

*Hairy Scary Evolutions/Tally Ho Braves  
the Devil's Breath to Take  
1st Place at Florida Coast to Coast 2005*



**Left to Right: Patricia Williams Smith, Paul Cox, Ardie Olson and Jon Barker**

Team Hairy Scary Evolutions/Tally Ho placed 1<sup>st</sup> at Florida Coast to Coast Adventure Race over Memorial Day Weekend after 62 hours of non-stop heat. Team members include: Jon Barker (Team Captain), Paul Cox, Patricia Williams Smith and Ardie Olson. Diane Barker and Sherry Olson were the support (pit) crew for the race. Adventurous Concepts did a stellar job putting on the race. Our thanks to all of the wonderful volunteers and race staff.

Here is a blow by blow:

**Leg 1/Paddle: Where is Midnight Pass?** Starting in the Gulf of Mexico at Lido Key, the team launched their boats from the beach and got out in front quickly. The plan was to paddle the Gulf to Midnight Pass (which was clearly shown on at least 4 maps) and then paddle the intracoastal waterway to Oscar Scherer State Rec. Area (TA1). After searching for a while, we found out from a local fisherman that Midnight Pass had been filled in after the 2004 Hurricanes. Now, it was an overland portage to get to the intracoastal waterway. Our Dennis Nigel Triton kayaks were light and easy to carry for this portage. When we got to the intracoastal waterway we could see the lead kayaks and

started gaining on them immediately. We came in 6<sup>th</sup> off the water. The Missing Midnight Pass had cost us some time.

**Leg 2/Bike: Wow, we did that fast.** After a short ride on sugar sand, we jumped onto an abandoned railroad tracks making quick work of this 10 +/- mile pedal. We arrived at TA2 just 2 minutes after Team E-Caps had left and were now in 2<sup>nd</sup> place. A quick transition and we were off on foot.

**Leg 3/Run: Dueling with Team E-Caps for Position.** Our next section was a run through Myakka River State Park. We sprinted the first 3 miles of this section picking up CPs along the way until we got insight of the lead team. Coming out of OP2, we made eye contact with Team E-Caps. Working our way through a maze of roads for CP2, we lost sight of them for a while until we met head on within 1/8 of a mile of CP2, then it was an all out sprint to the next TA3. Along this section, the team came across a wild boar.

**Leg 4/Bike: Where's the Exit?** Leaving the park was confusing as there were several prohibited roads and we could only ride on public roads and we had to make it to a specific waypoint to exit the Park Boundary. Additional maps were provided, but were just extra weight in our map case. We traded positions with Team E-Caps a couple of times before making it to the hard road. The team came across a wild boar in one of the dirt roads. Patricia had to yell at it to get it out of the way. Twice we had to cross under I-75 to make our way to the Peace River put-in TA4. Riding along Kings Highway was more dangerous than any of the animals we encountered along the course. The heat is starting to get to us and keeping food down was a problem.

**Leg 5/Paddle: Hamburgers and Fireworks – what more can you ask for?** When we arrived at the Peace River Put-In, Di and Sherry had hot hamburgers for us from the Nav-a-gator Restaurant. Unfortunately, our stomachs wouldn't let us enjoy them. The paddle down the Peace River at dusk was beautiful. Our plan was to find the mouth of Shell Creek before dark for easier navigation so we sprinted on the paddle to start. We eased up after reaching Shell Creek for the final stretch of the paddle. Some of the local residences were setting off fireworks through this section. While searching for a small low head dam which required a portage, we again came face to face with Team E-Caps, who beat us to TA5 by a few minutes. At this TA, we were notified that several OPs in the next section were being eliminated due to heavy alligator and bee activity, so the next leg was just a dirt/paved road bike straight to the TA.

**Leg 6/Bike: Logging Trucks.** After reaching the hard road, we were dodging semi-trucks. Logging trucks were playing chicken with cars in the on-coming lane to pass us. Ardie yelled –watch out – just as a Lincoln Continental came head on towards us in our lane. We were glad to reach TA6 in one piece.

**Leg 7/Paddle: Caloosahatchee River.** We put in the water at the same time as Team E-Caps. This was a nice upstream moonlight paddle, with easy navigation, on a calm river. Our team was flashing a light at the take-out for us guiding us in. When we pulled into the TA, we were surprised to see Team E-Caps just pulling out on their bikes and that no other support crews were there yet. We awoke Ann, who was sleeping in a sleeping bag on the sidewalk (great volunteer dedication) to get our passport punched TA7.

**Leg 8/Bike: Puking Paul.** Next, we back biking mostly on hard paved roads dealing with late night traffic, mostly logging trucks. Puking didn't slow down Paul much as he was vomiting on the go. All drafting behind Paul ceased at that time. With a little persistent searching we found OP7 in the Sears area. Nearing OP8, we once again ran into Team E-Caps. Working together both teams located OP8 which did not have a punch but had a sign that said “keep moving”. Team E-Caps kept the pressure on us, but somehow we passed them on the way to TA8. Sherry and Di had egg and sausage biscuits for us at TA8. Everyone loved them except Jon, who was now known as Barfing Barker.

