

# Rayner 2006 - Robben Island

Well now, this was a real big one even before we went. We were going to Rayner on a mission, a mission to prove to the scouting community of the Western Cape and ultimately, of South Africa, that 1st Durbanville is still a force to be reckoned with.

We started the mental preparation some time before packing our bags. We knew it was going to be something special because we'd been told to meet at Cape Town Central Station at 8 in the morning. Those of you who know Rayner will know this is odd, as a Rayner competition usually starts at about half past one in the afternoon, in an area where you can hike at least 30kms. So the middle of Cape Town at the unholy hour of 8am on a Saturday was rather 'interesting' and slightly worrying.



Robbie Kotze, Marius de Wit, Tjad Clark and I (Joseph Rom) arrived at the station a little late and almost missed the first base. But we had decided we would push ourselves to the limit straight from the word go and that's exactly what we did. We took off immediately at a blistering pace (a pace which we kept up until about 16:30 the following afternoon, shortly after the prize-giving!) and just made it to the first base.

After a couple of hours of running around Cape Town we arrived at the Waterfront - and ran out of bases. This is about when we realised that Rayner hadn't even started yet. In great anticipation we boarded a boat and were told we were heading for - Robben Island! I don't know how they'd managed it but what an awesome and perfect venue especially as the theme was World War 2 and U-boats.

When we arrived we fell in and the PL's were called for briefing. We were told the rules were slightly different this year. Instead of having a set course with numerically- ordered bases that everyone would follow with a designated time for sleeping and STA's, we had 48 bases that we had to get to in 24 hours, in any order, planned by ourselves. The bases were all over the island and they all opened and closed at certain times. We also had to check in for 6 hours compulsory sleep. Sounds impossible doesn't it?

We don't believe in impossible.

You have no idea how big that little island really is until you run around it non-stop for a full 24 hours. We saw the parts of the island the tourists never do as we crisscrossed it repeatedly, running all the way with our heavy bags on our backs. It was a pleasant day of only about 400 degrees so as you can imagine it seemed a nice gentle stroll.

The whole competition was in and around the ruins of the island's World War 2 naval base. In the old Power Station was fire rescue and at the old Shooting Range we had to make catapults and shoot with them. We launched coke-bottle rockets from the top of the lookout tower and had a bomb disposal base in the underground power station. In the middle of the night we were reading maps at the old Fort and acting out Scout Laws three stories underground in the old Chart Room. It was really amazing. In all the strange history of Robben Island and all the different types of people who have been there for different reasons, I'm sure this was the very first time there were 100 scouts running back and forth all over it!



We found a loop-hole which allowed us to fit in 6 hours of sleep and to get to all the bases. We split the 6 hours into two sessions (one of 2 hours and one of 4 hours), and took our first session at 00:30. We slept a little, but also used the time to eat and to catch up on STA's. Two hours later we got up and checked out. We did a couple more bases (we circumnavigated the island several times) and then went back to sleep from 4:30 to 8:30. We finished off our STA's and had an awesome 2 hours proper sleep. Then we were off again, running hard so that we could make all the bases. It was very tight and right up till the end we weren't sure we would make it. The temperature on Sunday wasn't any cooler and we were all suffering from blisters and chafing but we kept going.

At the end of the day we knew we had honestly done our best. We had made it to every base and we were pretty sure that we were the only team to have done so. The boat ride back was the most relaxing experience you could imagine. We arrived back at the Waterfront and had to stumble through the throngs of tourists in our filthy uniforms for about another 500 meters, possibly the hardest stretch of the whole time!

Then came the prize giving. We were fairly confident but that didn't stop our anxious feelings of nausea and faintness. They started at 10th place and it got closer and closer and then they announced it. For the first time in 13 years and only the third time in over 50 years, the Rayner Trophy would be making it's way back to the 1<sup>st</sup> Durbanville Scout Hall. We were ecstatic. We have left our mark.



I would like to thank everyone who supported us, Peter Statham, Ingrid Webster, Wouter de Wit, Werner de Wit, the whole troop, the parents who gave us lifts and of course, the guys themselves. We were a great team and to Marius, Robbie and Tjad. Thanks guys, you're the best.

Joseph Rom, PL Team 3

*Taken from 1<sup>st</sup> Durbanville Group 'The Stave' Magazine - April 2006*

