

The REAL ama race

*Is adventure
racing your next big
challenge?*

BY LAURA ROWE

Do you like to go mountain biking? Or how about kayaking or canoeing, white water rafting, rapelling or even trekking?

If you participate in some or all of these outdoor recreational activities, there's a sport that could whet your appetite and even become addictive.

Considered one of the fastest growing sports in the world in recent years, adventure racing has captivated the attention of thrill seekers and thrill watchers.

Defined as a non-stop, multi-day, multi-sport and team sport with at least one female participant, adventure racing, in many ways, can be compared to an expedition with a stop watch as each race is a point-to-point journey.

The goal of the competition is to be the first team to get all members across the finish line together.

The course takes competitors through remote wilderness where they must travel without outside assistance.

Each team must use strategy to determine the best route, equipment, food and pace to help them win.

Unlike participation in most sports, adventure racing is unique because no one can be subbed if they are having a bad game.

There are no referees making for a level playing field. If your equipment fails, you must soldier on. If someone is sick or injured, there are no time-outs allowed.

All situations — planned or unplanned, expected or unexpected — must be dealt with by the team.

Individuals cannot quit without disqualifying the entire team.

All problems must be solved by the team, out on the course, without help.

Personalities and character are pushed to the edge by lack of sleep, dehydration, hunger, physical and mental discomfort.

To be successful, each member of the team must fill a defined role, none being more important than the others for overall team success.

These roles are:

- Navigator: The team leader and route



finder, responsible for keeping the team going in the correct direction.

- Motivator: The team cheerleader, responsible for keeping spirits up and the dream alive;

- Monitor: The team mother hen, responsible for making sure people are eating, drinking and feeling healthy and;

- Pace Setter: The team workhorse, responsible for keeping the team focused on the task and end goal.

In a race, each person must respect and

support the roles of their teammates for everyone to be successful.

The team is only as fast as its slowest/weakest member, so it is everyone's job to help when they are strong and to accept help when they are weak.

To achieve greatness, the team must get the most out of each person physically and mentally.

They must pick up slack where needed and meet each team member at his or her needs.

An adventure racing team is an idealized microcosm of real life; everyone is working toward the same goal and utilizing their own strengths, while the team compensates for individual weaknesses.

There is no positional leadership, but leadership is based on trust, commitment to excellence and a selfless attitude.

This may all sound deep and intimidating and, to a certain extent, it is.

However, what adventure racing is really about is having fun in the outdoors with your friends and pushing yourself, mentally and physically, further than you thought you could go.

