



The Pandozer

IN BRIEF

Pulling into the surf beach at Coffs Harbour I checked in at the caravan park before realising that it would be easier to bring the kayak up the creek and unload there. I'd already carried the paddle up and dropped it off at the tent site. The creek was deeper than I thought and lined with oysters so I sat on top and hand paddled the 50 meters to landfall. A man was sitting on the opposite bank with fishing rod in hand. He looked quizzically at me as I slowly floated past. He cocked his head as I knew he would, slowly drawing, "Up a creek 'eh... without a paddle!"

I was a cliché.

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Whatever it Takes

It was tense for a moment. "I'll take this all the way to the CPA (Caravan Park Association)" I threatened, clawing desperately to break the deadlock. "Sorry but there's nothing I can do about it." replied the manager before adding, "We've hit a dead end." How can that be possible, I thought, we live in a society that puts dogs into space. "We can problem solve this." I eased out with as much syrup as I could muster. "There must, must, must be a way." I recoiled as Coastal Patrol Roslyn barged into my brain. Desperate times require desperate measures. The

manager just smiled weakly and turned her palms skyward as if to say 'it's out of my hands'. Then she said, "It's out of my hands." I slumped visibly but didn't turn to go. Instead I stood there looking as pathetic as I felt. "It's not right." I mumbled and stayed dumbly on the spot. More potentially embarrassing moments passed but I'd lost all semblance of self respect. Then the manager lowered her head and looked at me through the top quarter of her eye sockets. "I suppose," my heart leapt, "I suppose you can use the dirty cabin. It hasn't been cleaned but

there's a TV in there. And *only* for the game mind you." So, last night I watched Australia go down to Brazil in a 'dirty' (it was actually very clean) cabin here at Ballina. Winter has bitten over the last two weeks with plenty of rain, cold nights and cool days. There have also been sharks, whales, turtles, an inland excursion, great waves and beautiful camps. With a little luck the next fortnight will see me clear the active surf coast as I track into Queensland and past the half way point. With friends and relatives to see I won't be breaking records. Go Guus, Go.

Day to Day

85. Crowdy Head to Port Macquarie, 52km
86. Port Macquarie to Hat Head, 46km
87. Hat Head to Valla Beach, 53km
88. Valla Beach to Coffs Harbour, 35km
89. Coffs Harbour R&R
90. Coffs Harbour R&R
91. Coffs Harbour R&R
92. Coffs Harbour to Arrawarra Headland, 29km
93. Arrawarra Headland to Sandon Bluff, 45km
94. Sandon Bluff to Shark Bay (5km N Yamba), 35km
95. Shark Bay to Evans Head, 30km
96. Evans Head to past Broadwater (via Evans and Richmond R's), 32km
97. Broadwater to Ballina, 23km
98. Ballina R&R

Breaking All The Rules

What are the rules? It's not the first time I've dodged out of the ocean and into calmer waters. Near Lakes Entrance I dragged the boat over a spit to paddle up the lake, thus avoiding an unfavourable tide to cross the bar. This week I went up the Evan's and Richmond Rivers because I couldn't, not without browning my speedos anyway, cross the bars at Evan's Head and Ballina. Should I have waited for the swell to drop and continued along the coast? I'd be lying if I pretended I'd lost any sleep over this question, but it does raise a few issues. It helps to think about what I would definitely not do as I travel north. I would not accept an offer to transport the kayak by vehicle to a safer launching site. But I would accept an offer of help to carry the kayak by hand (and leg) to a safer launch. Unless I was clearly drowning, I would not accept an offer of transport

by boat or something similar. Not that I can see this happening. Most boaties either give me a wide berth or, very occasionally, drive past a little too close, eager, I assume, to test my balance. It seems to have everything to do with mechanised transport. If it eats petrol I won't use it, if it eats carrots I will. Although, while laying over in towns or cities I will happily transport myself around by bus or train. So only the kayak isn't allowed to ride the train. The problem is that I make these rules up as I go. They're not written down anywhere. I never break my own rules, I just have to change them before I do the next thing that would have broken the old rules. It's starting to sound decidedly loose, so why have unwritten rules of travel anyway? I'll tell you why in one pointy word. Anarchy. By the way, all words that start with capital A, M, N and W are

pointy. Anarchy, a state of disorder leading straight to the gates of bedlam and turmoil. That doesn't sound very nice does it. Under such a regime I could attach wheels to the kayak and roll back down the highway to Tasmania. I wouldn't have any idea how long it might take because the Bureau of Meteorology would only be able to advise me of 'chaotic' winds. The price of oats would be fluctuating so wildly that I wouldn't know if I could afford my porridge. It doesn't bear thinking about.

