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First-time racers hooked at Xstream

Ian Cropp
Vail, CO Colorado
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RANCHO DEL RIO — In the world of adventure racing — where top-of-the-line equipment, big-name sponsors and 40-hour training weeks are often base-level requirements — there is an alternative.

On Saturday, as racers pulled inflatable kayaks onto the shores of the Upper Colorado River at Rancho del Rio and jogged across the finish line of the Adventure Xstream Series with unmatching outfits under their jerseys, it was apparent the only thing anyone needed was a desire to compete.

“I do all of this stuff anyway, so this kind of loops it all together,” said Matt Seefeldt, of Boulder, a first-timer who agreed to race when a friend asked him.

Adventure Xstream — a series that features sprint, 12-hour, 24-hour and multiday races — is the perfect challenge for athletes like Seefeldt: those who bike, kayak, run and/or hike and want to combine them all for a day full of fun and scenic exercise. Add in, of course, whatever level of competition you’d like.

“It was something fun to do,” said Charles Patrick, of Highlands Ranch, who along with teammate Kraig Sheetz, of Golden, won the two-person sprint race Saturday. “I used to do triathlons a little bit, but I hate swimming and running on pavement. Coming out here is great — you’re running on trails, plus, I do a lot of mountain biking.”

At the “Vail” race — which was staged in areas throughout Bond and Radium — competitors paddled, mountain biked, trekked and navigated for about four hours in the sprint division and two to three times as long in the “12-hour” division.

Patrick, who competed in the Vail 12-hour race last year, introduced Sheetz to his first race Saturday.

“He called me on Wednesday,” said Sheetz, who quickly accepted. “This was a good entry-level race for me. It’s awesome; I’m hooked.”

“How can you not be when you win?” Patrick said.

Even for those who didn’t win their division, the experience on Saturday left everyone exchanging a smile and glowing review when they handed in their jerseys at the finish.

Members of Team Solomon paddle down the Colorado River toward Radium on Saturday during the Adventure Xstream Vail, an adventure race that has venues in Colorado and Utah.
Preston Utley/Vail Daily



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“It’s that it’s a multi-port event instead of just a run,” said Winston Chapman, of Summit County, who raced on a team with his wife, Anne, while daughter Kate competed on a four-person team. “Last weekend, we did the (Breckenridge Mountain Crest Marathon), and it’s hours and hours of just running. But in this event, right when you are getting tired of one thing, it’s time to go on the bike, and then you get on your feet, and then you paddle.”

Get out

With Adventure Xstream races in Breckenridge, Durango, Buena Vista and Moab, Utah, residents of the Rocky Mountains can travel to all the events without having to sacrifice too much time (or gas money).

“It’s pretty much the only one in the state that does a consistent series,” said Charlie Nuttleman, who won the solo 12-hour division.

The series, while attracting tons of fresh faces to the scene, has some pro teams on the circuit, like the Team Solomon/Crested Butte, which edged out Team 4Corners AR Saturday in the 12-hour, four-person coed division.

“It’s close to Crested Butte; they’re relatively easy to get to and don’t take a lot of logistics,” Team Solomon member Eric Sullivan said. “It’s good training, and you’re not doing a six-day race on the other side of the world, where it takes a week to get there and two weeks to recover afterwards.”

And for some racers, it’s a way to get familiar with lesser-known parts of Colorado. “It brings me to places I’ve never been before. Buena Vista — I’ve never been there,” Nuttleman said. “And (Bond) — I never knew it existed.”

Seefeldt also had never been to the Rancho del Rio area.

“I didn’t have any food this morning for breakfast because I thought it was going to be in Vail,” he said. “This is kind of in the middle of nowhere.”

The location, ironically, makes the race more accessible.

“Between Pumphouse, Radium and Rancho del Rio, those are three places that have facilities and are large enough for transitions and to support a large number of racers and support crew vehicles,” said Jenny Newcomer, one of the event organizers.

Along with proximity, Adventure Xstream prides itself on being user-friendly.

“Most people have running shoes and mountain bikes, and we actually provide the boats for the two- and four-person teams because we were finding that the hardest part was that people didn’t have kayaks or it was hard to rent enough kayaks in the places we were going,” Newcomer said. “So we bought a fleet of inflatable kayaks.”

Anne Winston likes the grass-roots nature of the series.

“When we help out, we get vouchers,” Winston said. “When you get enough vouchers, you can use them to race.”

Lost?

Dave and Maria Hopp, of Littleton,, had been planning to race in the series for a few years. Earlier this summer, they finally took part in their first one in Breckenridge.

“We figured we’d have time to train for it,” Dave Hopp said when asked why he finally decided to enter one this year. “But,” he went on laughing, “we didn’t train.”

The Hopps, who came in among the top coed sprint teams Saturday, find the Adventure Xstream to be more on the friendly side.



Members of Team Bagel Works pedal

their mountain bikes up a steep section of the course Saturday during the Adventure XStream Vail. The race features a sprint division, catered for newcomers to the adventure racing world.

Preston Utley/Vail Daily

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platform pedals, riding their bike with tennis shoes, but at least they are doing it and enjoying it. You've got to get started somewhere."

Sports Writer Ian Cropp can be reached at 748-2935 or icropp@vaildaily.com.

"We've both done quite a bit of triathlons," Dave Hopp said. "The crowd (at triathlons) is super intense, for the most part. If you are a recreational triathlete, you feel out of place. But at this, you have a wide range, and there are people that look like they don't train for anything, and I think that's great."

Professionals, like Sullivan, find the sight of amateurs diving into his sport exciting.

"It's great to see everybody out there," he said. "Some are on

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