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Men's Journal

May 2010 | Volume 19 | Number 4

ADVENTURE SPECIAL

Five Trips That Will Change Your Life
Forget the Beach, Get Ambitious!

Big-Wave Hunters
Globetrotting with the World's Best Surfers

Daredevil Skydiving
Into the No-Chute Zone

Afghanistan Unfiltered
Sebastian Junger's War Film

Decoding the NFL Draft
by Matt Taibbi

The Fighting Life of Robert Downey Jr.

The Most Powerful Motorcycle Ever

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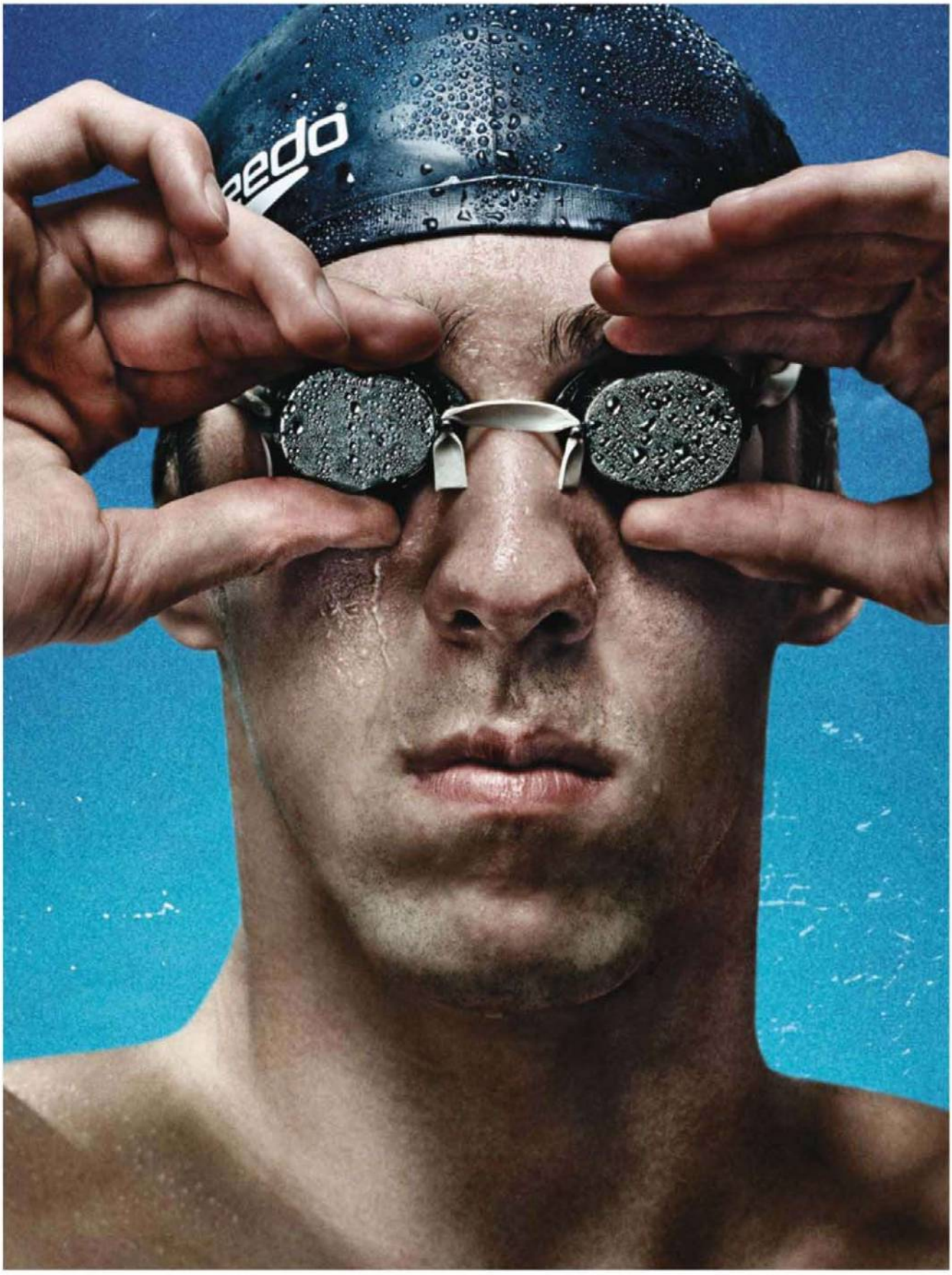

Jim Fiscus *for* ESPN The Magazine

We surf the Internet.
We swim in magazines.

The Internet is exhilarating. Magazines are enveloping. The Internet grabs you. Magazines embrace you. The Internet is impulsive. Magazines are immersive. And both media are growing.

Barely noticed amidst the thunderous Internet clamor is the simple fact that magazine readership has risen over the past five years. Even in the age of the Internet, even among the groups one would assume are most singularly hooked on digital media, the appeal of magazines is growing.

Think of it this way: during the 12-year life of Google, magazine readership actually increased 11 percent.

What it proves, once again, is that a new medium doesn't necessarily displace an existing one. Just as movies didn't kill radio. Just as TV didn't kill movies. An established medium can continue to flourish so long as it continues to offer a unique experience. And, as reader loyalty and growth demonstrate, magazines do.

Which is why people aren't giving up swimming, just because they also enjoy surfing.

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Lewis and Clark and Sarah.

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GO *on an* Expedition

For all the same reasons you never get away — job, marriage, kids — it's time for an adventure so ambitious it hits your reset button. Our step-by-step plan to making five dream trips a reality.

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HIKE THE TORRES DEL PAINE

KAYAK THE SEA OF CORTEZ

BAG AN UNCLIMBED PEAK

SKI THE ENTIRE HIGH SIERRA

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RACE ACROSS NEW ZEALAND

Our editor's solution to desk-job angst and domestic stress? Convincing his wife to join him for a 151-mile, three-sport endurance relay across an entire country.

by **BRAD WIENERS**

ON THE COVER

Robert Downey Jr., photographed exclusively for *Men's Journal* by MARK SELIGER on March 1, 2010, in Lancaster, California. Styling by ANNIE PSALTIRAS at The Wall Group. Grooming by DAVY NEWKIRK at traceymattingly.com. Production by MAURIA KIERNAN. Downey wears a T-shirt by ALTERNATIVE APPAREL.

Day one of New Zealand's Speight's Coast to Coast adventure race

photograph by **CHRIS MCLENNAN**

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Deep in the Himalayas, a brutal turf war over a libido-enhancing mushroom is resulting in murderous bands of Buddhists dismembering their rivals. How an ancient medicine became a curse.
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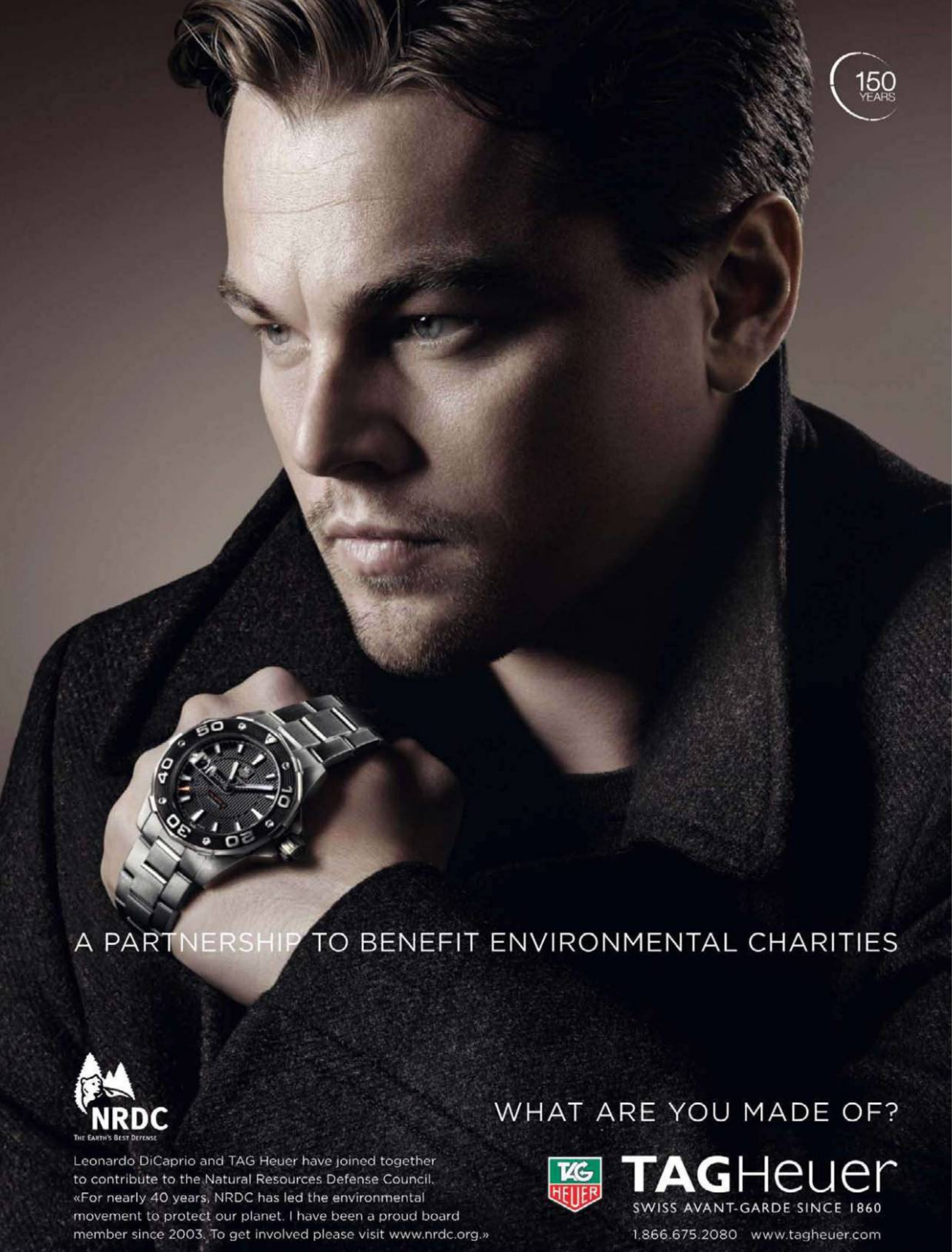
photograph by **DYLAN COULTER**

NICK BENNETTE WEARS A JACKET BY NAUTICA. BIB KNICKERS BY GORE BIKE WEAR. SOCKS BY SMARTWOOL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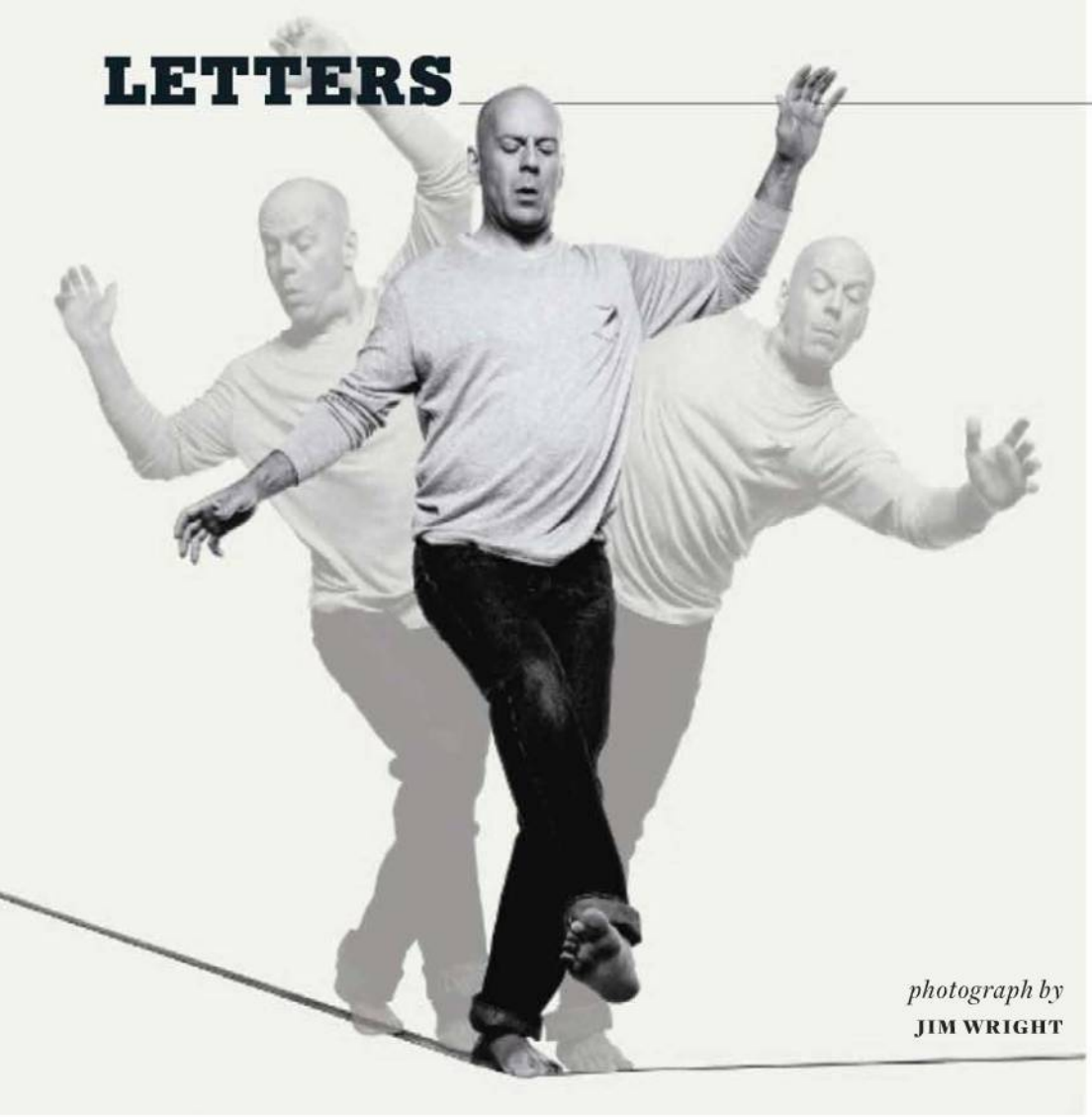

photograph by **JIM WRIGHT**

WHO WOULD'VE THOUGHT I'D FIND LIFE AND LOVE ADVICE from a guy like Bruce Willis ["What Would Bruce Do?" by Bill Zehme, March]? You really can't judge a book by its cover, especially a famous one. It turns out he's a pretty good, wise man after all. Thanks for the great read. *—Curtis Smith, Seattle*

THE NEXT BIG THING

"THE WORLD'S FOURTH Strongest Man" is a brilliant article [by Paul Solotaroff, March]. As an aspiring strongman, I find it a relief and testament to the sport when articles like this highlight the athletes competing in one of the world's oldest competitions. Derek Poundstone is a beast, yet he's poised to carry the sport on his behemoth shoulders. Hopefully more recognition like this will bring standards and regulations to a sport that could gain high popularity here in the U.S.

—NIC ALESHIRE
Dublin, OH

FOOD FIGHT

GREAT ARTICLE ON A GLUten-free diet ["Winning Without Wheat," by Vanessa Gregory, March]. I had digestive problems, so I went gluten-free. It's made a huge difference in my energy and cut down on my stomach pain. In fact, it worked so well that I recommended it to a colleague; he's noticed the same results.

—ANDREW ANTONIO
Lafayette, IN

THIS ARTICLE IS NOT VERY well-rounded. First of all it talks about getting burgers without a bun, but there are plenty of gluten-free breads out there. It also mentions eating oatmeal. But almost all oatmeal is *not* gluten-free because of the process used to separate the oats. That's bad information. You're professing that a gluten-free diet is a fad diet. It's not. It's for people with celiac disease.

—NAME WITHHELD
BY REQUEST
from mensjournal.com

CLIMBING LESSONS

"BORNEO'S FORBIDDEN Chasm" [by Mark Synnott, March] is a great piece. I'm in the mountains every weekend, but never above 13,256 feet. As an endurance athlete, I know my best performance is out there beyond some perceived limit. But as a 53-year-old father, I'd better rely on a clear head to stay on this side of peril. I have logged enough miles over the years to know when to back off. My hope for Alex Honnold and his contemporaries is that they learn the lesson that you wove so nicely into your story.

—JOHN MATTA
Irvine, CA

FEEDING THE KNEE

AT THE RISK OF SOUNDING like a food faddist, I offer an alternative to the treatments highlighted in your excellent article ["The Complete Guide to Your Knee," by Gretchen Reynolds, March]. After chronic pain in both knees, I tried making my diet more alkaline, thereby reducing inflammation. Unless I do something particularly rigorous or strenuous these days, I have zero pain in my knees — or other joints, for that matter.

—PHILIP BROOKS
San Francisco

EGO ADDENDUMS

LET'S NOT FORGET ABOUT George Foreman ["A Field Guide to Sports Egos," by Matt Taibbi, March]. Each of his five sons is named George, and one of his daughters is named Freeda George.

—RYAN SMEETS
Washington, DC

MATT, YOU LEFT OUT Danica Patrick.

