

The Ten Tors Challenge 5th-7th May 2017

Training

For this year's challenge we entered two 35 mile teams and a 45 mile team, each team consists of six students. Sixteen year 9 and 10 students were initially selected for the 35 mile training and nine year 11 students for the 45 mile. There are a lot of new skills to be learnt so training started in November last year and continued right up to the event.

Training for Ten Tors included classroom work each week, a day walk on Woodbury Common and Dartmoor in January and then, from February through to April, five training weekends on Dartmoor, each one more progressively difficult in terms of the distance and terrain covered.

As usual this year's training was conducted in winter Dartmoor weather - strong cold winds, rain, snow and limited visibility, though the weather conditions did improve in for the training on the north moor in March and April.

One walk in February was particularly challenging, 40 mph head winds with driving rain for most of the day and temperatures hovering around freezing. In these conditions the teams successfully navigated over harsh terrain carrying rucksacks weighing around 30 Lbs, that's about a third of their body weight!

Throughout the training some students were unable to continue due to injuries and other unforeseen reasons and on completion we had six students ready for the 45 mile team and nine for the 35 mile teams.

Well done to all of who participated in the training which was the hardest, both physically and mentally, that you will have undertaken. It is a sad fact that not all will make it to the end.

We were extremely happy to welcome Michael, Dan and Reuben, three fully trained East Devon District Explorers who kindly agreed to join our 35 milers. This enabled all HCC students that completed the training to take part in the challenge. The three teams were:

35 Mile A – Tom Lilley (Team Leader), Bianca Chisca, Emily Lee, James Oak, Rob Smith and Taylor Little.

35 Mile B – Ollie Bright (Team Leader), Jake Carswell, Ben Riley, Michael Alford, Dan Alford and Reuben Hunt

45 Mile – Will Lancaster (Team Leader), Hannah Land, Jodie Abbott, Harry Turner, Harry Loader and Dan Mottram.

The Challenge

The teams travelled to Okehampton Camp on Friday and spent the day preparing for the challenge including clothing and equipment inspection, a safety brief and then route planning. Head Chef Mr Holt and his team did an outstanding job cooking the barbeque in gale force winds (sorry the kids ate all the burgers) and after an early night and were ready for a 5 am start on Saturday.

At 7 am on a mild but cloudy Saturday morning the teams, along with more than 2400 other young people, crossed the start line. The weather conditions continued to improve and visibility was good throughout the weekend.

During their route planning the teams identified their day 1 target and worked out a game plan to enable them to reach it. Those of us waiting anxiously at Okehampton Camp were pleased to see that all 3 teams did a brilliant job and achieved their targets. The 35 mile teams walked over 20 miles on day one and the 45 team walked over 30 miles. We love it when a plan comes together.

So, after a hard day's work, the 35A team camped at Water Hill. Unfortunately Bianca had suffered an ankle injury that stopped her from continuing and she was evacuated from the moor at the third check point. It was a real shame, but Bianca has shown that she is more than capable of tackling Ten Tors and we all hope that she will be

back next year to complete the challenge. Meanwhile the 35B team camped at White Barrow and the 45 team after the long demoralising walk south and the even harder ascent back to the north moor, camped after checking through Higher White Tor.

The teams set off at around 6 am on Sunday, with good weather for the final push to the finish line at Okehampton Camp and, having broken the back of the challenge on day one, all teams knew that they would complete the challenge if they stuck to the game plan.

This year's finish times were among the fastest ever for HCC teams during my 10 years as team manager. The first team to cross the finish line at 12.42 pm were the 35A team, the 45 mile team finished at 1.10 pm and the 35A team finished at 1.40 pm. It is a testament to their training that they all finished within half an hour of each other. Well done Tom, Ollie and Will for successfully leading your teams.

So now, at the end of another Ten Tors season I can reflect on the last 7 months and, as always, come to the conclusion that the resilience, commitment and the dogged determination and guts that these brilliant young people show never ceases to amaze me.

Well done teams for an outstanding job. You should all be proud of your remarkable achievement.

Of course none of this could have been possible without the organisers who run the event in a way that only the best Armed Forces in the world could.

Thanks to all the College staff who have assisted throughout the training and also a big thanks to the parents for the support they have given to the teams throughout and a huge thanks to Warren Oak, John Lilley, Miss Adams, Suzette Perryman and the Ten Tors legend Cerys Little who played a huge part in training and preparing the teams.

These remarkable young people could not have achieved their success without your valuable help and guidance.

But most importantly, congratulations to all this year's successful medallists who proved to everyone, including themselves, that they did have the skills, stamina, determination and commitment to overcome adversity and get the job done.

Mick Robson, Ten Tors Team Manager