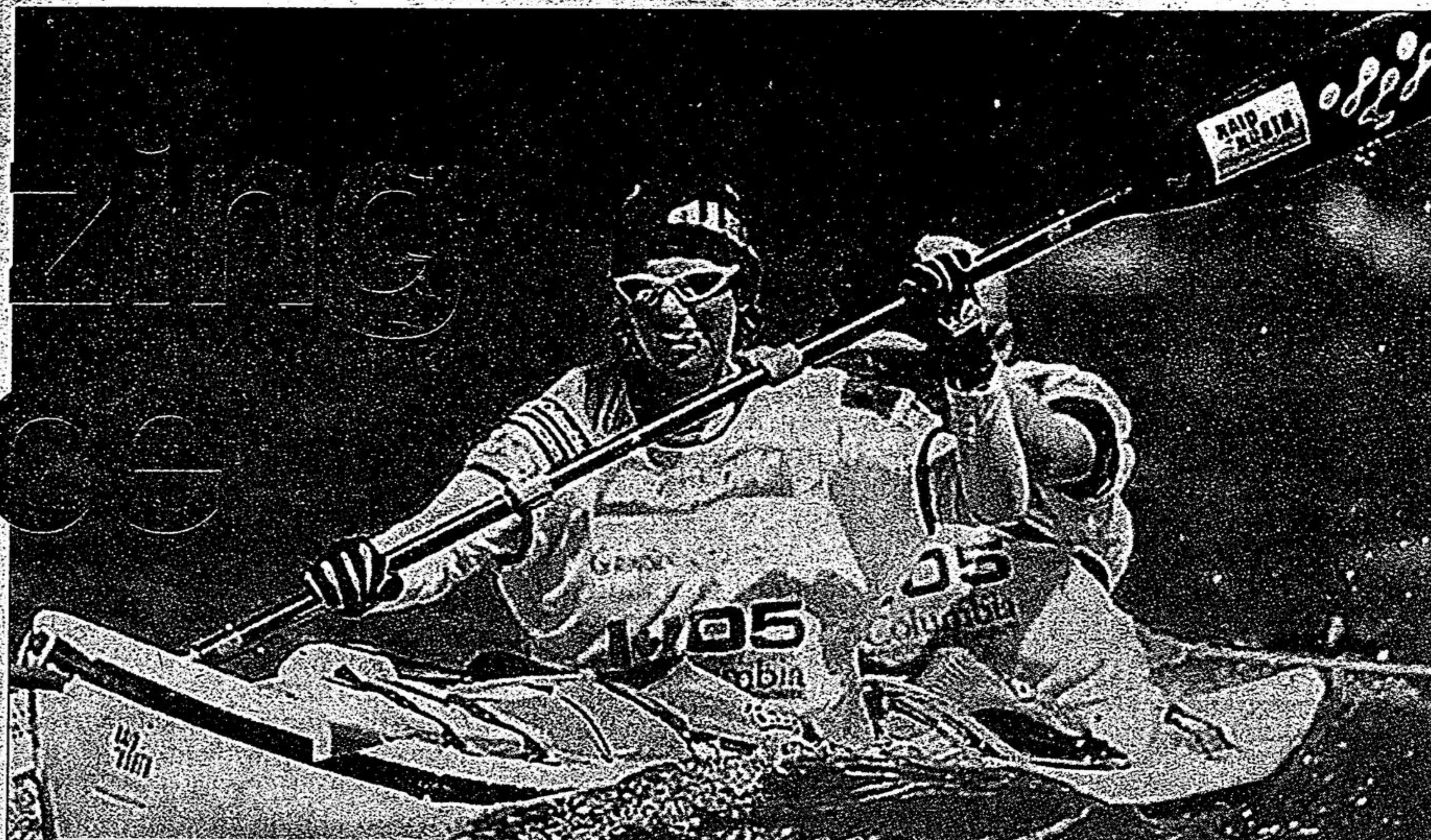
So now you have a bit of an idea what adventure racing is about and what it takes to have a good team.

Maybe you need to know what tools of the trade you will require.

The following list is by no means all inclusive.

You can find out more about these races at www.raidthenorth.com or www.sleepmonsters.ca or www.canadianara.com

Markham resident and chiropractor, Laura Rowe, 34, has been involved in adventure racing for the past six years. She recently took part in the national championships in Timmins and helped her team, Spirit, earn a fifth place finish in a 22-team field with entries hailing from across Canada. Among other events she's competed in include the six-day Eco-Challenge North American Championships in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont. in 2003 and the six-day Great Patagonia Endurance Race this year in Chile and Argentina. When Rowe isn't involved in adventure racing she also runs in road races, including the Boston Marathon in 2005, competes in triathlons, plays volleyball, ultimate frisbee and hikes along the Bruce Trail.



Laura Rowe has sought adventures rowing and hiking in Northern Ontario as well as the Great Patagonia Endurance Race across Chile and Argentina.

SO YOU WANT TO RACE

Here are some of the items you will need to get your start in adventure racing:

- ▶ **SHOES:** You'll need a good pair of trail shoes. Do not confuse these with hiking boots. Trail shoes can be trail running shoes or ones specifically designed for adventure racing.

- ▶ **BIKE:** A mountain bike would be the best bet for you. Preferably, get one with at least a front suspension and don't forget your helmet.

- ▶ **BOATS:** Canoes or kayaks are provided by racing officials, but you will need your own lifejacket and paddle. The most ideal is the four or five-piece breakdown kayak paddle.

- ▶ **ROPES:** You'll need these for any climbing sections. Also remember to get a harness, beaners, full length gloves and some sort of rappelling device and.

- ▶ **PACK:** Your equipment pack should be light and waterproof. You should include a head lamp and a bright bike light for those dark nights.

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The fanciful, naive notion by social engineers like former prime minister Pierre Trudeau and the left-lib, pseudo-intellectuals who supported him is that a nation can somehow be forged by weaving together a patchwork quilt of different races and cultures from around

the world. The thinking was that all these new Canadians would happily co-exist and build a brave, new Canada, distinct and unique in the world.

Trudeau, a vicious ideologue, despised the notion of the U.S. melting pot (no surprise, since he hated Americans), believing instead that state-sanctioned and funded multiculturalism would be superior to any system in the world.

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