—ANONYMOUS
from mensjournal.com

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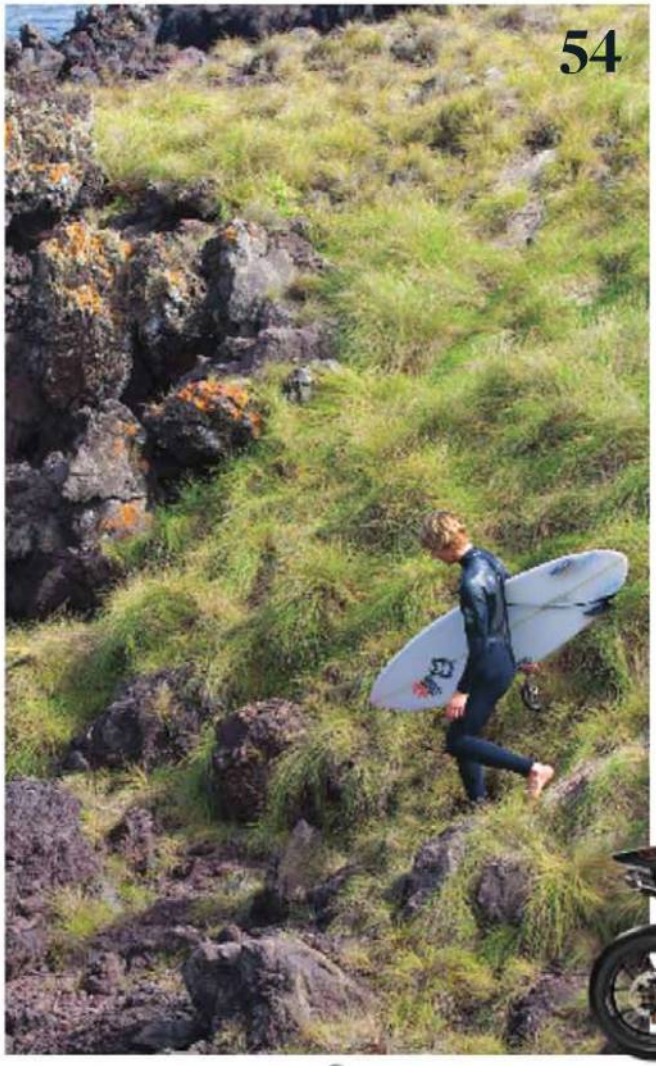

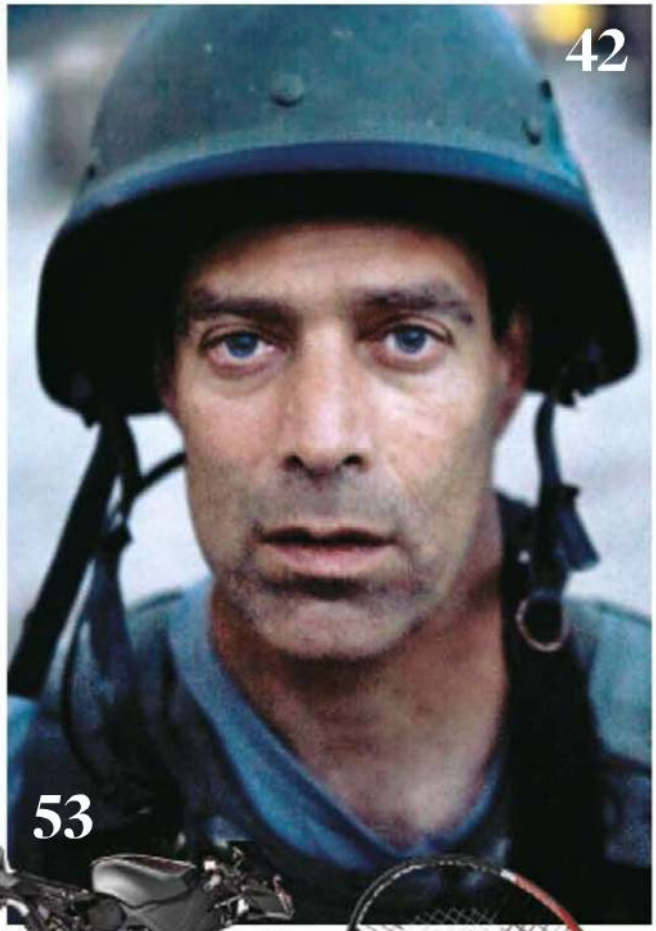

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CODY DOUCETTE; TIM A. HETHERINGTON; COURTESY HEAD.COM; TRAVIS RATHBONE; VIRUS.IT

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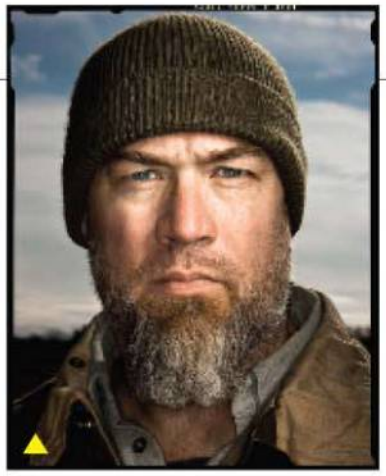
Jamie James

"NEPAL'S APHRODISIAC WAR," *page 112*

"*Adventure* is kind of a silly word," says James. "It just means going to places that don't have great toilets." For this month's story about the deadly *yarsagumba* trade, the writer spent two weeks exploring such places, traveling all over Nepal to talk to murderers and dealers. He didn't have to travel far; since 1999, James, 58, has lived in Indonesia, where he owns two restaurants. The former *New Yorker* art critic's eighth book, *The Snake Charmer*, is out now in paperback.



Dan Winters

"THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO YOUR HIP," *page 73*

For the past three issues, Winters has created a biomechanical knee, back, and hip — and photographed them, for MJ's special series on the body. The process is exhaustive: He studies the joints in medical reference books, washes and paints casts of real bones, and then attaches the bones to machinery pulled from aircraft salvage yards in L.A. "I spend about two days building them," says Winters, 47, who is a preeminent portrait photographer (he has shot the likes of Obama, De Niro, and Hanks). "I like these kinds of assignments, though; they allow me to stay home."

FROM LEFT: THOMAS KELLY; COURTESY DAN WINTERS

Wayne Curtis

"AFTER THE FLOOD," *page 40*
"GIN UP A BETTER DRINK," *page 46*
Five years ago Curtis was living in Maine and writing mostly about historic preservation, which made him an unlikely candidate to cover gins and New Orleans for MJ. But within a year, that all changed. "I went down to New Orleans to research drink for my book [*And a Bottle of Rum: A History of the New World in Ten Cocktails*], and by my second trip I was calling my wife and telling her we had to move," says Curtis, 52. "My interests are drink, travel, and historic preservation. So where else could I live?"

FROM LEFT: COURTESY WAYNE CURTIS; COURTESY CARLA LAFONG

BikeSnobNYC

"THE BIKESNOB MANIFESTO," *page 40*
How does one stay anonymous these days? "The secret is, there is no secret," says BikeSnobNYC, who back in 2007 started a blog to celebrate and decimate the good and bad of cycling culture. "So what if someone figures out my name? It's not like discovering I'm Lance Armstrong." The writer parlayed his blog's success into *Bike Snob: Systematically & Mercilessly Realigning the World of Cycling*. The cost? On May 1, with his book's release, BikeSnobNYC will out himself.

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WISH YOU WERE HERE

Humboldt Redwoods State Park

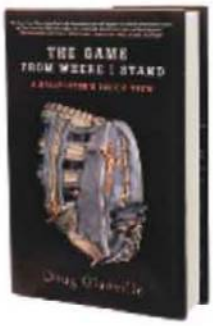
Northern California

TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-SEVEN MILES due north of San Francisco lie 53,000 acres of pristine parkland, 250 campsites, and 100 miles of hiking, biking, and riding trails — and on most days you can have it all to yourself. "It amazes me how few people are around in such a breathtaking place," says Justin Bailie, whose company on the trail the day he took this photo (of friend Jason Reale atop a fallen redwood) included a black bear. "Some of these trees are exactly the same as they were 2,000 years ago." A ranger-led paddle down the South Fork Eel River, offering views of some of the park's most isolated areas, will run on April 24 (*free; humboldtredwoods.org*). —DACUS THOMPSON

NOTEBOOK

MAY 2010

photograph by **JUSTIN BAILIE**



Inside Pitch

Doug Glanville, an Ivy League grad and nine-season MLB vet, is as adept at thinking and writing about baseball as he was at playing it. *The Game from Where I Stand* explains, among other things, how pinch hitting is like *Being John Malkovich*.

DEEP FREEZE Last year Sebastian Copeland trekked to the North Pole on a brutal mission to commemorate Admiral Peary's 1909 attempt. *Into the Cold*, his film about the adventure, debuts this month at the Tribeca Film Festival (*tribecafilm.com*).

WHAT'S NEW
MAY 2010

THE KOBE KILLER?

Kevin Durant

How did Oklahoma City go from last in '08–'09 to a playoff run?
Chemistry's part of it. If you don't have that, the team will fall apart. We like being around each other off the floor, and that translates on the floor.
You've gained a reputation as a clutch finisher. Is that something you train for?
The key for the close-and-late shots is to take them like regular shots. I think of it just like I'm playing the first half, which takes the pressure off.

Winds of Summer

Hawks Cay Resort in Duck Key, Florida, hosts all the ingredients for perfect kiteboarding: high winds, smooth water, and plenty of room for error. And fresh off a $35 million renovation, the resort now offers lessons for all levels. What to do when the winds die? Learn to stand-up paddleboard (*from $100; hawkscay.com*).

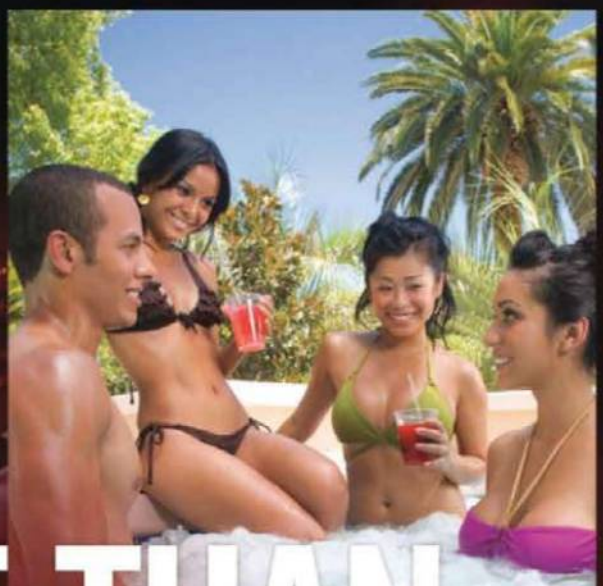
Land Shark Greg Noll's epic surfboard designs are now street ready (*$170; elementskateboards.com*).

URBAN RUSTIC Timberland Boot Company's Colrain reissue fuses Industrial Revolution–inspired design with premium Horween leather (*$400; timberlandbootcompany.com*).

One Giant Tweet for Mankind

Follow NASA Mission STS-132 as astronauts ready Atlantis for a trip to the International Space Station (*twitter.com/nasa_astronauts*).

BOOK: MICHAEL PIRROCCO; KITEBOARDER: DAVE BJORN/A-FRAME; COPELAND: COURTESY KEITH HEGER; DURANT: DENNIS HUBBARD/ICONSMI/CORBIS; SKATEBOARD: COURTESY ELEMENT SKATEBOARDS; ASTRONAUT HAND: JACK AMBROSE/GETTY IMAGES; IPHONE: COURTESY APPLE; SCREEN: COURTESY NASA; BOOT: COURTESY TIMBERLAND BOOT COMPANY



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My Twist On Chicago

How to craft a great trip to the city
by ***Ron Livingston***

After graduating from college, Ron Livingston made his way to Chicago where the actor spent years honing his craft in the city's vibrant theater scene.

Since his days in the Windy City, Ron has taken on roles in hit movies including "Office Space" and "Swingers," and acclaimed television shows such as "Band of Brothers." Upcoming projects include "Dinner for Schmucks" and "Going the Distance." Ron takes time out of a very busy 2010 to offer an insider's guide to his Chicago.

Love Chicago For...

Twenty-six miles of lakefront free and open to the public; celery salted hot dogs; the elevated train; the river dyed St. Patrick's green; aisle 4, row 8, seat 113.

Take A Walk Around...

My favorite neighborhood in Chicago would have to be the Lakeview area. You've got stately townhouses to the south of you, Lake Michigan and the zoo to the east, and the madness of Chicago baseball just to the north.

Meet A Friend At...

When I think of the all-time great Chicago bars, I think of the quintessential corner locals in Lincoln Park, jealously guarded by the neighborhood regulars. Making yourself at home at a place like this is an accomplishment. Sort of like successfully wooing a Manhattan co-op board. But it's worth it.

Bring A Date To...

The Museum of Science and Industry. A beautiful building left over from the 1893 "White City" exposition houses the best field trip ever. Bring a date, and if she doesn't like it, break up with her. If you don't like it, break up with yourself.

Celebrate Your Birthday At...

A beer garden or pub on North Lincoln Ave, or for something a little less intimate—Chicago is home to great art deco inspired venues where with the right 2,500 people, you could throw one hell of a party.

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHARLIE POWELL

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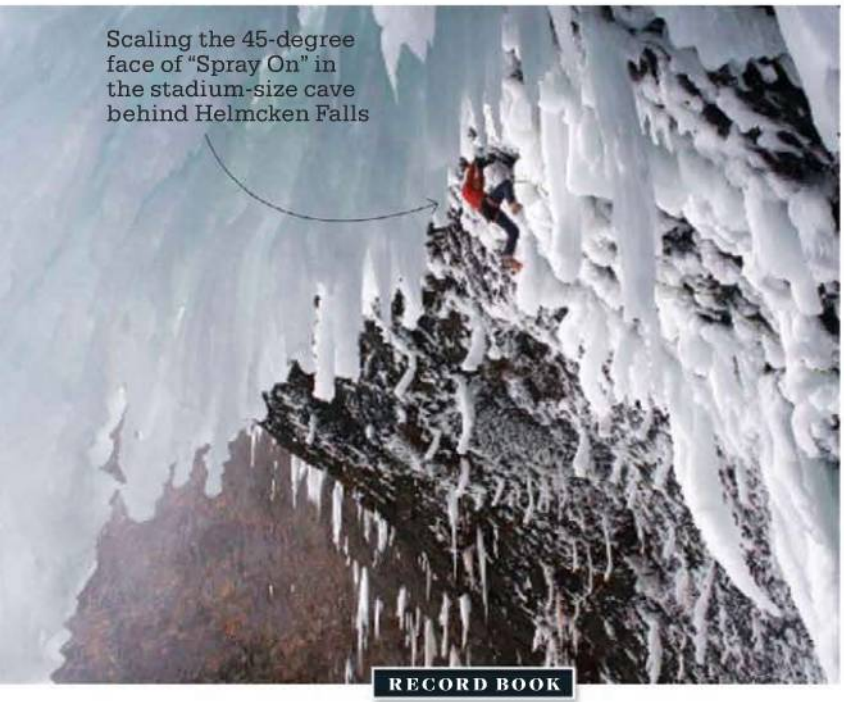


Scaling the 45-degree face of "Spray On" in the stadium-size cave behind Helmcken Falls

RECORD BOOK

The Sickest Ice

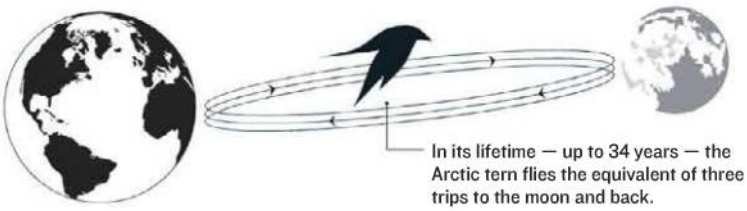
PLUS: WHO FLEW FARTHEST, SUMMITED YOUNGEST, AND JUGGLED LONGEST THIS MONTH

HELMCKEN FALLS IN EASTERN BRITISH COLUMBIA HAS NEVER been known to freeze, even during the coldest Canadian winters. But ice climbers **WILL GADD**, 43, and **TIM EMMETT**, 36, had a hunch that the spray frozen to the rock abutting the 460-foot waterfall might be climbable, and in late January they decided to find out. Gadd and Emmett spent two days prepping and climbing a 90-foot route up the cave behind the falls — just under a quarter of the way up the cliff. They called it "Spray On" and rated the climb Water Ice 10 — a full three grades higher than any other pure-ice climb on the planet.

Gadd, a former Ice Climbing World Cup champion, believes Spray On's pick placements and requisite gymnastic moves justify the leap in standards. "This is what I dreamed ice climbing could become when I was 17," he says. "Steep, athletic, and wildly difficult." Next winter, Gadd plans to spend two weeks pushing a 400-foot route to the lip of the cave. —DOUGALD MACDONALD

Flight Tracking

For decades, the **ARCTIC TERN**'s yearly migration was presumed to be the longest in the world. Now, with the advent of tiny geolocators, an international team in Greenland has finally confirmed the tern's migratory supremacy. The devices, which weigh just 0.05 ounces, record ambient light intensity, providing data on local sunrise and sunset times. The findings: Each year, the tern travels an average of 44,000 miles. "Impressive for a bird that weighs less than 3.5 ounces," says Iain Stenhouse, a researcher who worked on the study. —YANG-YI GOH



In its lifetime — up to 34 years — the Arctic tern flies the equivalent of three trips to the moon and back.

Air Ball

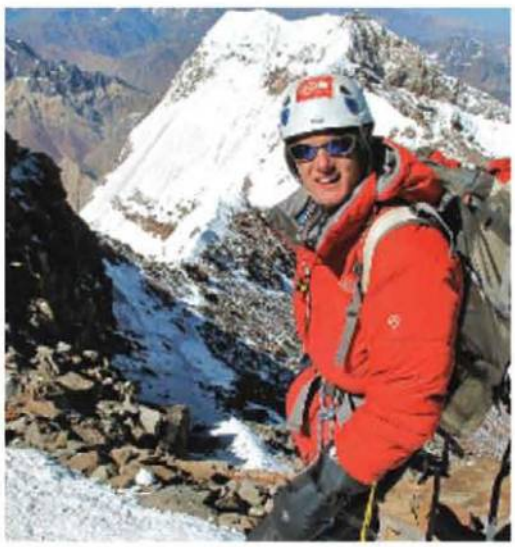
Keeping a soccer ball off the ground without using his hands or arms, **DAN MAGNESS**, 26, recorded the longest "keepy uppy" journey of all time in January when he logged 36 miles in 14 hours on a tour of all five Premier League stadiums in London. *Men's Journal* caught up with the Englishman in Istanbul, where he was performing keepy uppy on stage and, predictably, during this interview.