**Leg 9/Run: OP9, Jon nails it.** Wanting to put some distance on Team E-Caps, we ran the first 2 miles before heading off into the woods toward OP9. We did this section in just over 3 hours. Jon's excellent navigation led the team directly to OP9 and then TA9. It was only after the race that we learned how crucial finding OP9 quickly was. It was the determining factor in the race. Di and Sherry knew that we would be suffering from the heat and had the van fully unloaded and running with the air on when we arrived. We did our TA inside. They had kept it running for an hour before we arrived so it was an icebox. Getting out of the heat for 10-15 minutes, was just what the team needed as everyone was nauseous.

**Leg 10/Bike: Seminole Indian Reservation.** This road ride in blistering heat was hard work for the team. Two of the roads had different names than shown on the maps. First, we checked in a store, but the clerk did not know the names of the roads. Next, Jon had to ask two local Indians in a golf cart for directions. Apparently, the road names had changed. When we biked in to TA10, we learned that the course was again being modified.

**Leg 11/Run: Ardie catches a Gator.** At TA10, Elias worked with the team to show them the new course as he X'd out items on their instructions. (Later, he put out maps for the other teams to mark their CPs off of). The team was told that they'd have about a 4-6 hour hike, then return to this transition to be drove to the next TA. This section was our nemesis. First, we head out to OP12. While searching for OP12, Ardie found a small gator laying the road and carefully picked it up to show the team. He later released it into a nearby canal. After searching for 2 hours, we decided to get OP10 and OP11, then come into OP12 from another direction. There were panther tracks around OP11, very cool to see. The Team went straight to OP10 and OP11 picking them up quickly. Now, we attacked OP12 from the southside from what seemed like a good road. Along the way, we ran into numerous cottonmouth snakes and gave them a wide berth. We were 5 hours into the trek now. Back to the canal road, we started again and ran into Team E-Caps and joined forces to find OP12. (Fortunately, Team E-Caps still had to get OP10 and OP11). After finding OP12, we sprinted back to the TA11, where we knew Sherry and Di were frantically waiting for us after 11 plus hours.

**Drive to Next TA12: Sherry and Di go Nascar.** From TA 11 to TA 12, the Support Crew had to transfer the team. Luckily, we knew that we had a 3-4 hour lead on Team E-Caps, or Sherry would have been driving 100 miles an hour to the next TA. The drive was supposed to take 1 to 1 ½ hours so the Team immediately went to sleep. However, Sherry's lead foot and Di's quick road navigation meant we only had a short 30-40 minute nap.

**Leg 12/Paddle: Alligators, Alligators, Alligators...** Paddling at daybreak, we could hear constant splashes and orange eyes were everywhere next to the boat. At dawn, we now could see that the canal was infested with BIG alligators. At some places, they were thick enough to walk across. In fact ,Ardie invented the game of "steer you kayak straight at the gator!". We had one portage around a canal lock. It was a straight forward paddle to the TA13 where Sherry and Di had ice cream sandwiches for us.

**Leg 13/Bike: Devil's Breath.** Biking along the levees into what seemed to be the Devil's Breath, we again struggled with the heat. This 50+ miles took us 6 hours. Jon's rear derailleur was bent and he was limited to his middle ring, plus he had a flat tire. Everyone was suffering from heat exhaustion and had to stop many times to cool in the canal. Completely out of water, we stopped and asked a local resident for water. He was wonderful and filled up our bladders with ice and water and then "thanked us for visiting his subdivision".

**Leg 14/Paddle: Elias “Go to the Finish.”** When we pulled into the TA14, Sherry and Di, plus two TA volunteers were the only ones there. But as we were leaving Team E-Caps support crew pulled in and made us worry how close they were. Their dominance on the water gave us great concern. Thinking we had about 30-40 miles to paddle, down long canals and across open bays to the finish, we kept a steady, fast pace. After about 14 miles, at the end of the canal, we were greeted with the best news of the race. Elias, in a motor boat, caught us and said four magic words “Go to the Finish”. We were elated that the final paddle section had been shortened and could hardly control our excitement. With only 9 miles to go, we paddled into the sunset to the finish to find Di and Sherry yelling and jumping up and down.



Left:  
Jon Barker and Paul Cox the core members of Team Tally Ho.

Ardie Olson usually races Team Mighty Dog.

Patricia Williams Smith has raced many times with both Team Tally Ho and Team Mighty Dog.



Support Crew: Sherry Olson, Diane (Di) Barker and Big Red Van

There were 14 transitions and the Support Crew had to hustle to many of them to set up just in time for the team to come in. Team Tally Ho's speed kept the Support Crew hopping during the entire race. The Support Crew only got 1 hour 15 minutes sleep during the race and had swollen feet and hands from the heat, blisters, bruises and cuts. Sherry's quote "I didn't know the support crew was suppose to lube their feet too".