

[Tough Mudder Toronto - The event recap](#)

The term epic comes to mind in trying to sum up the Tough Mudder event. On August 18th I was lucky enough to be a part of an amazing team of people who completed the Tough Mudder Toronto event at Mount St. Louis.

There was no shortage of people there (19000 participants altogether) and the levels of athleticism were varied, but the one thing that stood above all was that we were all one. One goal, one team, one day, one purpose. Nobody was there alone, whether they came as a single entrant or not, we all did this together.

This is not a race, this is an event. You don't win; you succeed.

We climbed over the 8 foot wall and into the starting gate at 8:20 AM on a cool but sunny Saturday. After getting up and out of the house at 5 AM to get up to the site we were still reeling from the anticipation as the Tough Mudder emcee/motivator began to fire up the crowd and we were released at 8:30.

As much as you can mentally prepare, we couldn't fully understand what we were facing. But one thing we knew was that we were as ready as we could ever be. The first hill immediately started to eat into the legs and it was a quick reminder that this was not just a flat land race. We had 16 km of intensity ahead of us.

First up, the Arctic Enema. A 5 foot deep pool of ice water. Not cold water...ice water. Not only did you have to get into the ice bath and wade through, but you had to submerge fully underneath a board. While we had already been entirely covered in mud from crawling under barbed wire for 20 feet, this took care of cleaning us off quite a bit. Everyone was watching, cheering, motivating and we got our first taste of team camaraderie right away. This was going to be an adventure.

Throughout the 16 km course there were 6 ascents up blue and black diamond ski runs all totalled along with lots of cross-country style running. The running was not as difficult as most of us had thought because it was never massive durations at high pace, but the trade off was that it was punctuated by intense strength challenges and muscle burning ascents and descents that would test your body and your mind.

Every essence of yourself was going to be put to the test here. Claustrophobic tunnels, ice water, deep mud-water submersion, climbing under barbed wire, dirt ditches, logs and then up and over everything from 10 foot walls to 15 foot rope fences. If you weren't already testing your height limits, the 12 foot jump into a pool of mud water rounded out that skill for you. Nothing seems high until you stand up there and look into the brown pool below knowing there was only one way down.

I learned a lot about myself, and a lot about my team. We were 9 people who had actually never had a chance to train together. We were different in so many ways, but out there on that course we were one. Each of us had to overcome something along that route, and whether we were prepared for it or not, we fought through. I could write a page on the incredible work we all did at each obstacle. It goes without saying that each was a personal test, and a barrier that we each refused to succumb to.

The final few obstacles could not have been more appropriate. Log Jamming: Have you ever carried a 15 foot long tree trunk up a ski run and back down? Neither have we; until that day. But when faced with the challenge, our team was like a choreographed troop as we switched in and out to take

turns at each point of the wooden beast. In only half a day we have learned where each of us was best to be in order to maximize our strengths and support each other when we needed it. This was a test. We passed with flying colours.

Next obstacle was named Everest. An impressive and daunting looking 18 foot tall quarter-pipe. We had our first team member surprise us, and even himself by tearing down that hill in a full sprint and he launched himself up that monster and climbed over. It wasn't just watching him leap to successfully overcoming the wall that made it awesome, it was the fact the first thing he did was turn around and lean back over reaching his hand for the next runner.

One by one we ran with every ounce of strength and leapt with faith at the hands of the waiting team members at the top. We were one. Nobody would be left behind here. It took some of us more than one attempt to make it up there. But even the crash of your body as you reached for the ridge and just watched it slip out of your fingers, would not make any of us give up.

One more hill. It was steep to the eyes and to the body. The angle was so massive at points that some even had to lean with hands on the hill to stay upright and not slip and crash out. Every part of your body was screaming at you to stop but the cheers and encouragement from fellow Mudders and from our team gave us each the strength we needed to come over the top and begin the beautiful descent into the finish line.

We couldn't have known what it was going to be like, but there it was; the final test. 40 feet away you could see the finish line, but in the way was the great unknown. A 20 foot long mud pit with water, mud, ruts and ridges. Running through this was going to be hard enough. Just to negotiate the uneven ground and not tear your ankle off was tough enough after 16 km of running.

That is when you start to come to the harsh realization that the hundreds of wires dangling from 10 feet overhead down to inches from the water and mud were pulsing with body halting voltage. 10,000 volts to be exact. It was impossible for us to know what it was about to be like, but it was named Electroshock Therapy for a reason. All that we knew was that as we held each other's hands for one last rally cry, we separated and launched with every bit of speed each of us had to face adversity with everything we had.

As I pushed through the first few feet I hoped that I would escape the pulsing as much as possible, and when the first one struck I immediately became aware of how difficult this was going to be. It shot through my entire body with every single muscle clenching like a taser attack for a full second. It was actually only about a fifth of a second in real-time, but now everything was moving like it was slow motion. I couldn't even reconcile what had happened and then the second one struck. I pushed forward with everything I had and watched my team mates as each of us faced our own personal hell for what felt like an eternity.

The third pulse struck, and then immediately after the fourth jolt surged through me and sent me to the ground. It was like watching a movie from inside. For a moment I looked through to see another 10 feet ahead of me of mud and wires. I launched myself up and was stunned again with another massive pulse. Pushing through, I stopped trying to avoid the wires because it was futile. There was only one way out and it had to be done by putting everything aside and going beyond your limits. For a moment, it really felt like it couldn't be done. But inside my soul there was no option to quit. We had to get to that line.

There were too many of us to go all through together, so we had 6 go through and then 3 followed a few seconds after. The first group looked back and everything inside us wanted to celebrate but all we did was look back to find our teammates. It wasn't about individual achievement. We would not

cross the line without being together.

Two team members had hit the ground hard and were almost stuck in there being ravaged by the electric attack and fighting the muddy terrain to try to muscle through. They fought hard and it was amazing to watch. We must have all had that look as we came through. It was almost unreal to watch as it happened. Watching each person come through that obstacle and clearing the wires was like a personal victory for everyone.

Three and a half hours after we had begun, we crossed the line together with arms raised. We are one. We are Tough Mudder. See you there in 2013.