Why keepy uppy?
When I didn't make it [as a soccer pro], I knew I still had to do something in football. People said I couldn't make a career out of keepy uppy. I set out to prove them wrong.

Is there a physical toll to playing so much?
Neck aches. Blisters on your head and feet. I have to see a doctor about headaches.

Does your wife ever tell you to give it a rest?
Even at our wedding, there are photos of me balancing the ball on my head. If I'm having a day with no football, I just have to let the air out of the ball. —CHASE SCHEINBAUM

ALL-DAY KEEPY UPPY
250,000 touches: 25 percent feet, 70 percent head, and 5 percent knees



The Youngest Summiter

ON JANUARY 19, 17-YEAR-OLD Utah native **JOHNNY COLLINSON** became the youngest person to conquer the Seven Summits, topping Antarctica's Vinson Massif one year after reaching his first peak at Aconcagua. An avid climber since age four — when he taped nail plates to his boots for traction — Collinson tackled the peaks with mountaineering twins Willie and Damian Benegas and even skied off of Denali, Elbrus, and Vinson. He hopes to become a professional backcountry skier. —JORDAN REED

A BOYHOOD OF ASCENTS

Age	Total ft.
4	65,009
5	121,991
6	184,786
7	425,407
8	NA
9	130,695
10	403,827
11	280,612
12	334,268
13	281,996
14	NA
15	100,572
16	88,283
17	142,139

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM TOP: COURTESY GADD/EMMETT COLLECTION; COURTESY PATAGONIAN BROTHERS EXPEDITION. ILLUSTRATIONS: NICOLE WILKINSON

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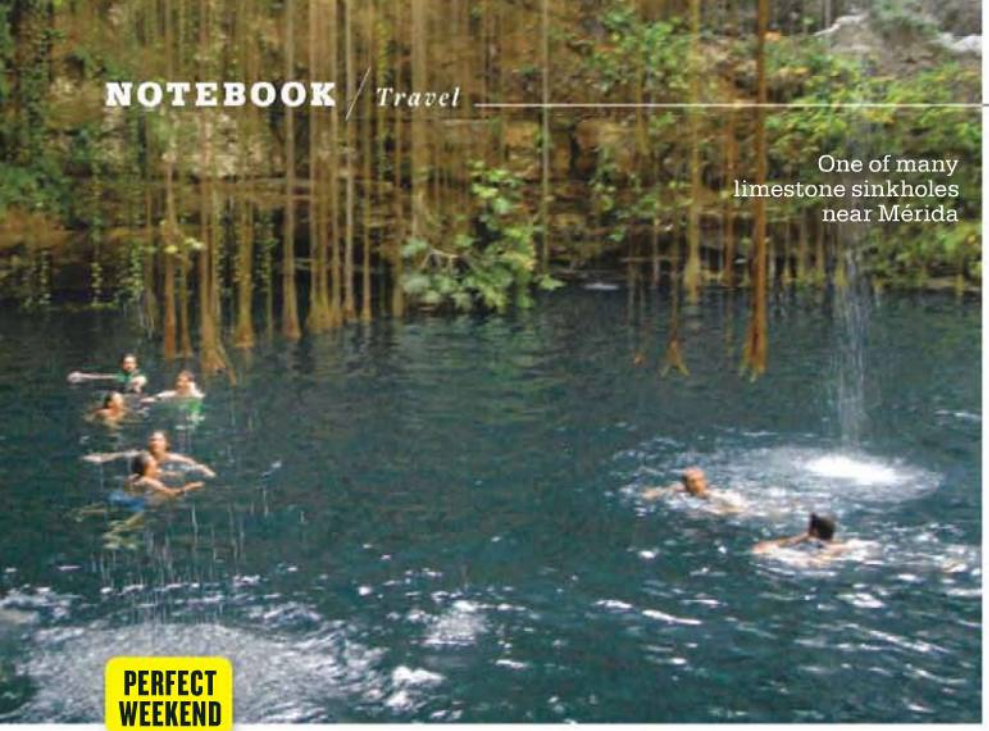

One of many limestone sinkholes near Mérida

GETTING THERE
You can connect to Mérida directly from Houston and Miami in about two hours, but flights to Cancún are both cheaper and more frequent.

PERFECT WEEKEND

Mexico Auténtico

AROUND MERIDA ON THE YUCATAN, AN UNDEREXPOSED PARADISE

THE MAYAN RIVIERA FROM CANcún to Tulum has become so overbuilt that it feels about as authentic as a strip mall, but three and a half hours to the west lies a much more interesting Mexico. Perfect for a long weekend escape, this colorful inland city of almost 1 million is quaint but vibrant, steeped in Spanish colonial and Mayan history, a hospitable and affordable outpost that has been attracting a growing number of expats. (Check Realestateyucatan.com for a peek at prices.)

BEING THERE

Upon arriving, make the Villa Merida — once a 19th-century nobleman's mansion, now a hotel — your base. (*$235 and up; 888-737-2124, thevillasgroup.com*)

DAY TRIPPING

Most hotels can arrange for guided tours to the flamingo-loaded Celestún Biosphere Reserve on the Gulf of Mexico (50 miles farther west) or the mesmerizing ruins at Dzibilchaltún and its Temple of the Seven Dolls, where, during the fall and spring equinox, the rising sun is visible through one window and out the other (it's the Mayan mathematical prowess at work).

CENTER CITY

Loaded with museums, flea markets, and cafes serving *botanas* (Yucatán snacks, such as *longaniza*, a local smoked sausage), Mérida's historic El Centro district explodes on Saturday nights when streets are closed to traffic and Latin music blares while locals dance the merengue on the cathedral steps. It's one holy hell of a good time. Just make sure to allow extra time on the drive to or from the Cancún airport for a dip in the cenote (sinkhole) at Ik-Kil, near Chichén Itzá's ruins. —MATT HENDRICKSON

Shooting from Inside the Green Room

CLARK LITTLE'S UP-CLOSE-AND-PERSONAL SHOREBREAK ART

The legendary war photographer Robert Capa famously said, "If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough." Clark Little shoots surf breaks, not Normandy invasions, but the principle still stands. "There's been a few times I've had to ditch my camera to avoid breaking my neck," he says, "but I have learned to love getting worked over."

Clark, the younger brother of big-wave pioneer Brock Little, has made a career of capturing images from the very pit of the barrel at some of the world's scariest spots. A new book, **THE SHOREBREAK ART OF CLARK LITTLE** (with forewords from friends Kelly Slater and Jack Johnson), gathers the man's work in one place for the first time. The result is a whole new perspective (*clarklittlephotography.com*).

—SHELBY STANGER

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM TOP: KENNETH MARTIN/LANDOV; COURTESY CLARK LITTLE. MAP BY ALAN KINUGHI

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Motorcycling the Hemisphere

17,000 MILES AND FIVE YEARS LATER, THE TWO-WHEELED ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME CONTINUES.

EVERY YEAR, SOME 2,000 PEOPLE ATTEMPT SOMETHING extraordinary: a 17,000-mile motorcycle trip spanning two continents. Some take as few as 35 days; many, sidetracked by either mechanical or human failure, abandon all hope long before the finish line at the bottom of South America. But Ivan Pisarenko, 38, just a few classes away from completing his law degree in his hometown of Buenos Aires when he started out in June 2005, has turned what began as a nine-month plan into a five-year-long quest, and the clock's still ticking (he hopes to reach his destination later this month). Below, some highlights of his journey thus far. —PAUL KIX

illustration by **EMILY COOPER**

Pisarenko

SEPTEMBER 2005

1 BAD BREAKS

Pisarenko's brother meets up with him in San Francisco to ride along for a few days but loses control of his bike and falls 20 yards down a cliff, shattering bones in his knee. While overseeing his brother's physical therapy, Pisarenko is grounded until November.

DECEMBER 2005

2 THIEVES' HONOR

Pisarenko is confronted in a Baja cantina by five Mexican bandits, who think he's American. They want his money and his bike. Pisarenko explains that he's broke, which is true: He's earning his way by working as a bartender, photographer, and T-shirt maker. When Pisarenko tells them he's traveled on his bike from Alaska, he has to explain where that is. "You're crazy," they say. Instead of robbing him, they buy him a beer.

MID-2007

3 LOST AT SEA

In Honduras, looking to shorten his trip to Panama, Pisarenko decides to sail there with an American scuba diver who, in hindsight, didn't know much about the glorified dinghy he was repairing. The two spend 17 days at sea, often in hurricane conditions. One night, a large tanker almost runs them over.

NOVEMBER 2008

4 A CLOSE CALL

Rounding a corner in Ecuador, Pisarenko sees an approaching truck in his lane. He brakes hard, but his back wheel slides out, and he and the bike somehow pass underneath the truck. "The driver thought I was dead," he says. "I had to calm him down until the ambulance arrived." It takes him six months to mend his broken pelvis.

Mud-running through Colombia

JUNE 2009

5 DOG DAYS

In Peru's so-called White Rockies, Pisarenko is given a puppy. He spends two weeks building the dog a proper crate, finds some goggles so the pup's eyes won't redden and tear, and heads out again. Pisarenko names the dog Wari.

EARLY 2010

6 THE FINAL LEG

Pisarenko sets out from Buenos Aires for the last 1,700 miles, which he hopes to complete by June. (Check Americaendos ruedas.com for more photos and Pisarenko's diary.)

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM TOP: SHARON ALVIZ; IVAN PISARENKO/ARCHIVOLATINO

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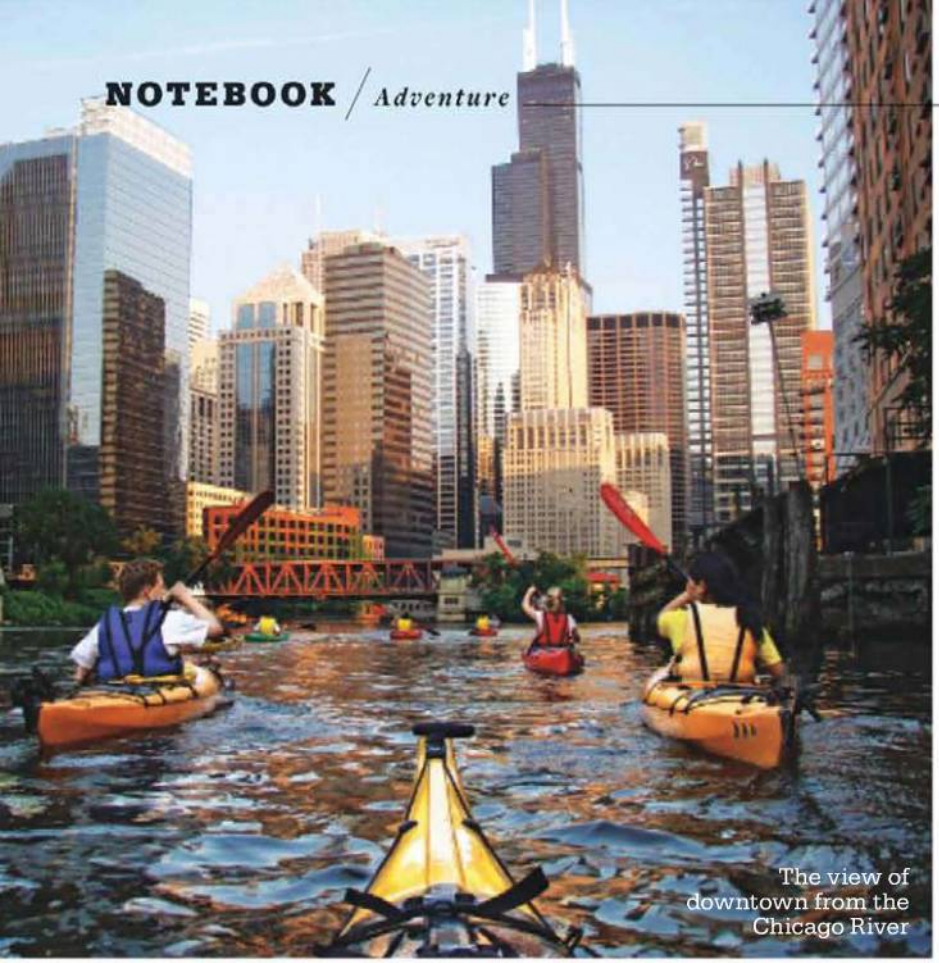


The view of downtown from the Chicago River

Big-City Escapes

FIVE GREAT WAYS TO EXPLORE FIVE GREAT AMERICAN CITIES — FOR YOUR NEXT VISIT OR SIMPLY AN AFTERNOON OFF

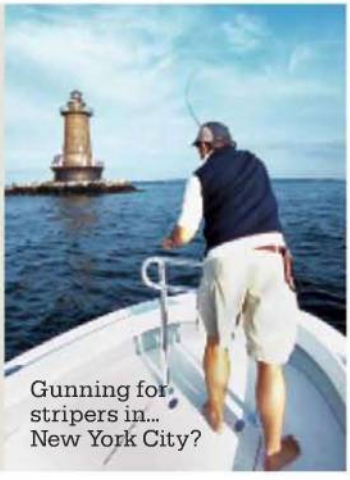
Chicago KAYAKING

The architectural splendors straddling the city's river have long attracted tourists to Chicago's boat tours, but the view from a sea kayak is even better, providing a stark contrast between steel, concrete, and gentle river currents. Paddle past the greatest-hits lineup, including works from Mies van der Rohe and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's Sears Tower (now Willis Tower). The river-paddling season ends with October's Flatwater Classic, a seven-mile race through the city (*from $15; kayakchicago.com*). —SARAH ROSE

New York

FLY-FISHING

Some of the best saltwater fly-fishing on the Eastern seaboard is just a subway ride from Manhattan in Jamaica Bay. Every morning from April to December, purists gather to toss Deceiver and Clouser patterns at striper, bluefish, and false albacore. If you lack sturdy sea legs, shore casting is feasible from nearby Rockaway Beach or the Breezy Point jetty — but the best way to get at city fish is to hire Captain Brendan McCarthy, who will put you onto 30-pound stripers just 50 feet from JFK (*$450 for a half day; urbanflyguides.com*). —JOHN O'CONNOR

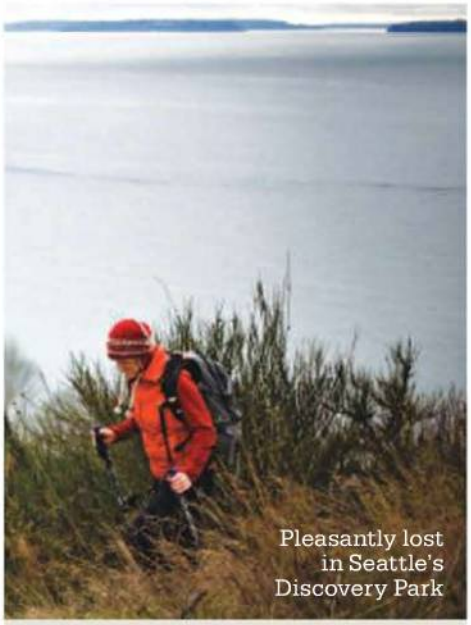


Gunning for stripers in... New York City?

Houston

CYCLING

Launch a fat-tire romp through the root-laden tangle of singletrack in 1,500-acre Memorial Park. Start with the tight turns of the West Ridge Trail, a rutted eight miles that demand your attention. Then hit the speedy Green Trail, a 3.5-mile out-and-back roller coaster, and cap your ride with a mile of zigzagging corridors in the park's northwest corner, known as the Triangle. For rentals, try West End Bicycles (*from $35; westendbikes.com*). —DAN OKO



Pleasantly lost in Seattle's Discovery Park

Seattle

HIKING AND KAYAKING

On Seattle's western edge is Discovery Park, 534 acres of undeveloped land with 12 miles of hiking trails, a tidal beach, and views of the Olympics across the Puget Sound. And though open space abounds in the Emerald City (it has more than 6,200 acres of parkland), it's also explorable by water. Blake Island makes a perfect day trip — rent from Alki Kayak Tours (*from $15; kayakalki.com*). —JOSH FULMER

Charlotte, NC

KAYAKING

Nearly 400 of Charlotte's 17,000 acres of green space are home to the U.S. National Whitewater Center. The highlight is the world's largest recirculating river — a 3/4-mile-long run with a 21-foot drop that, once you finish, deposits you back at the top via giant conveyor belt. A max flow of 1,250 cubic feet per second over more than 20 Class II-IV rapids will excite even the Olympic kayakers and canoers who train here (*from $25; usnwc.org*). —J.F.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY DAVE OLSON/KAYAK CHICAGO; STEPHAN HOEK/GETTY IMAGES; MICHAEL HANSON/AURORA PHOTOS; BRYAN GOULART

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After the Flood

WITH *TREME*, THE CREATOR OF *THE WIRE* TAKES ON LIFE IN POST-KATRINA NEW ORLEANS AND SERVES UP SPRING'S BEST NEW DRAMA.

WENDELL PIERCE SWAYS down a New Orleans street to a big tuba beat amid a happy crowd near the Claiborne Avenue underpass. He's following the Rebirth Brass Band, which is ripping out a rough-edged version of "Do Whatcha Wanna" while a pair of cameramen shooting for *Treme* — the new HBO series created by David Simon — hustles alongside, catching Pierce's every move. After a few minutes, the cameras lower and leave. Pierce doesn't even seem to notice — he's still bobbing down the street with a cigarette in one hand and a Budweiser in the other, nodding to the deep, brassy sound reverberating under the concrete span.

Pierce, known for his masterful portrayal of Bunk Moreland in Simon's *The Wire*, really serves two roles in *Treme*, whose ensemble cast includes John Goodman, Steve Zahn, and a raft of New Orleans musicians. Pierce plays Antoine Batiste, a streetwise trombone player striving to reassemble his life in post-Katrina New Orleans. But as a native New Orleanian, Pierce is also an informal, behind-the-scenes translator of the city's culture for the cast and crew. Simon has said that Pierce understands that in New Orleans, "the nuances have nuances."

