

# Surprises test athletes in local challenge

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For The Patriot-News

At first glance, the Capital City Challenge looks like some kind of twisted science experiment.

And at second glance ... well, it looks pretty much the same. Take 240 people, some canoes, bikes, fire hoses, cargo nets and beer kegs, put them all together, solve for x and you've got yourself an adventure race.

Eighty teams of three started yesterday morning's race on City Island, biked north toward Wormleysburg, then canoed back to City Island and into Riverfront Park to finish the nearly 30-mile course.

In all, there were three legs to the race — biking, canoeing

and running — and “secret tests” at each stop along the way.

But there was a catch.

No racer knew where the course was going or what surprises lurked around each corner.

And there were plenty of surprises: blasting beer kegs with fire hoses, scaling walls and attempting to swim with a beach ball submerged in water, just to name a few.

The Sutliff Hummer-sponsored team (Sutliff was also the event's primary sponsor) of Brent Kametz, Mike Mills and Sam Mummert was the first across the finish line, making its way through the demanding course and all of its obstacles in just over four hours.

But for all the physical pain,

exertion and creative challenge that a 30-mile course would present, yesterday's race was essentially won with one team's collective thinking.

“The puzzle was great for us because that's where we took the lead,” Kametz said of a puzzle obstacle midway through the course. The teams had to take small geometric shapes and put them together to make a certain bigger shape. “The team that was leading at that time struggled with that and several teams passed them.”

The Sutliff team jumped into the lead after a one-mile mountain bike ride straight uphill was capped off with the geometric puzzle. Mills, an engineer, took command of the mental challenge and put his team into the lead heading

into a technical bike ride — one of the team's biggest strengths.

“We want to basically push their mental limits, as well as their physical limits,” Randy Leforce, a mastermind behind the course's secret tests, said of the obstacles. “We try to test their mental toughness, whether they're scared of a certain obstacle, but try to keep it fun at the same time.”

Their places and times seem to be of secondary importance to most teams. It's the thrill and rush of finishing it that has kept them coming back. Organizers have seen a gradual increase in the size of the race's field each year and a corresponding hike in its ability to raise funds.

“The race has essentially doubled in size [since its first

year],” said Jeff Allen, executive director of the East Shore branch of the YMCA. “This year, at 80 teams, we had the maximum.”

If it weren't for a shortage of usable canoes, the field could be drastically bigger.

“All the proceeds benefit the child care programs at the YMCA,” said Allen. “Those funds are used for financial assistance to attend the program.”

The program serves nearly 500 kids each day, with the funds of today's race capable of assisting 50 to 75 kids each year, according to Allen; a philanthropic result to all of the event's mad science.

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