So although my rules are floppy and seemingly arbitrary, they are essential. On balance I probably have more rules than some and less than others. I also favour formulating retrospective rules to justify my behaviour and avoid specifying them to myself and others lest they contradict other rules, my own or others. I have to leave the laundry now, it's the rule.

“Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read.”

Groucho Marx

Seawater or Snot?

The whale exhales. I can tell by the powerful vapour cloud suddenly sprouting from the sea surface. But is it seawater or snot? Do whales produce snot? Do whales get head colds and feel all dreary? Surely if it was snot it would be clumpier? Questions for later, it's a pursuit, not time for idle speculation. Another spurt, and then two more in quick succession. A pod, a posse, a cluster of blubber-coated bones and barnacle-bearing beaks. Brilliant. And they're heading for the gap between the island and the breakwater. That's where I'm going. Paddle harder. Where are they? The water is too choppy to follow their slicks through the water. Spurt, spurt, there's two pulling away. Too fast for me. Spurt, spurt, the other two are dawdling at the back. I'm alongside now, eyes bugging out so as not to miss a glimpse. They're huge. I can feel the power of their bodies as they ease up and down in the water. Every sense is on high alert, not so much to capture the moment as to stay safe. They know I'm here but do they

know that I'm a land dwelling life-form, best equipped for eating cashews and manipulating small screws? Message to whales, 'I do not want to play. Small, curious observer only. Repeat, I do not want to play.' The big one's turning at a right angle and rising, heading directly towards me. Inhale. Hold. Watch. Light green effervescent water streaming beneath. Stay down there big fella. Silence. Exhale. They're pulling away, heading out to sea. The tingle in my chest is moving outward, I feel it tap against my fingertips. Dopamine, adrenaline, endorphins? Whatever it is I like it. No hurry, I can sit in it for a while longer. It might not happen again tomorrow, or even the day after. But it will come again and that's all I need to know. Every day that I grab a handful of wet sand and shuffle into the water there's a chance.

I looked it up and it is not seawater or snot, it's warm, moist air from their lungs hitting the outside air and condensing into a vapour cloud. Well I'll be!

Mad Dogs and English Teachers by Matt Dalziel (Grade 17, Utas)

Atomic clocks derive their accuracy from measuring the oscillations between energy states of Caesium 133 atoms. A second is defined as 9,192,631,770 of these cycles. These oscillations are so regular that atomic clocks will only lose or gain one second every 1.4 million years.

My aim in this year's Overland Track run was to complete the 80 something kilometres, with its 2800 metres of climbing and 3000 of falling down again in less than the time taken for 2.65×10^{14} oscillations of a certain energy state of a Caesium atom. This had only been accomplished by 3 runners before and the mild weather and dry track promised every assistance. It was great to see a bunch of fresh young mainland boys and girls on the start line, with a total of 3 starters curiously choosing the above number of Caesium oscillations as their goal.

Around 50 runners set off into gloom at 6am while Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff were still sleeping, however Oakleigh, the Pelions, Ossa and the DuCane range revealed themselves as the mild morning turned into a gorgeous day. Caesium's quantum state transitions can be notoriously hard to correlate with locations along the Overland Track, and at Pelion Hut I found myself alone and with an energy state deficit to make up over the biggest climbs. As I was counting quartz vibrations as a crude approximation for the much more accu-

rate Caesium I decided to just go as hard as I could, with the aim of getting to Narcissus in under 6 hours as approximated by my wrist-borne timepiece.

This technique of boneheaded estimation proved successful, giving me enough time to pause for a glass of coke and photo op with the lovely Sue Drake and friend at Anzac cove on the Narcissus river. I temporarily forgot leaping electrons and fuelled up, ready for the big challenge of Lake St. Clair. My good friend Richard had jogged up the track, and as we had synchronised clocks he was aware that I was over five and a half trillion oscillations ahead of schedule. While this may seem like a lot, anyone who has run around the lake knows that 10 billion or so energy state transitions can be lost in the blink of an eye. Fortunately the track was dry, although cramps, snakes and countless logs, rocks and obstacles frequently forced a change of pace. I was extremely fortunate to beat both the heat and my old friend, element #55 and celebrated with a dip in the lake, some chips and two very sore legs.