Capturing those nuances is what makes *Treme*. The series is, at heart, about how people save culture and are in turn saved by it. The scene opens three months after the flood, as cooks, musicians, DJs, lawyers, and others filter back in to town to salvage what's left and rebuild what's not. "It's what the blues idiom is about," Pierce says. "The blues is not, 'I ain't got no shoes,' but 'I ain't got no shoes, and I'm still gonna walk to Chicago.' It's the triumph in spite of everything."

For Pierce, the survival of the city is highly personal. He grew up five miles north of the French Quarter in the middle-class African-American enclave of Pontchartrain Park, which was badly flooded when the canal walls failed. His parents' house had to be rebuilt from the inside out, with just a brick facade remaining. Dismayed by the slow progress citywide, Pierce rolled up his sleeves a few years ago, launching the Pontchartrain Park Community Development Corporation to aid in the city's reconstruction and help make his old neighborhood whole again.

"I came back to start this project, and now I'm on my third year," he says with a smile of disbelief. "I have houses in L.A. and Manhattan, and I've been living out of a suitcase at my momma's house, with my daddy complaining that I didn't put the toilet seat down. It's joyful and scary all at the same time.

"But I'm still here," he says, rolling into a rumbling laugh. "And that's the thing that makes me shake my head. I'm still here." (*Treme* premieres April 11 on HBO at 10 PM.)

—WAYNE CURTIS

THE BIKESNOB MANIFESTO

Since 2007 a mysterious, anonymous blogger known as BikeSnobNYC has been terrorizing hipster-fixie wannabes and doling out esoteric wisdom to his followers. We asked him to set the record straight on what's wrong — and what's right — about cycling.

1

FORGET CARBON

The cycling industry has made everybody think carbon fiber is a must-have. It's not. Carbon is like gold, or cheese — sometimes it's nice, but a lot of times it's just something they put over something else to hide poor quality. If you want a smoother ride, lower your tire pressure.

2

DON'T BABY YOUR BIKE

Fretting over scratches and cleaning and upgrading can be a waste. You're supposed to ride the bike, not the other way around. Even the most exquisite bicycle is built to withstand abuse.

3

YOU DON'T NEED TIME TO RIDE

Cycling isn't like skiing or surfing: You don't need to squeeze it into your day or limit it to weekends and vacations. You can ride a bike pretty much anywhere, so if you're too busy with life's errands to have fun, then just make errand-running — or getting to work — fun.

4

DON'T TRY TO LOOK COOL

Some companies say their clothes will make you cool. They are lying. The only way to look cool on a bike is to be a good rider. Remember: The guy in the Pink Floyd jersey thinks he looks cool. Just wear what's comfortable for the riding you do and the style will take care of itself.

Bike Snob: Systematically & Mercilessly Realigning the World of Cycling *is out this month; bikesnobnyc.blogspot.com.*

PHOTOGRAPHS FOR TREME ILLUSTRATION: COURTESY SKIP BOLEN/HBO (2). BIKE ICON: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM. BIKESNOB-MANIFESTO ILLUSTRATION: EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

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Junger inside a Battle Company outpost in Afghanistan's Korengal Valley

Sebastian Junger

IN A NEW BOOK AND FILM, THE AUTHOR OF *THE PERFECT STORM* SHOWS WAR FROM A SOLDIER'S POINT OF VIEW.

SEBASTIAN JUNGER FIRST WENT into Afghanistan in 1996 to report for this magazine on a group of Americans taken hostage in nearby Kashmir. "There were rumors of Al Qaeda training camps outside of Jalalabad," he says, "so I went there — what did I know? — and one of the local Afghans told me, 'There are Arabs up in the hills training, and we don't know what they're training for, but even Afghans can't go up there, or we'll be killed.' Obviously no one realized it was going to be what it became. Then 9/11 happened, and I started going back there more frequently."

A lot more frequently: After a series of five monthlong embeds with the U.S. Army's Battle Company stationed in the epicenter of Afghanistan's combat operations, the Korengal Valley, he's written a book (*War*) and, with photographer Tim Hetherington, directed a documentary (*Restrepo*, which won the Grand Jury Documentary prize at Sundance in January) about men in combat. We sat down with him at the Half King, his bar in Manhattan.

Neither your book nor your film is about strategy or politics or what the U.S. might do differently in Afghanistan. What made you decide to approach them this way?
I had this idea that combat is the same whether it's a good war or a bad war, whether you're winning or losing, whether it's 2008 or 1968 or 1942. I'm never gonna be a soldier; I'm 48 years old. But what I could do is effectively join a platoon as a journalist. I didn't try to get an interview with Admiral Mullen, because the soldiers can't interview Mullen. I don't need to know why we're in the Korengal. Fact is, we *are*. What interested me was young men in combat, end of sentence.

A resupply mission from *Restrepo*, which opens this summer

Had any of the company read The Perfect Storm *or seen the movie?*
The youngest guy was seven years old when my book came out. I might as well have been Hemingway. They really didn't give a shit. The fact that I owned a bar — that meant about a hundred times as much to them.

Did you do special training?
I was already in decent shape — I've run my whole life. But I tore my Achilles tendon over there. I didn't write about that in the book.

Why not?
It wasn't that interesting. It just sucked. I was out there for three weeks and I couldn't walk right when I was going out on patrol. I was literally hopping for cover in firefights.

Did you plan for the movie to have the same point of view as the book, or was it more a case of working with the material you ended up with?
It has the same idea. Early on we made the decision: no interviews with family members, nothing about the context of what they're doing. There's no moral debate — no, are we winning or are we losing? All the stuff that liberal filmgoers expect in a documentary about war is not there. The only people you see in the film are men who are fighting in the Korengal. We wanted to give viewers a 90-minute deployment.

Was it a surreal experience showing the film amid the scene of Sundance?
In that whole weird world there was a core of seriousness. After every showing there were military families or soldiers who would come up to us, visibly emotional, a lot of them crying. One guy literally couldn't talk. I said, "Do you have someone in the military?" All he could do was nod, and then he started sobbing and then he ran away.

You're quite frank in the book about the growing incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychiatric fallout. Does war create damaged people?
If you get an infection, you get a fever; the fever is your body dealing with

TIM A. HETHERINGTON (2)

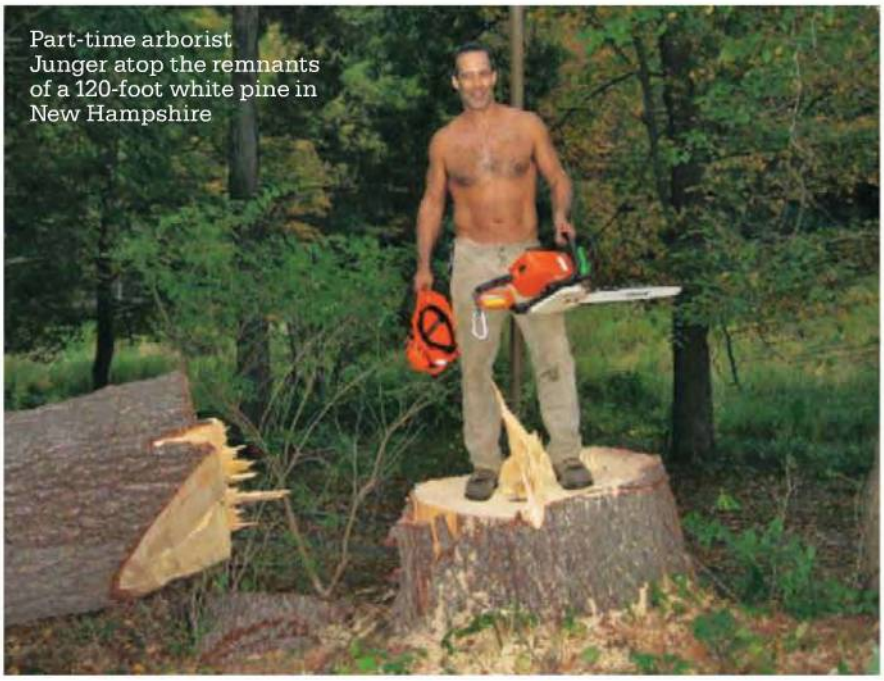
the infection. If you get traumatized, your mind and your brain have a reaction to that trauma. If you're *not* dreaming about it, something's probably wrong. So I wouldn't say they're damaged. I'd say they're in some way trying to heal themselves.

Did you sustain any lasting effects — at least that you're aware of?
I was in a Humvee that was blown up by a roadside bomb. It went off under the engine block instead of under us, and as a result we were all uninjured. Three weeks earlier a guy lost both his legs in the same kind of incident, and I became obsessed with the idea that 10 feet separated me from that guy. It messed me up. I had nightmares and got very short-tempered and depressed. I still jump at certain noises. A distant tapping sound can send me straight to the ground.

What does that sound mean to you?
A machine gun at a distance. A sound like bang-bang-bang right next to me doesn't do anything at all, but that does.

In a 1998 essay for MJ, you wrote that you got into war reporting because you "wanted to be changed." Has being so close to war changed you?
I've been covering war for a long time, and I knew it was exciting. It just is. It's also a lot of other things, but the idea that it's purely horrible is a kind of liberal fiction. I really liked the combat, and I got to see a strand of the fabric of human society. There were guys out there who at times couldn't stand each other, but they'd all die for each other. The consequences of war are horrible, but the experience of war isn't, necessarily.

How do you mean?
There were a number of situations where I didn't know what was going to happen — nobody did. And it made me think about what I was risking. I have a wonderful life, and I was consciously betting that on a poker table I didn't have control over. War made me think about these things in a way that I wouldn't have otherwise. Maybe a spot on your lung in an X-ray would do the same thing. I haven't had that experience. But this is my version of it.


Part-time arborist Junger atop the remnants of a 120-foot white pine in New Hampshire

"THE IDEA THAT WAR IS PURELY HORRIBLE IS A FICTION. THE CONSEQUENCES ARE HORRIBLE, BUT THE EXPERIENCE ISN'T, NECESSARILY."

And when you're not betting your life in a war zone, where are you? I'm guessing you have better digs now than when you were working as a climber for a tree-removal company when we first met.
Actually, I still do a fair amount of tree work. My wife, Daniela, and I live in an old house from 1810 with three fireplaces at the end of a dead-end dirt road on Cape Cod, so I turn the trees into firewood for us and a friend of mine sells the rest. I was out on a job yesterday.

—INTERVIEWED BY COREY SEYMOUR

Junger on War Movies

People ask me about **The Hurt Locker** a lot, and it's an incredible piece of filmmaking — as are **Band of Brothers** and **Platoon** and **Full Metal Jacket** and **Apocalypse Now.** But they're not necessarily true to war in a literal sense. What they are, really, are brilliant movies about Hollywood's *idea* of war. I don't mean that as a criticism, but it's a distinction worth making.

Here's an easy way to see if a war movie is being truthful: If you see an explosion on a faraway hillside and the sound of the explosion and the detonation of the bomb happen at the same time — if they're putting the sound and the vision together in the same moment — they're going toward our cultural understanding of war, not the reality of war. If you've been in combat, things like that make a huge impression on you.

The best film I've ever seen about war is an incredible documentary called **The Anderson Platoon**. It was shot by a French filmmaker who went into the Vietnam jungle with a 1st Air Cavalry Division recon unit for six weeks and came out with the most insane footage of war. It's a very flawed movie — the narrative structure is a mess; there's no organizing principle — but you don't even care. It's just incredible — American troops crawling around on the ground, pinned down by enemy fire; wounded lieutenants calling for airstrikes on the radio — it looks like D-Day. You can't rent it on Netflix, but you can find old copies on the Web or watch it on YouTube.

From Pierre Schoendoerffer's *The Anderson Platoon*

TOP: AMY KIMBALL

photographs by TRAVIS RATHBONE

In Praise of Braising

THE SIMPLE SKILL EVERY SELF-RESPECTING CARNIVORE NEEDS TO LEARN

NO OTHER CULINARY TECHNIQUE SO EMPOWERS you to make satisfying meals out of the humblest cuts of meat as braising. So why don't more guys do it? If steak cookery is all about spending your way to pleasure — buying a classy hunk of protein and not screwing it up — braising plays the opposite role in a man's repertoire, transforming cheap, sinewy stuff such as pork shoulder, beef chuck, and lamb shank into succulent comfort food. And it's not even bad for you. Done correctly, braising pulls the fat out of the meat but leaves the flavor behind. Sure, it takes time: 15 to 20 minutes to brown the meat in a skillet, along with a few hours of burbling on low heat in the oven. But if you make enough for leftovers, you'll be eating like a king for a week, because the longer a braise sits, the better it gets, with flavors deepening as the days go by. Finally, despite the fact that a hundred chefs will have a hundred different recipes, the technique is easily mastered by following our simple, straightforward template. The only thing you have to do is plug in the ingredients you like and have a little patience. —DANIEL DUANE

Braising, Step-by-Step

I

THE LIQUID

Chop **1 onion**, **1 carrot**, and **1 stalk of celery**; put in a large pot with a lid with a few sprigs of **thyme** and **parsley**, a **bay leaf**, some **peppercorns**, and a **head of garlic** cut in half. Pour in a bottle of **cheap red wine**, place over medium-high heat, and simmer until wine has largely vanished, leaving a glaze on the vegetables. Add another chopped onion, carrot, and celery stalk; stir and set aside.

II

THE BEEF

Cut **2 lbs of beef** into chunks, roughly 2 inches square. Dry with paper towels, season with **salt** and **pepper**, and coat in **flour**. Heat a few tablespoons of **canola oil** in a heavy-bottomed skillet over high heat until the oil shimmers. Remove excess flour from beef and place in skillet without crowding the pan. Let sizzle until first side is browned, then turn, browning all six sides one by one.

III

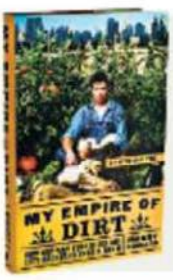
THE BRAISE

Place meat in pot on top of vegetables. Add enough **beef, veal, or brown chicken stock or broth** to surround but not cover meat, and bring pot to a simmer over medium-low heat. Place lid so that it doesn't quite cover the pot, then transfer to a 350° oven. You want the liquid barely bubbling. Simmer for 2.5 hours. Let cool. Strain liquid, discard vegetables, and place pot in the fridge.

IV

THE PAYOFF

After a couple of days, remove pot from fridge and skim off fat, which will have congealed on the top. Place pot over medium heat for five minutes. Once meat has loosened, remove and set aside. Simmer liquid over medium-high heat until it has a syrupy consistency, put the meat back in, and rewarm in a 250° oven for 15 minutes. Serves 4 to 6. Each plate should get meat and sauce.



GROWING YOUR OWN

For *My Empire of Dirt*, Manny Howard's task was twofold: to feed himself for at least one month solely from foods harvested on his own property — 800 square feet of uninterested clay in the heart of Brooklyn — and to narrate the process. The result is a provocative and bitingly personal account of a guy who almost destroys his marriage to prove his manhood. —MINDY CARDOZO

FOOD AND PROP STYLING BY ROSCOE BETSILL. BOOK: MICHAEL PIRROCCO

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Gin Up a Better Drink

CLASSIC COCKTAILS STAND UP AND SING WITH NEW AND RARE JUNIPER SPIRITS.

UNTIL RECENTLY, FIRST-GENERATION GINS SUCH AS genever (from 16th-century Netherlands) and Old Tom (from 18th-century England) lived in quiet exile in a few foreign markets and the occasional musty bartender's guide, where odd, specific gins are called upon for odd, specific drinks. But just as the cocktail renaissance has created demand for long-lost liqueurs and obscure vintage bitters, it has brought back to the American market a whole raft of gin styles — genever and Old Tom, but also Plymouth, new western dry, and a slew of other tweaked dry gins. For mixologists and drinking enthusiasts, it's been like going from the eight-Crayola box to the 64. If you've long considered gin overly medicinal or just a bit off-putting, some of these variants might surprise you. Here are three recipes to (re)start you down the juniper path, with tasting notes below. —WAYNE CURTIS

photograph by
TRAVIS RATHBONE

2

RAMOS GIN FIZZ
1-1/2 oz Hayman's Old Tom
1/2 oz lemon juice
1/2 oz lime juice
3/4 oz simple syrup
1 oz cream
1 egg white
3 drops orange flower water

Shake all ingredients without ice for one minute, then fill shaker with ice and continue shaking with vigor for at least another minute. Strain into Collins glass; top with club soda.

1

NEGRONI
1-1/2 oz Beefeater 24
1-1/2 oz sweet vermouth
1-1/2 oz Campari

Stir with ice and strain. Serve in rocks glass with orange twist.

3

IMPROVED HOLLAND GIN COCKTAIL
2 oz Bols Genever
1/4 oz simple syrup
2 dashes Angostura bitters
1 dash absinthe
1/4 tsp maraschino liqueur

Stir with ice and strain. Serve in cocktail glass with lemon twist.

1

BEEFEATER 24 ($29)
Classic Beefeater London dry — a standard for decades — is beautifully tricked out in this new variant made by steeping dried grapefruit peel and two types of tea (among other ingredients) for 24 hours, which imparts a well-rounded softness and zest when compared to the original.

2

HAYMAN'S OLD TOM ($25)
Old Tom, a lightly sweetened gin, was what was for dinner during the 18th-century British gin craze, but sweet gins fell out of favor as tastes changed and better distillation techniques improved dry gins. Hayman's has a touch of sweetness with a burst of botanicals.

3

BOLS GENEVER ($39)
In *The Bartender's Gin Compendium*, Gaz Regan suggests not even thinking of genever as gin — the whiskey-ish finish is that distinct. Bols Genever is new to the market and delivers a fuller and fruitier flavor, with its juniper notes more a suggestion than a command.

LIQUID AND PROP STYLING BY ROSCOE BETSILL

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MY FAVORITE THINGS

Zach Gilford

THE *FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS* QUARTERBACK KNOWS HIS WAY AROUND THE BACKCOUNTRY — AND BLUES BARS.

