:34 p.m. on race day. Be sure you have those extra batteries for your headlamp and that your red blinking light on your bike is nice and bright.

Scoring/Format

The race starts at 7 a.m. and finishes at 7 p.m. You will be disqualified for returning to the finish after 9 p.m. All CPs must be visited in order. Standings will be determined by number of CPs visited and then by time. There are no cut-offs in this year's race.

Post-race festivities

We'll announce results, hand out awards and enjoy some hot pizza after the race at the Kiwanis Community Center.

National Championship

The top four teams in the combined 3 and 4-person co-ed divisions will be invited to compete in the 2010 USARA National Championship 24-hour race in Ohio, Pennsylvania. The winning team from this combined division will receive the coveted "Regional Champion" jackets *and* a \$400 sponsorship from the Fig *and* a \$100 sponsorship from Zanel toward their USARA Nationals entry fee *and* first dibs on pizza, obviously.

Questions?

Okay, as soon as I hit "Send," I'll remember four things I wanted to mention and you'll ask me a dozen more questions, so check the FAQs page of the web site next week for updates. I'll likely send out one last e-mail before race day. I'll not be disclosing any further information about the course, however, which includes anything more about staging gear, transition areas, and the like. I've told you everything I intend to tell you along those lines before the pre-race briefing. Also, between the Sheltolee Extreme and the Fig, I've had an outrageous cell phone bill for the last three months. If your question can be addressed via e-mail rather than phone, I'd sure appreciate it.

That's it - train well - see you in the Gorge!

Stephanie Ross
Race Director
Red River Gorge American Classic,
The Fig VII
www.racethefig.com