Thanks to all the sweepers, organizers and volunteers, with an especial thankyou to the timekeepers. We often take their incredible technical, scientific and mathematical abilities for granted, which is a bit rough. Congrats to all who came, saw and hurt, with special mention of first timer Grace Elson coming home first in front of a great women's field in just over 12 hours.

Editor's Note: Phew, thanks Matt. I thought for a moment my harping calls for stories had gone the way of the Gibson Desert Stag Beetle, ignored to death. The scary thing about Matt's account of the Overland Track run is that it's all true! People actually do it. They arrive at the Cradle Mountain end of the National Park with no intention of driving back out like sensible people. They jump up and down on the spot and shake their hands all about (loosening up, and having never witnessed the start of the run I don't know this for an actual fact). Then they run up hill and down dale like wombats fleeing a bushfire. I've seen wombats run and they're faster than you'd think. Probably don't have the boiler for the full 80+km though? Matt is a successful multi-sport racer, having competed around the globe in various kayaking, riding and running postures. Think Discovery channel helicopter shots of weary, mud spattered people abseiling down a cliff and then chasing tails into a jungle thicket. That's how I picture it anyway.

If you know how to handle your Casio Mx1246 Scientific calculator, do the sums and let me know what Matt's target time was... in hours and seconds please.

*Be careful
about reading
health books.
You may die
of a misprint.*

*Mark Twain
(1835 - 1910)*

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!! ANYONE!!

The Ball Is Now Rolling

We're finally up and running with contributions. I think you'll agree that new voices give The Pandozer a fresher feel. With your help we can make it positively minty. By the way we're all students now. Life-long learning is all the rage.

Send it as a Word attachment with your name and school for publication. Get your teacher to check it because I'm a sloppy editor. Keep it shortish (100-200 words).

2186 Km

Spiked at Port Macquarie

Two mistakes and an incident. One I was aware of at the time and one I figured out soon after.

Mistake Number 1: Entering the surf zone without a clear idea of where I wanted to go or even *if* I wanted to go.

Mistake Number 2: Paddling into a wave pointing directly at beach, perpendicular to the break.

The Incident: Leaving Crowdy Head I knew I could safely harbour at Camden Haven (30ish km's) or inside Port Macquarie (50ish km's). Other than that it would be a beach landing and I'd have to take my chances with the beach-break. The swell was moderate so I left with an open mind. The southerly blew me past Camden Haven about lunchtime and I was feeling fresh. I'm carrying Allan Lucas' sailing book, 'Cruising the NSW Coast', which is a great reference for entering and exiting river and lake entrances. Port Macquarie, I noted, was home to a particularly fickle bar. Bars are the build up of sand where bodies of water flush in and out of the ocean. Some bars are predictable and relatively safe if you know their behaviour, others are unpredictable and need careful watching and usually local knowledge to tackle. Port Macquarie bar is probably somewhere in between, predictably unsafe.

Coming around the long curving headland the rain, threatening all day, finally reached land. The sun had just

set on the clear western horizon and I was paddling 200 meters off the entrance in an increasingly lumpy sea.

The wind picked up to a squally 20-25 knots as the rain acted to soften the sea surface and raise a splatter haze. I couldn't see far enough to determine where the bar was breaking or if there was clear water in the channel. After what I'd read I was already twitchy enough about it. Nup, I thought, not for this little rabbit. I paddled wide around to the beach, now with some urgency in the fading light. Mistake one, I paddled slowly to the rear of the surf zone... and then a little bit further. I didn't catch the wave, it caught me. The stern rose and the bow started to push down. Faster and faster. The nose reached the trough of the wave and continued downward. Mistake two, if I'd been on an angle this wouldn't have happened (probably). Leaning back had no effect, opening my mouth as wide as an orange had no effect, I was just along for ride. Thunk, the nose hit the sand. Still being quite a distance from shore, this was a surprise. Spiked. There was a moment of slow motion as I rose up out of the sea, my fate now clear. In a final moment of clarity I threw the paddle to one side before landing face down with a flourish. Spiked and pancaked. I popped out without trying and surfaced near the paddle. Together we followed the upturned boat to the beach. Spiked, pancaked and safe.