GIFT

▲ My girlfriend was a Seahawks cheerleader for five years, and being from Chicago I'm a big Bears fan, so we're always arguing about football. But when I wrapped the first season of *Friday Night Lights*, she gave me an **original photo from 1930 of the Bears at Soldier Field**. That was pretty cool.

PACK

▲ I've always been a **Dana Design** guy, which is a company that isn't around anymore. The last year it was, I bought this pack, which is huge. It fits me really well, it carries well, and it's durable. I'm a nerd about gear.

SKIS

▼ I've been skiing on a pair of **2006 Atomic R11s** for the past two years. They have a great sidecut; it's not huge, but for me they just work. I grew up skiing and love going to Telluride. It's one of those places that's hard to get to, but when there's good snow, it's awesome.

GUITAR

▼ When I did the film *Post Grad*, **Gibson** hooked me up with this acoustic guitar. When you play a G on it, you know that's what a G is supposed to sound like.

▲ MORNING ROUTINE

I wake up and walk my dog — I named her **Pippen**, after Scottie Pippen. She's super-smart. When I feed her, she can't eat until I say okay. Sometimes I forget and she'll wait for an hour.

NEW SKILL

▼ I had never fly-fished before working on *The River Why*. I went to Idaho's Three Rivers area to learn. I loved it. The guides said, "Don't do it like Brad Pitt. He got it all wrong." He would leave his elbow out. Almost every fish I caught was on this fly, the **Woolly Bugger**.

BAR

T.C.'s Lounge is a blues bar in Austin. They have beer, but if you bring liquor, they'll sell you ice for $2. Every night there's one dish they put out — from chicken and dumplings to Hamburger Helper.

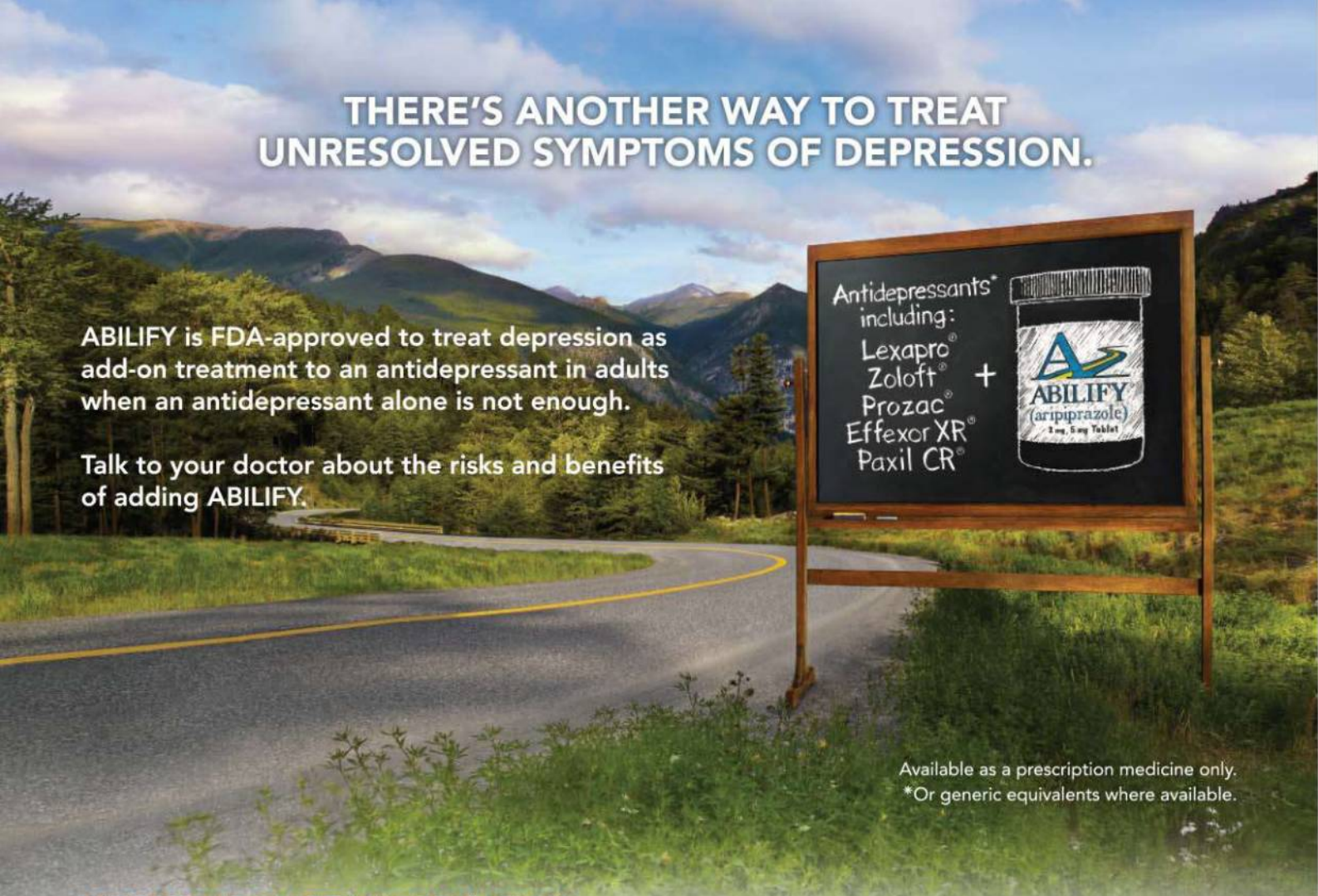
SUMMER JOB

◀ For the past seven summers, I've led trips through **NOLS**, which teaches kids skills like how to ice-climb, camp, and be a leader. I've worked in BC, Alaska, and Costa Rica, to name a few. It's fun taking kids out of their element; by the end they're stoked — they're in their new element.

—DACUS THOMPSON

PORTRAIT: AUTUMN DE WILDE/ICON INTERNATIONAL; FRAMED PHOTO, DOG, GUITAR, SKIS, BACKPACK: BRAD NELSON; FLY: MICHAEL PIRROCCO ICE CLIMBING: COURTESY ZACH GILFORD

THERE'S ANOTHER WAY TO TREAT UNRESOLVED SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION.



ABILIFY is FDA-approved to treat depression as add-on treatment to an antidepressant in adults when an antidepressant alone is not enough.

Talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits of adding ABILIFY.

Available as a prescription medicine only.
*Or generic equivalents where available.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:

Elderly patients with dementia-related psychosis (eg, an inability to perform daily activities due to increased memory loss) taking ABILIFY have an increased risk of death or stroke. ABILIFY is not approved for treating these patients.

Antidepressants can increase suicidal thoughts and behaviors in children, teens, and young adults. Serious mental illnesses are themselves associated with an increase in the risk of suicide. When taking ABILIFY call your doctor right away if you have new or worsening depression symptoms, unusual changes in behavior, or thoughts of suicide. Patients and their caregivers should be especially observant within the first few months of treatment or after a change in dose. Approved only for adults 18 and over with depression.

- Call your doctor if you develop very high fever, rigid muscles, shaking, confusion, sweating, or increased heart rate and blood pressure, as these may be signs of a rare but potentially fatal condition called **neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS)**
- If you develop abnormal or uncontrollable facial movements, tell your doctor, as these may be signs of **tardive dyskinesia (TD)**, which could become permanent
- If you have **diabetes** or have risk factors or symptoms of diabetes, your blood sugar should be monitored. High blood sugar has been reported with ABILIFY and medicines like it. In some cases, extreme high blood sugar can lead to coma or death
- **Other risks** may include lightheadedness upon standing, decreases in white blood cells (which can be serious), seizures, trouble swallowing, or impairment in judgment or motor skills. Until you know how ABILIFY affects you, you should not drive or operate machinery

The **common side effects** in adults in clinical trials (≥10%) include nausea, vomiting, constipation, headache, dizziness, an inner sense of restlessness or need to move (akathisia), anxiety, and insomnia. Tell your doctor about all the medicines you're taking, since there are some risks for drug interactions. You should avoid alcohol while taking ABILIFY.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please read the additional Important Information about ABILIFY on the adjacent page.

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT ABILIFY

This summary of the Package Insert contains risk and safety information for patients about ABILIFY. This summary does not include all information about ABILIFY and is not meant to take the place of discussions with your healthcare professional about your treatment. Please read this important information carefully before you start taking ABILIFY and discuss any questions about ABILIFY with your healthcare professional.

Name

ABILIFY® (a-BIL-i-fi) (aripiprazole) (air-ri-PIP-ra-zall)

What is ABILIFY (aripiprazole)?

ABILIFY is a prescription medicine used as an add-on treatment to an antidepressant for adults with Major Depressive Disorder who had an inadequate response to antidepressant therapy.

What is depression?

Depression is a common but serious medical condition. Symptoms may include sadness, loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed, loss of energy, difficulty concentrating or making decisions, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt, insomnia or excessive sleep, a change in appetite causing weight loss or gain, or thoughts of death or suicide. These could be depression symptoms if they interfere with daily life at home, at work, or with friends and last most of the day, nearly every day for at least 2 weeks.

What is the most important information that I should know about antidepressant medicines, depression, and other serious mental illnesses?

- Antidepressant medicines may increase suicidal thoughts or actions in some children, teenagers, and young adults
- Depression and serious mental illnesses are the most important causes of suicidal thoughts and actions

For more information, see the Prescribing Information and the Medication Guide called *Antidepressant Medicines, Depression and Other Serious Mental Illnesses, and Suicidal Thoughts or Actions.*

Who should NOT take ABILIFY?

People who are allergic to ABILIFY or to any substance that is in it. Allergic reactions have ranged from rash, hives and itching to difficulty breathing and swelling of the face, lips, or tongue. Please talk with your healthcare professional.

What is the most important information that I should know about ABILIFY?

Elderly patients, diagnosed with psychosis as a result of dementia (for example, an inability to perform daily activities as a result of increased memory loss), and who are treated with antipsychotic medicines including ABILIFY, are at an increased risk of death when compared to patients who are treated with a placebo (sugar pill). ABILIFY is not approved for the treatment of patients with dementia-related psychosis.

Antidepressants may increase suicidal thoughts or behaviors in some children, teenagers, and young adults, especially within the first few months of treatment or when the dose is changed. Depression and other serious mental illnesses are themselves associated with an increase in the risk of suicide. Patients on antidepressants and their families or caregivers should watch for new or worsening depression symptoms, unusual changes in behavior, or thoughts of suicide. Such symptoms should be reported to the patient's healthcare professional right away, especially if they are severe or occur suddenly. ABILIFY is not approved for use in pediatric patients with depression.

Serious side effects can occur with any antipsychotic medicine, including ABILIFY. Tell your healthcare professional right away if you have any conditions or side effects, including the following:

Stroke or ministroke in elderly patients with dementia: An increased risk of stroke and ministroke has been reported in clinical studies of elderly patients with dementia (for example, increased memory loss and inability to perform daily activities). ABILIFY (aripiprazole) is not approved for treating patients with dementia.

Neuroleptic malignant syndrome (NMS): Very high fever, rigid muscles, shaking, confusion, sweating, or increased heart rate and blood pressure **may be signs of NMS, a rare but serious side effect that could be fatal.**

Tardive dyskinesia (TD): Abnormal or uncontrollable movements of face, tongue, or other parts of body may be signs of a serious condition known as TD, which may be permanent.

High blood sugar and diabetes: Patients with diabetes and those having risk factors for diabetes (for example, obesity, family history of diabetes), as well as those with symptoms such as unexpected increases in thirst, urination, or hunger should have their blood sugar levels checked before and during treatment. Increases in blood sugar levels (hyperglycemia), in some cases serious and associated with coma or death, have been reported in patients taking ABILIFY, and medicines like it.

Orthostatic hypotension: Lightheadedness or faintness caused by a sudden change in heart rate and blood pressure when rising too quickly from a sitting or lying position (orthostatic hypotension) has been reported with ABILIFY.

Leukopenia, Neutropenia, and Agranulocytosis: Decreases in white blood cells (infection fighting cells) have been reported in some patients taking antipsychotic agents, including ABILIFY. Patients with a history of a significant decrease in white blood cell (WBC) count or who have experienced a low WBC due to drug therapy should have their blood tested and monitored during the first few months of therapy.

Suicidal thoughts: If you have suicidal thoughts, you should tell your healthcare professional right away.

Dysphagia: Medicines like ABILIFY have been associated with swallowing problems (dysphagia). If you had or have swallowing problems, you should tell your healthcare professional.

What should I talk to my healthcare provider about?

Patients and their families or caregivers should watch for new or worsening depression symptoms, unusual changes in behavior and thoughts of suicide, as well as for anxiety, agitation, panic attacks, difficulty sleeping, irritability, hostility, aggressiveness, impulsivity, restlessness, or extreme hyperactivity. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have thoughts of suicide or if any of these symptoms are severe or occur suddenly. Be especially observant within the first few months of antidepressant treatment or whenever there is a change in dose.

Tell your healthcare provider about any medical conditions you may have and all medicines that you are taking or plan to take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, or herbal products.

Be sure to tell your healthcare provider:

- If you have suicidal thoughts
- If you have or have had a low white blood cell count (WBC)
- If you or anyone in your family have or had seizures
- If you or anyone in your family have or had high blood sugar or diabetes
- If you are pregnant, plan to become pregnant, or are breast-feeding

What should I avoid when taking ABILIFY?

- Avoid overheating and dehydration
- Avoid driving or operating hazardous machinery until you know how ABILIFY affects you
- Avoid drinking alcohol
- Avoid breast-feeding an infant

What are the possible side effects of ABILIFY (aripiprazole)?

Common side effects in adults include: nausea, vomiting, constipation, headache, dizziness, an inner sense of restlessness or need to move (akathisia), anxiety and insomnia.

It is important to contact your healthcare professional if you experience prolonged, abnormal muscle spasm or contraction which may be signs of a condition called dystonia.

This is not a complete list of side effects. For full patient information, visit www.abilify.com. Talk to your healthcare professional if you have questions or develop any side effects.

What percentage of people stopped taking ABILIFY due to side effects?

In clinical trials, the percentage of adults who discontinued taking ABILIFY due to side effects was 6% and 2% for patients treated with sugar pill.

Can I safely take ABILIFY while I'm taking other medications?

ABILIFY can be taken with most drugs; however, taking ABILIFY with some medicines may require your healthcare professional to adjust the dosage of ABILIFY.

Some medicines* include:

- ketoconazole (NIZORAL®)
- quinidine (QUINIDEX®)
- fluoxetine (PROZAC®)
- paroxetine (PAXIL®)
- carbamazepine (TEGRETOL®)

It is important to tell your healthcare professional about all the medicines you're taking, just to be sure.

How should I take ABILIFY?

- Take ABILIFY exactly as directed by your healthcare professional
- ABILIFY is usually taken once a day and can be taken with or without food
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. However, if it is time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and take only your regularly scheduled dose
- Talk to your healthcare professional before stopping ABILIFY or changing your dose

General advice about ABILIFY:

- ABILIFY should be kept out of the reach of children and pets
- Store ABILIFY Tablets and the Oral Solution at room temperature
- For patients who must limit their sugar intake, be aware that **ABILIFY Oral Solution contains sugar**
- For patients who cannot metabolize phenylalanine (those with phenylketonuria or PKU), **ABILIFY DISCMELT® contains phenylalanine**
- If you have additional questions, talk to your healthcare professional

Find out more about ABILIFY:

Additional information can be found at **www.abilify.com**

* NIZORAL is a registered trademark of Janssen Pharmaceutica; QUINIDEX is a registered trademark of Wyeth Pharmaceuticals; PROZAC is a registered trademark of Eli Lilly and Company; PAXIL is a registered trademark of GlaxoSmithKline; TEGRETOL is a registered trademark of Novartis Pharmaceuticals.

Based on Full Prescribing Information as of 11/09 1239550A7.

Bristol-Myers Squibb Otsuka Otsuka America Pharmaceutical, Inc.

Tablets manufactured by Otsuka Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd., Tokyo, 101-8535 Japan or Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, Princeton, NJ 08543 USA.
Orally Disintegrating Tablets, Oral Solution, and Injection manufactured by Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, Princeton, NJ 08543 USA.
Distributed and marketed by Otsuka America Pharmaceutical, Inc., Rockville, MD 20850 USA.
Marketed by Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, Princeton, NJ 08543 USA.
U.S. Patent Nos. 5,006,528; 6,977,257; and 7,115,587.

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570US08CBS01603 0309L-2757 D6-B0001D-11-09-MDD November 2009

THE WISH LIST

WHAT WE'RE COVETING THIS MONTH

▲SEEING STARS
The Baccarat crystal **Atmos 566 Clock** tells time, sure — but it also shows off a current view of the night sky. [*$106,000; jaeger-lecoultre.com*]

▶SHEAR POWER
The **Edwin Jagger Cut Throat Razor** demands — and rewards — a strop-sharpening and a steady hand. [*$312; freemanssportingclub.com*]

▼EXPERT TRAVELER
The waxed cotton–and-leather **Perfect Bag by Steven Alan and V Australia** knows how to compartmentalize. [*$777; perfectproject.vaustralia.com*]

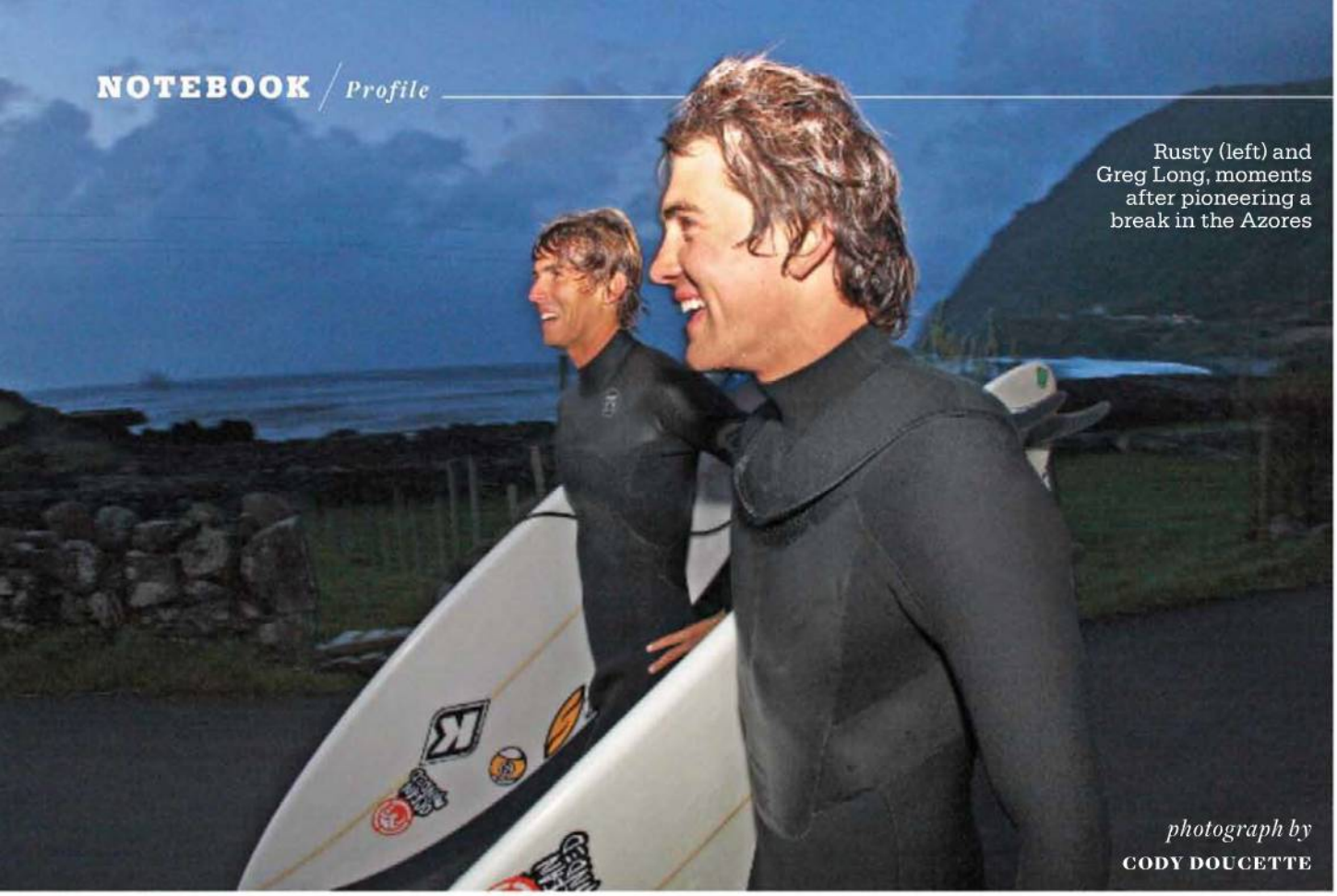
▶GHOST WRITER
The **Bedol Super Sleuth Camera Pen**'s built-in video camera is triggered by a motion detector; with 4GB of memory, it can capture a full two hours of refrigerator thieves. [*$160; bedol.com*]

▶CULINARY EXECUTION
The **F. Dick Double-Edged Cleaver** exists at that odd intersection of cutlery and medieval weaponry. Just mind your backswing. [*$200; fdick.us*]

▲DESIGNER SEACRAFT
Hot graphics aren't just for skate decks anymore: Old-school canoe builder Nova Craft has partnered with the art department of Ontario's Fanshawe College to make the **Nova Craft Lurking Octopus**. [*$2,200; novacraft.com*]

◀UNFORKED VELOCITY
With 211 horsepower from a 1198cc Ducati V-twin, the **Vyrus 987 C3 4V** is the most powerful production bike in the world. [*$89,000; vyrus.it*]

RAZOR: MICHAEL PIRROCCO



Rusty (left) and Greg Long, moments after pioneering a break in the Azores

photograph by **CODY DOUCETTE**

The Big-Wave Hunters

FOR THE LONG BROTHERS, PIONEERING GIANT SURF BREAKS IS AN ART, A SCIENCE — AND AN ENVIABLE WAY OF LIFE.

by **KITT DOUCETTE**

RUSTY LONG CAN FALL ASLEEP anywhere, anytime, in two minutes. A short while ago he was unloading the car and laughing about the drive up from San Clemente at 4 AM in the rain, but the moment he learned that our flight to Boston was canceled, he simply shrugged his shoulders, laid himself down atop a pile of surfboard bags, and immediately fell asleep amid the chaos of Los Angeles International Airport.

This ability to sleep whenever and wherever comes in handy when you spend nine months a year traveling the world to ride its most dangerous waves. When not surfing the greatest hits of the genre — Mavericks in Northern California; Waimea Bay on Oahu's North Shore; and Playa Zicatela in Puerto Escondido, Mexico, where huge waves breaking close to shore make the whole beach shake — Rusty, 28, and his brother, Greg, 26, travel to remote corners of the globe in search of undiscovered epics. Over the past five years they've established themselves as leaders in the next generation of big-wave hell men, pioneering breaks in Baja, South Africa, Ireland, Western Australia, northern Chile, and California. (A "big wave," in the Long brothers' world, means any wave that's tall and heavy enough to seriously injure or kill someone.)

From Boston we were to catch a flight to the Azores, a group of nine islands in the middle of the North Atlantic between New England and Portugal. Rusty had done his research, studying bathymetry charts, weather patterns, swell models, and satellite images on Google Earth to spot the kind of potential setups — a triangle of whitewater, a shallow shelf dropping abruptly into deep water, a headland jutting out into the ocean farther than any others — that, with the right swell and wind combination, could yield the kind of barely rideable waves for which he and his brother are known.

Swell models — computer-generated forecasts that turn marine and weather data into animated projections of wave heights, periods (time between crests), and direction — play a crucial role in modern surf adventure. They allow you to predict and track virtual swells across the open ocean and help determine how large and powerful they might be at various times. Greg and Rusty check the models four or five times a day in search of blobs of purple and white, the colors used for the biggest waves.

All of this research and modeling, alas, had been foiled by a much more commonplace malady: rainy weather in Boston. The Azores would have to remain unridden a while longer. Waking up Rusty with a gentle nudge, we rebooked our tickets for the next available flight — four days later — and drove back to Greg and Rusty's hometown.

SAN CLEMENTE IS THE EPICENTER OF SoCal surf culture. Located at the northern edge of the Marine Corps's Camp Pendleton, a rare block of open space that separates Orange County from San Diego, the city is home to myriad surf companies, surf magazines, surf shops, surfboard shapers, and virtually all of the economic machinery it takes to run the industry. It also has one of the densest per capita populations of surfers in the world, the result of two things: beautiful beaches free of development and consistent year-round waves.

The house the boys grew up in is tucked

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Fitness Group

Shape-ups

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Joe Montana

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Designed to help:

- Burn more calories
- Firm muscles
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Testimonial

"I spent 16 years on a football field – it was an amazing time, but also pushed my body to its limit. Since I started walking in Shape-ups, I have noticed an improvement in my core strength, and the pressure on my back and knees has eased."

- Joe Montana, Hall of Fame Quarterback

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Greg Long drops in at last year's Eddie at Waimea Bay (left); Greg and Rusty, aged 8 and 10, at Trestles in San Clemente

GREG ONCE TRAVELED 18 HOURS OVER DANGEROUS OCEAN FOR A MERE THREE-HOUR WINDOW OF SURF.

quietly within the confines of San Clemente State Beach among a dozen homes reserved for long-term park employees and lifeguards. Their father, Steve Long, worked as a lifeguard supervisor in the California state-park system for 26 years, and it's no wonder his boys love the ocean. "It was their backyard growing up," he tells me. "The ocean and the beach were their babysitter and their playground."

Several years of training and competing in the junior lifeguard program cemented the boys' skills and strength in the ocean not just as surfers, but also as swimmers and divers, and local surf contests up and down the coast filled most of their adolescent weekends. Trips down to Mexico in the old family RV offered the boys an early taste of surf adventure, and when they were 15 and 17, they made their first pilgrimage to Killers, a big-wave break at Todos Santos, eight miles off the coast of Northern Baja.

"After that first session, I was hooked," Greg says. Rusty adds, "It grows on you. You paddle out on a 15-foot day, get beat a couple of times, catch the biggest waves of your life, and realize that you can handle the beatings. Then you want to ride even bigger waves, and so on and so on..."

During the next three years, the brothers took both their wave-riding and their training seriously, transforming themselves from scrawny surf rats into lithe athletes with body-fat percentages in the low single digits.

Although they still competed in local and national surf contests — Greg won the United States National Amateur Championship at age 18 — the boys' main focus soon became finding and riding big waves, and after three more years, their appetite grew beyond the crowded lineups of Hawaiian hot spots. Armed with fresh travel budgets from sponsors such as Ocean Pacific, they hit the road, following winter swells around the globe while competing in a newly formed big-wave circuit.

To the degree that their routine these days can be pinned down, it goes something like this: December through February in California, keeping an eye on Hawaii and Baja just in case a big swell develops; March and April exploring such corners of the world as Rapa Nui (Easter Island, in the South Pacific), Tasmania, and Western Australia, where they keep a camper van; May and June in Puerto Escondido, where Rusty owns property; July and August in South Africa; just about anywhere in September; and Europe for October and November. One would be tempted to call their schedule "grueling" — if it didn't seem like so damned much fun.

AFTER AN EVENING SURF WITH RUSTY, I walk back to the house and find Greg in the kitchen, pacing back and forth and talking excitedly on his cell phone. The models have forecast a large western swell to hit California and Baja in three days, and the conversation turns to wave angles, wind predictions, and travel logistics. Surf spots from Oregon to Baja are suggested, but no decision can be made until the last minute. "A lot can change really quickly," Greg explains between calls. "So many variables are involved, and although the forecasts help, they're never totally accurate."

He tells me that he once made a trip out to Cortes Bank, a submerged mountain 100 miles off the coast of Southern California where some of the biggest waves in the world break. He traveled 18 hours round-trip over dangerous ocean waters in the hopes that the wind and rain would slacken for a mere three-hour window before the next storm was forecast to hit. It paid off: He got to surf waves seven stories tall.

"There are so many almosts," Rusty says. "For every score, you get skunked three times. Wind, tide, swell direction, weather — it all has to come together just right."

While Greg resumes his phone calls, I stumble across an article in a surf magazine about a three-day big-wave bender he and Rusty went on a few Decembers ago. One of the largest swells in four decades was brewing in the Pacific, with waves forecast to be in the 50-to-80-foot range at most of the premier big-wave breaks. The brothers set their sights on a trifecta — surfing Waimea Bay, then hopping on a plane to San Francisco and driving three hours south to ride Ghost Tree near Monterey, then driving 12 more hours south to Ensenada to board a boat for the eight-mile crossing to Killers — and decided to do it all during the same three-day swell.

Having already ridden the first two with a total of seven hours' sleep in two nights, Greg paddled into a five-story wave at Killers, earning him a biggest-paddle-in-wave nomination for the Billabong XXL awards, big-

FROM LEFT: MICHAEL CLARK; COURTESY GREG AND RUSTY LONG

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wave surfing's highest honor. The Longs are no strangers to the awards: Rusty was nominated for the Monster Paddle award in 2006; two years later, Greg won the biggest-paddle-in award as well as best overall performance, and last year Greg edged out his brother for Ride of the Year honors before triumphing at the Eddie, the oldest and most prestigious big-wave contest in the world, beating out Kelly Slater in giant surf.

Their styles on the water reflect their personalities, with Greg surfing aggressively and competitively, riding deep in the tube and cutting waves to pieces with powerful carves, and Rusty surfing patiently, smoothly flowing between elegant, relaxed turns. Neither brother, though, is about to let the pursuit of a trophy or title get in the way of their good time. "Contests are an important part of big-wave surfing," Greg says, "but the greatest joy for me comes from leaving the first set of footprints on an isolated beach, paddling out into unknown waters, and being the first to ride a wave somewhere."

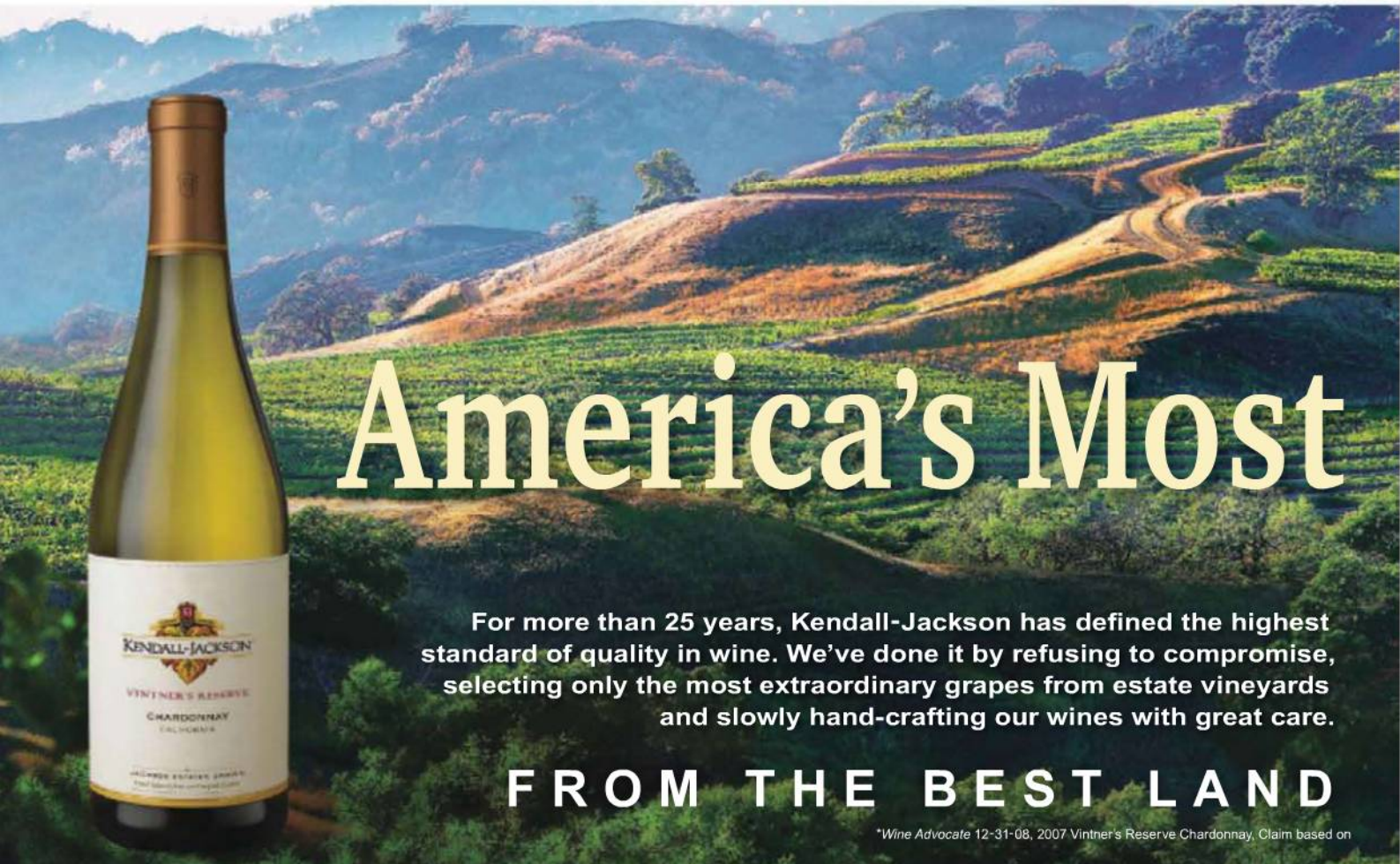
The swell Greg is tracking this time comes later than predicted, but he is on it, scrambling to load up his van in the dark, dashing down to Baja, and taking a boat nine miles off the mainland to ride 40-foot waves — all in a day's work. Rusty and I are off to Boston and the Azores again, and will meet up with Greg in a week. As we taxi up the runway for our red-eye, I look over at Rusty, already fast asleep.

IF THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS AND IRELAND had a torrid love affair and their bastard child spoke Portuguese, Azores would be its name. After landing in Ponta Delgado, we quickly light out for the far territories, where low-lying rock walls divide the countryside into thousands of asymmetrical green shapes speckled with cows and sheep. In the small towns, houses with whitewashed walls and pink-tiled roofs line narrow cobblestone streets. Volcanic rock surrounds the islands, thermal hot springs bubble up through caves, and waterfalls pour over 800-foot cliffs. The islands' mountaintops were once thought to be vestiges of the lost civilization of Atlantis — the parcel doled out to Poseidon when the rest of the gods divided up the Earth.

"CONTESTS ARE IMPORTANT," GREG SAYS, "BUT THE GREATEST JOY FOR ME COMES FROM PADDLING OUT INTO UNKNOWN WATERS."

For three days we drive around the island, with Rusty checking and rechecking various locations through WWII-era Russian binoculars. His equanimity in the face of a wave drought is admirable; far from seeming perturbed, Rusty appears to exist in a state of near-constant expectation. Then, as if on command, the clouds clear and I stand on a deserted headland watching 15-foot waves crash over a shallow rock reef. After quickly pulling on his wetsuit, Rusty skips across lava-rock boulders the size of tractor tires, tiptoes over the sea urchin–infested tidal zone, jumps into a small keyhole in the reef, and weaves his way through piles of whitewater that dwarf both him and his surfboard.

He surfs for two hours, catching a dozen waves with fluid efficiency. Beyond simply



Rusty Long, dreaming of big waves at LAX

CODY DOUCETTE

riding the heavy water (or just struggling to survive the drop), Rusty seems to join it. When he eventually drags himself from the surf, he just smiles and says, "Some fun ones out there today."

Every time the wind shifts, though, we look at the computer, cross-referencing different models to predict where we might find something better. After a day of this, we decide to gamble: Rusty sees a small triangle of whitewater in the grainy black-and-white satellite image where the wind is forecast to turn offshore, so we pack our bags and hop a small plane for a 30-minute flight to another island in the archipelago.

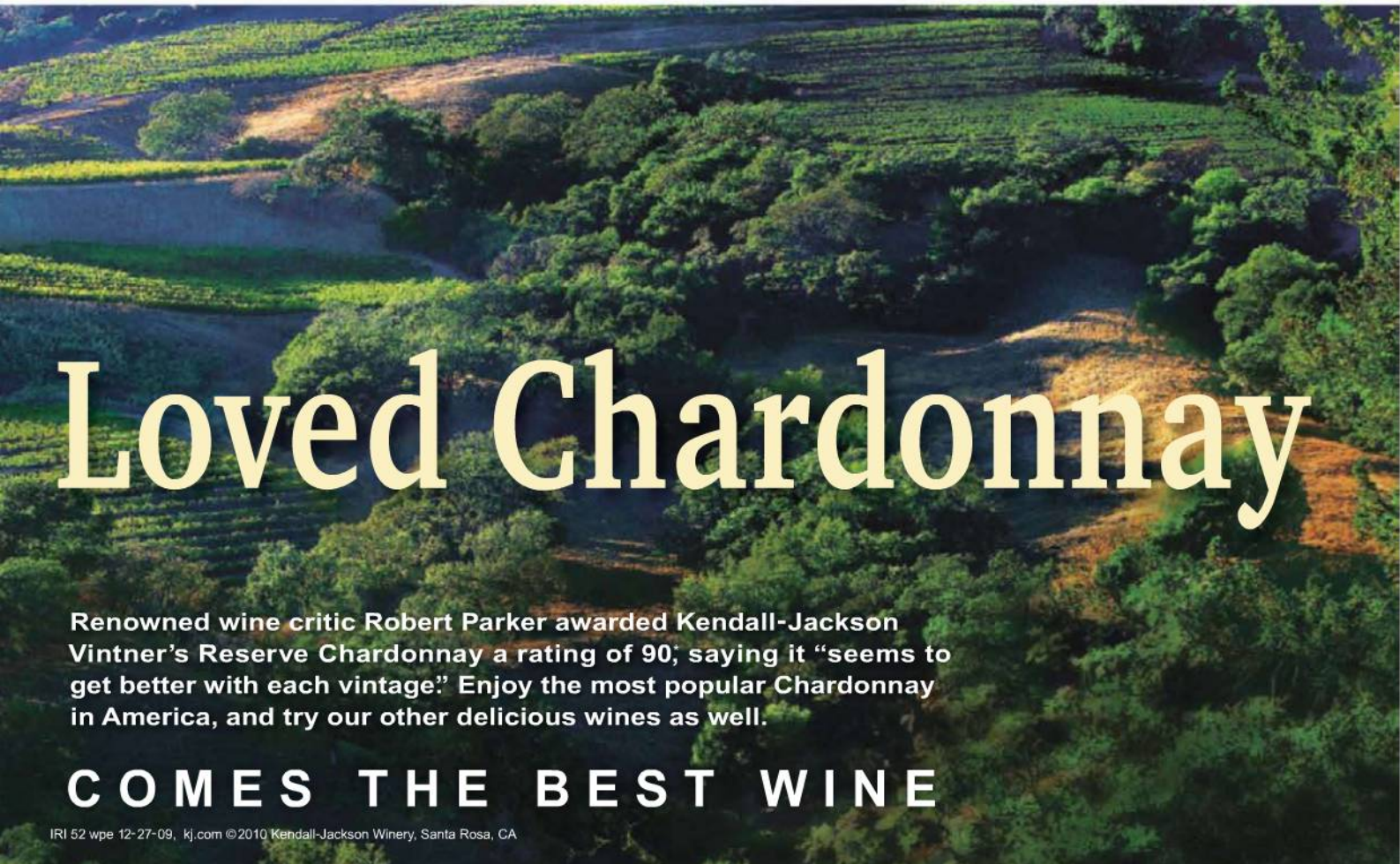
All we find is rain. People in the airport stare at our surfboard bags and call us crazy. We spend two days wearing out our windshield wipers looking for anything resembling a rideable wave until Greg shows up, and just like that, the waves turn on. We emerge one late afternoon from a thick cloud on top of the island into a sun-spotted overlook above a fresh ocean swell, with lines of perfect 12-foot waves stacked to the horizon. Four large waterfalls cascade off the cliffs rimming the bay while the setting sun turns the electric-green cliffs a soft pink. Forget about Atlantis: This is surfing Shangri-La.

I put my wetsuit on and watch as Greg drops in. Stalling at the bottom of his first wave, Greg watches calmly as thousands of gallons of water pitch up and over his head. Reaching his hand out to touch the wave face, he stands perfectly still on his board while the water peels flawlessly down the reef, encasing him in a perfect almond-shape barrel.

Dinner that night is a celebration. Rusty and Greg have a few beers and start to tell stories — something about a stolen car in South Africa; typhoons and food poisoning in a Philippine archipelago; spending a month in the rain on Easter Island only to have the wave they were waiting for go perfect on the eve of their departure...

Of course, our wind switches again, the swell fades again, and it's time to move on again. Greg says the models look amazing for Morocco, but when I say goodbye the next morning, the brothers still aren't sure where they're headed next. Greg puts up his hands and arches his eyebrows. "Maybe Morocco...maybe Ireland, maybe Spain... We'll have to just wait and see."

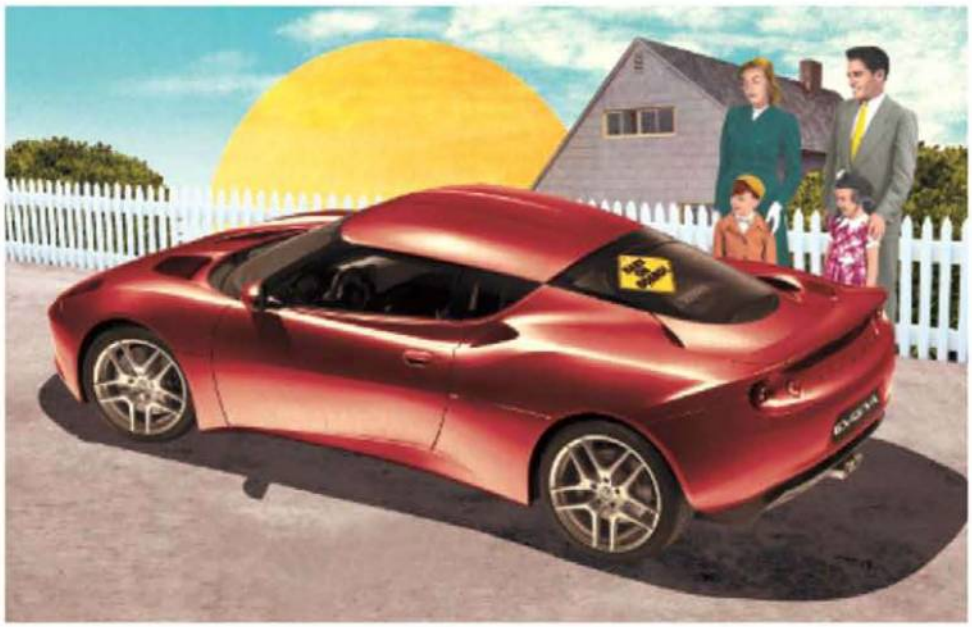
Rusty grins from ear to ear. Then he goes back to sleep. ■



The Everyday Sports Car

What happens when a company known for making Ferrari-slaying track stars with all the creature comforts of a refugee camp builds a coupe with a luxurious interior and a backseat? You get the Lotus Evora.

LOTUS HAS A NEGATIVE BODY IMAGE. IT FERVENTLY believes that the best cars weigh the least, a fact borne out by physics — shaving pounds allows a car to stop quicker, accelerate faster, and handle more sharply. As a result, for the past six years its showrooms have sold only the minimalist Elise and Exige. Astoundingly nimble and relatively inexpensive, yes, but practical they're not: If you've never seen an Elise's interior, throw a yoga mat into a steel trash can and climb inside. Yet here comes the new Lotus Evora, engineered to provide nine-tenths the performance of its brethren while also offering cruise control, an optional automatic transmission, and — heresy! — backseats. By the British company's standards, this is an Escalade. But by the Porsche 911's standards, this is serious competition.



The backseats sparked my grand plan to investigate the dualism of the Evora's personality by ripping around the Road Atlanta racetrack with four people in the car. One problem: "Seat" is a misleading descriptor for these leather-upholstered mini-fridges. The bottom cushion is relatively high and the roofline rakishly low, which means there's nowhere to put your head. And because the front seat-backs can touch the rear seats, there's nowhere to put your legs, either. The Lotus PR guy explains that they're intended for small children and luggage, but I'm persistent. I cram four helmeted adult males into the Evora, but the two unlucky souls in back are turned sideways, doubled over, with their knees to their chests, which keeps them from wearing seat belts. Track safety officials take issue with human projectiles, so I have to kick them out.

That means it's just me and a track instructor in the car as I surgically dissect turns seven and eight before bombing down the back straightaway at Road Atlanta. The speedometer touches 125 mph, and I stand on the brakes, the decelerating Evora pulling enough G's to strain my neck muscles. At this point I'm thinking how thankful I am that in 1996 Road Atlanta built the track over the old Gravity Cavity, a gully at the end of the straight that was known to break cars and cause incontinence in drivers. But what I'm *not* thinking, as the gravel trap rushes at me, is, "Wow, this reminds me of a Camry."

Indeed, the 276-horsepower V-6 nestled behind me also powers tens of thousands of unremarkable Toyotas that qualify as exciting only when their throttles stick open. Bolt it into a mid-engine, flyweight Lotus, however, and the engine grows a pair. That is, so long as you opt for the $1,500 sports-ratio transmission. With the stock gear box, the Evora goes narcoleptic after third gear.

But saying that a Lotus handles well on a track is like saying that Carlos Mencia isn't funny: It's obvious. More enlightening, if less exciting, was my time driving to the track. Georgia may have some gorgeously curvy back roads, but Atlanta is a gnarled tangle of divided highways and stop-and-go sprawl. Where the spartan Elise or Exige would have you gazing enviously at luxurious Corollas and Cobalts with their automatic transmissions and audible stereos, the Evora feels downright homey. The "premium package" interior is worth all $1,990, wrapping everything from dash to door sill in buttery Muirhead leather. The center stack and its buttons are real aluminum, not painted plastic. And it's quiet.

With the Evora, Lotus has realized that livability does not automatically compromise credibility. Because the reality of car ownership is that you're very rarely striving for lap records at Road Atlanta. You're sitting in traffic, fiddling with the radio. You're driving on bombed-out streets last repaved when *Dynasty* was on prime time. Or you're taking a weekend road trip and slaying some corners en route. The Evora excels in all of those roles. And if you get it on a track, you'll find your stomach in your throat. It'll make you giddy, the Evora. As long as you're not in the backseat. ■

SPEC CHECK

PRICE: $75,000

ENGINE: 276-horsepower, 3.5-liter V-6

0–60: 4.9 seconds

TOP SPEED: 162 mph

FROM TOP: MICHAEL WARREN; COURTESY LOTUS

illustration by JULIEN PACAUD

Many of the best vehicles in the world start with Mobil 1.

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Fact. 4 out of the top 5 auto manufacturers choose Mobil 1 for one or more of their flagship vehicles. Why? Because they know Mobil 1 technology has been proven time and again on both the track and the road. Get the full story at mobil1.com.

Mobil 1

The NFL Draft, Decoded

For years I've been obsessed with what is surely the greatest spectacle in all of sports: the NFL draft. Now I've finally figured out how to put my fixation to good use. Listen up, GMs.

I PROBABLY KNOW MORE ABOUT THE NFL DRAFT than I do about any other single thing in life. I have first cousins whose names I can't remember, and I forget the contents of pretty much every book I read the moment I'm finished. But for some mysterious and no doubt deeply psychotic reason, I have a virtually limitless ability to remember details about football's annual meat market. I can recall what kind of car Seattle Seahawks pick Jerramy Stevens crashed into an old-folks home in his Washington Huskies days (a red Toyota pickup) or what a lumbering Auburn tackle named King Dunlap "ran" in his pre-draft 40 two years ago (a 5.28, I'm pretty sure). People in my parents' generation remember where they were when Kennedy got shot; I'll remember where I was when Andre Smith first bared his bouncing man-titties during a pro-day workout.

It's hard to say exactly what makes the NFL draft so compelling. For starters, with its creepy slave-auction vibe and armies of drooling, flesh-peddling scouts, it has an excessive, perverted side that the drafts of other sports lack. NFL scouts who crisscross the country in search of raw football talent aren't looking for future stars with marketable faces and personalities the way NBA scouts do, and they're not interested in wide-eyed high school kids with fairy-tale dreams of making the Show the way baseball scouts are. NFL scouts are looking for raw gladiatorial muscle whose sweat-drenched faces will be hidden under helmets as coaches drive them to be rapidly ground into hamburger over the course of what, for most of them, will be ridiculously short (three and a half seasons, on average), injury-plagued, nonguaranteed-contract careers.

This is about as dark and freaky as our sanitized modern American mainstream culture ever openly admits to being. These are bloodless corporate enterprises using advanced scientific and economic metrics to measure the material worth of human flesh down to the half-pound, the 16th of an inch. Which would be horrifying and morally repulsive under normal circumstances, but when added to a strong rooting interest in your home team, can become for certain people one of those guilty pleasures you just can't give up because you enjoy it so much, like jerking off while hanging yourself in the shower.

Which, uh, brings me to the point I was eventually going to make about my own relationship with the draft. I went from being merely fascinated by it to embarking on a years-long quest to crack its code and discover the Unified Field Theory of NFL drafting. After years of watching well-staffed teams blow their picks over and over again, I'm now convinced that by following a few basic principles, any team, even one owned by Daniel Snyder or Al Davis, can score big in the draft.

They just need to follow these basic rules.

RULE 1: DOPE SMOKERS ARE A BARGAIN

Before the draft, teams spend far too much time worrying about the "character" issue, when the real question to ask is much narrower: "Can this player make it through his four- or five-year rookie contract without missing actual games due to incarceration?" Guys with drinking problems or who throw cell phones at their girlfriends' heads or get pulled over driving 110 with loaded unregistered pistols in their glove boxes are bad bets. Guys who just stay home and smoke weed while giggling at *Manswers* are not. Thus: Always draft the guy who falls in draft position due to a positive weed test. In fact, if a guy is regularly smoking buttloads of weed and he's still kicking ass in Division I football, grab that motherfucker quick. Teams who pass on such players almost always regret it; Randy Moss and Warren Sapp are two classic examples, and last year there was Percy Harvin, Minnesota's fast-as-hell wideout, a steal at pick 22. But what about the NFL's drug policy, which makes league suspension or banishment a consideration? The reality is that in the age of the Whizzinator and delightfully rare random testing, not many guys are going to make it all the way to their third (i.e., banishable) positive drug test before their rookie contract ends. Hell, even Ricky Williams didn't get sus-

illustration by VICTOR WHASE

pended until after his fifth season, and *nobody*, not even Tommy Chong, likes smoking weed more than Ricky Williams.

RULE 2: STEER CLEAR OF THE RECENTLY ARRESTED

There's a corollary to the rule of drafting guys with chronic weed issues: Do *not* pick any player who manages to get himself arrested shortly before the draft. The February-March-April period of a draft-eligible player's life is all about one thing: getting drafted. He barely goes to classes anymore, if at all. He is surrounded by family, coaches, and personal trainers. His agent, if he is not actually living in the player's house and sleeping in his bed, is certainly in constant contact with him. All of these people are continually feeding him important information and advice, like, "Hey, just FYI, don't pound 18 beers and get into a fight with an off-duty cop at a bar tonight, okay?" The guys who manage to elude all of these subtle hints about avoiding trouble at the very moment when they are being watched most closely by NFL scouts — guys like former Clemson and New York Jets corner Justin Miller, who shoved a female cop and screamed, "This is my house and my party!" at a campus bash a week before the draft — almost never pan out. Alex Boone of the 49ers, a giant left tackle who had to be Tasered twice shortly before last year's draft after drunkenly jumping up and down on car hoods in California, is another example. Did your target player punch out some poor unsuspecting bespectacled sociology major in a bar his freshman year? Fine — that's just the delightful puppy phase! But if the full-grown dog is still biting a week before the Westminster Kennel Club show, put him down.

IF A GUY IS SMOKING WEED AND STILL KICKING ASS IN COLLEGE, GRAB HIM QUICK.

RULE 3: TAKE A CHANCE ON SMALL

I remember years ago watching a Big 12 championship game and seeing a little Kansas State running back disembowel the Oklahoma defense in a four-touchdown blowout. Linebackers were crashing into each other lunging for the guy, and by the time they got themselves untangled, he'd be in the end zone pulling up his socks. It was like watching a bunch of Jenny Craig trainees in snowshoes trying to take a tennis ball away from a Dalmatian. That guy, Darren Sproles, finished his NCAA career with the sixth-most all-purpose yards in history but didn't get drafted until the end of the fourth round by San Diego, mainly because he's roughly the size of Janeane Garofalo. Virtually every year there's an undersize college running back who gets passed over because scouts agree that he "can't take the pounding," and almost every year that guy turns out to be not just one of the best running backs in the draft but one of the best players in the league. The list includes Clinton Portis (who fell to the 51st pick), Maurice Jones-Drew (drafted behind taller duds like Laurence Maroney), Leon Washington (116 guys were picked ahead of him!), and Chris Johnson, an MVP-level player who lasted until the 24th pick despite running an obscene 4.2 in the 40. To avoid Sproles impostors, like ineffectual Cardinals dwarf LaRod Stephens-Howling, the rule seems to demand that in the upper rounds, you draft only the little guys who possess legitimate monster speed, like sub-4.4 times. But in the middle to late rounds, snatch up any superproductive back whom scouts hate for size reasons: Gems like Mewelde Moore, Justin Fargas, Ahmad Bradshaw, and Domanick Williams always seem to be there.

RULE 4: DON'T SLEEP ON THE SAMOANS

For some reason Samoans, particularly Samoan defensive players, are consistently underdrafted. Even human jackhammer Troy Polamalu, taken by Pittsburgh with the 16th pick back in '03, should have gone higher. The guy was decapitating people at USC but got passed over in favor of, among others, three useless elephantine nose tackles: Dewayne Robertson, Jimmy Kennedy, and Johnathan Sullivan. First-round-talent linebackers Lofa Tatupu and Rey Maualuga each dropped into the second round in their drafts, and fearsome Cincinnati defensive tackle Domata Peko, whose amazing ass-length strawberry mane was worth a sixth-round pick all by itself, fell all the way to the fourth. When you're done picking up overlooked angry Samoans in the early rounds, then start scouting around for the goofy-looking-but-useful white wide receivers in rounds three and beyond: Productive guys like Ricky Proehl, Kevin Curtis, Austin Collie, Drew Bennett, and Wes Welker are always available well after the second round.

RULE 5: BE KIND TO FAT TIGHT ENDS

There always seems to be some dude who played tight end well in Division I, but his huge, billowing fat stomach disqualifies him from playing that position in the NFL. Draft that guy in the late rounds, stick him at tackle, see what happens. NFL scouts have a bizarre attitude toward fat: They not only like it but love it on a nose tackle, don't mind it on a guard or a 3-4 defensive end, frown on it on an offensive tackle, but absolutely flip the fuck out when they see it on a tight end. Jason Peters — who, appropriately enough, played for the Razorbacks in college — bummed out scouts because he looked like a *Biggest Loser* contestant, when what they should have been noticing is that this was an obese 328-pound kid running right past rocked-up Southeastern Conference linebackers to catch passes in the flat. For curiosity's sake alone, that should have been worth a seventh-round pick, but he went undrafted and only later made the Pro Bowl as a tackle. There is a short but elegant list of other oversize college tight ends who made great careers as NFL tackles (ex-Bronco Matt Lepsis is another), so if one of those dudes is sitting there in round six or seven, shit, why not? It's not like you're going to find a Tom Brady there. Oh, wait.

RULE 6: TAKE A FLYER ON A LATE-ROUND QB EVERY YEAR

Here's the thing about quarterbacks: You just don't know. Any coach who tries to tell you that he *knew* this or that late-round college quarterback was going to be an NFL star is a fucking liar. If you saw Tom Brady at the 2000 combine workout, you'd have thought he was auditioning for a role in a musical about gay milkmen. Same with Delaware Blue Hen Rich Gannon (who looked so unpromising as a QB, his first team wanted to try him at safety); prematurely balding BC Eagle Matt Hasselbeck; way-too-Christian Northern Iowa grocery bagger Kurt Warner; the seriously-resembling-a-dentist Indianan Trent Green; anonymous USC benchwarmer Matt Cassel; and so on. The least efficient way to acquire a Super Bowl quarterback is to draft a grinning, square-jawed, neck-deep-in-pussy first-round bonus baby, give him $50 million, and stake your franchise on him. That strategy sometimes works (see Manning, Peyton) but can also cripple a team for years (see Russell, JaMarcus). Instead, the surest way to get a quarterback is by accident. First you draft a bunch of late-round unknown geeks like Brady and Hasselbeck, then bring in a low-cost free-agent placeholder like a Trent Dilfer or Chad Pennington to actually run your team. Then you wait for your aging veteran to rupture his Achilles, as he inevitably will, and while he's on the IR, you see if any of your late-round flyers can actually play. Quarterbacks are like cats or teenage girls: It's impossible to tell what the hell is going on in their flighty heads or know how they're going to act even five minutes from now. Do like Bill Parcells does and use your high-round picks for real men: left tackles and pass rushers. ■

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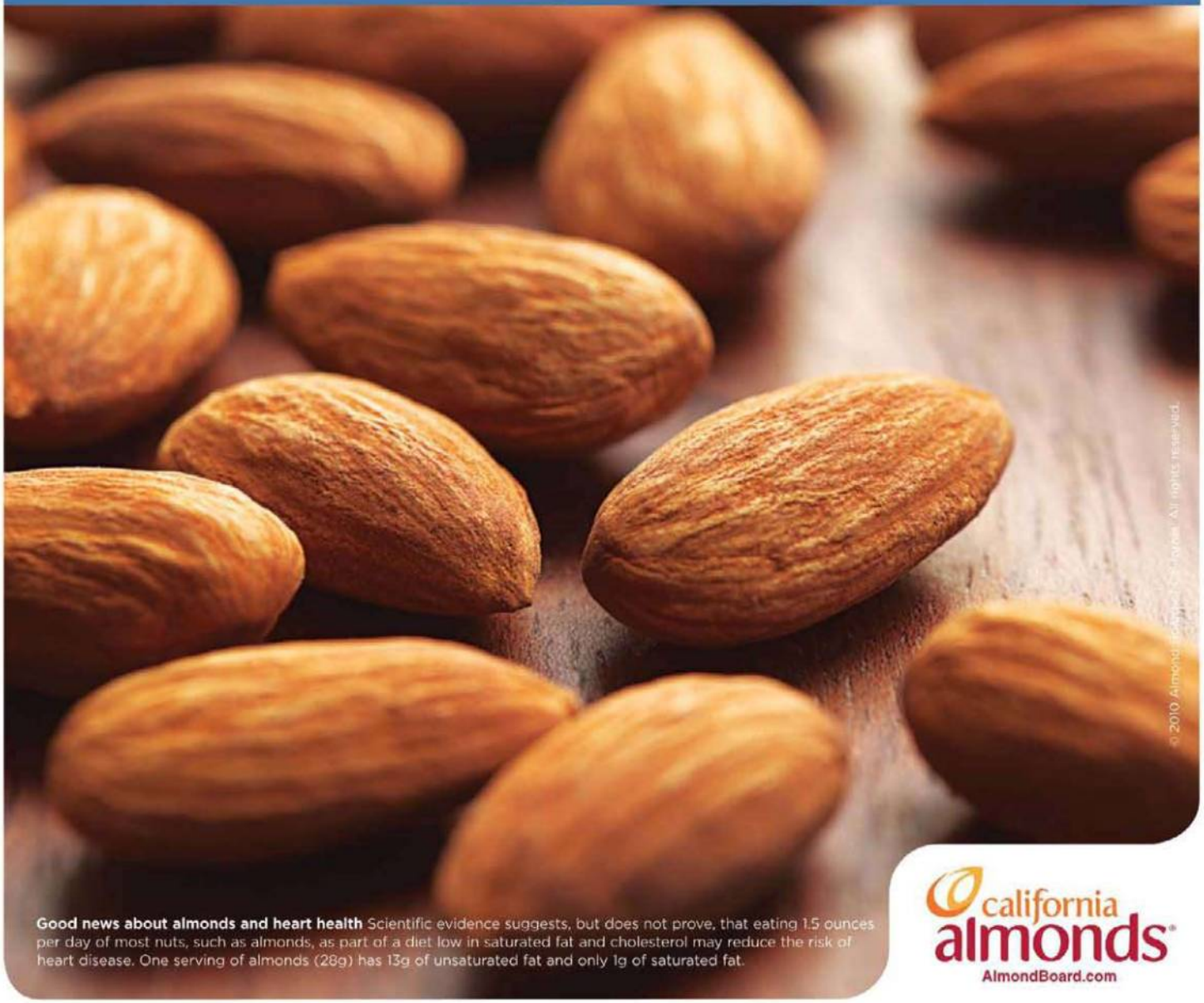

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Good news about almonds and heart health Scientific evidence suggests, but does not prove, that eating 1.5 ounces per day of most nuts, such as almonds, as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease. One serving of almonds (28g) has 13g of unsaturated fat and only 1g of saturated fat.

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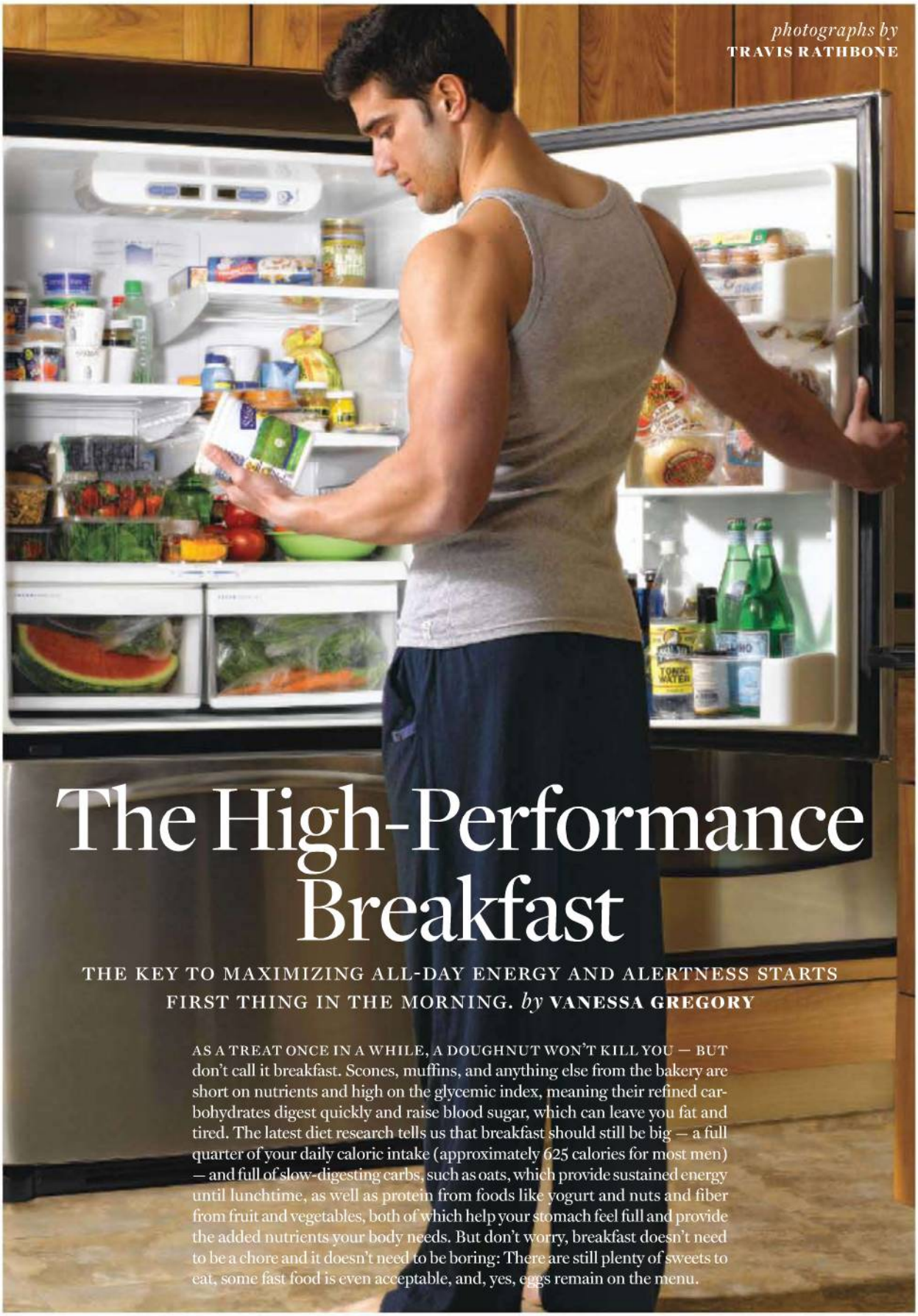

photographs by
TRAVIS RATHBONE

The High-Performance Breakfast

THE KEY TO MAXIMIZING ALL-DAY ENERGY AND ALERTNESS STARTS FIRST THING IN THE MORNING. *by* **VANESSA GREGORY**

AS A TREAT ONCE IN A WHILE, A DOUGHNUT WON'T KILL YOU — BUT don't call it breakfast. Scones, muffins, and anything else from the bakery are short on nutrients and high on the glycemic index, meaning their refined carbohydrates digest quickly and raise blood sugar, which can leave you fat and tired. The latest diet research tells us that breakfast should still be big — a full quarter of your daily caloric intake (approximately 625 calories for most men) — and full of slow-digesting carbs, such as oats, which provide sustained energy until lunchtime, as well as protein from foods like yogurt and nuts and fiber from fruit and vegetables, both of which help your stomach feel full and provide the added nutrients your body needs. But don't worry, breakfast doesn't need to be a chore and it doesn't need to be boring: There are still plenty of sweets to eat, some fast food is even acceptable, and, yes, eggs remain on the menu.

FOOD AND PROP STYLING BY ROSCOE BETSILL

Building a Better Breakfast

Cook oatmeal by combining 1 cup of oats with 1-3/4 cups of water or milk (soy, almond, or cow) and microwaving until thickened for two and a half to three minutes. **Calories:** 300

Add fruit (fresh or frozen) for fiber, vitamin C, and cancer-fighting antioxidants. Studies have also linked bioactive compounds found in blueberries to improved memory function. **Serving size:** 1/2 cup **Calories:** 26–52

Get your protein — crucial for feeling full until lunch — by topping oatmeal with low-fat yogurt or dried milk. **Serving size:** An 8-ounce container of plain, low-fat yogurt **Calories:** 154

For flavor and an energy boost, a dash of cinnamon — linked to efficient transport of glucose into muscle cells — gives your bowl some zip without calories. Or cook your oats in almond milk. **Serving size:** 1 cup of unsweetened almond milk **Calories:** 40 for almond milk

A handful of walnuts or a spoonful of flaxseeds provides heart-healthy omega-3s. **Serving size:** 1 ounce, or about 14 walnut halves **Calories:** 185

Tired of Oatmeal?

The meal above should be your go-to breakfast, but if you feel the need to switch it up, this frittata offers a healthy alternative. To make it, just follow these simple directions:

1) Break two eggs in a bowl and beat until yolks and whites combine. "Egg yolks are rich in a number of things that are critically important for a healthy nervous system and brain function," says Washington-based sports nutritionist Susan Kleiner. "Eating a couple of eggs three or four times a week is good for anyone." **Serving size:** 2 eggs **Calories:** 204

2) For fiber and vitamins, chop up some spinach, tomatoes, or any other vegetables you like. **Serving sizes:** 1 cup of spinach, 1/2 cup of tomatoes **Calories:** 41 for spinach, 22 for tomatoes

3) Grease a pan with olive oil, which contains antioxidants, and heat on medium for a minute. **Serving size:** 1 teaspoon **Calories:** 40

4) Pour the eggs into the pan and toss in the vegetables. Mix them together and cook for two minutes.

5) For carbs, toast whole-grain bread containing at least three grams of fiber per serving. Spread almond butter on top. **Serving sizes:** 2 slices of toast, 2 tablespoons almond butter **Calories:** 138 for toast, 203 for almond butter

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Breakfast on the Go

BREAKFAST BARS

Some bars are nearly fiber-free, but Clif Bar's Clif C has four grams of fiber, 130 calories, and dates, almonds, and apples. Wash it down with a glass of low-fat milk for protein and adequate calories.

FAST FOOD

Follow one rule: Fuel from several food groups. For example, McDonald's sells a 7-ounce Fruit 'n Yogurt Parfait with 160 calories; Starbucks's spinach, feta, and egg-white wrap is a sound choice too.

SMOOTHIES

In a blender, combine an 8-ounce container of low-fat Greek yogurt with 1 cup of frozen fruit. Add water as needed to reach desired consistency. Smoothies are convenient, especially if prepared the night before.

IF YOU MUST EAT COLD CEREAL...

Subsisting on grains alone is a bad idea. "Don't believe a cereal that says it gives you 100 percent of daily vitamins and minerals," says Roberta Anding, nutritionist for the Houston Texans. She says to load the bowl halfway up with fruit and milk, and find a label that resembles the one below.

Ingredients: The first item should contain the word "whole," as in whole grain. Avoid cereals with the word "enriched," which means the food was processed.

Fat: Avoid high-fat granola; grab a low-fat brand like Familia.

Sodium: Beware: Some cereals, like Cheerios, contain more salt than chips.

Vitamins and minerals: If this bowl of cereal is going to supply a quarter of your day's energy, then 25 percent is a good number to aim for.

Nutrition Facts

Serving size: 1-1/2 cups

Amount per serving	% Daily Value
Calories: 300	
Fat: 3 g	5 %
Saturated Fat: 0	
Cholesterol: 0	0 %
Sodium: 100 mg	4 %
Potassium: 170 mg	5 %
Total carb: 24 g	8 %
Sugars: 6 g	
Fiber: 3 grams or more	12 %
Protein: 5 grams	

Vitamin A	25 %	Vitamin C	25 %
Vitamin D	25 %	Calcium	25 %
Iron	25 %	Thiamin	25 %
Riboflavin	25 %	Niacin	25 %

Serving size: 1-1/2 cups may not seem like enough food, but with fruit and milk it's all you need.

Calories: Some cereals believed to be healthy, like Grape-Nuts, are calorie bombs — just a cup delivers more than 400 calories.

Sugar: A cereal like zero-sugar Kashi Puffs is best, but six grams or less is fine. Just don't add more.

Protein: Milk or soy milk adds another eight grams of protein, plenty to keep you feeling satisfied until lunch.

HOW THE PROS START THEIR DAY

Ultrarunner **DEAN KARNAZES** says his perfect morning meal is an eight-ounce container of Greek yogurt; a half cup of blueberries, raspberries, or blackberries; a quarter cup of sliced almonds; and a cup of coffee. For sweetness Karnazes chooses zero-calorie PureVia.

DAVE WIENS, the 45-year-old mountain biker famous for winning six consecutive Leadville 100 titles, goes for cereal. "I'm a mixer; I love mixing Corn Chex, Rice Krispies, Cheerios, and Wheaties," he says. "A banana is important too, just for the potassium."

Men's Journal columnist and NBA all-star **STEVE NASH** says he always eats gluten-free cereal with almond milk and fruit. "I also will have a handful of raw almonds or cashews and a cup or two of green tea before practice every morning. The best green tea is loose-leaf."

FROM LEFT: JASON MERRITT/FILM MAGIC/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY DAVE WIENS; JEFF NEWTON

ZZZz

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The Truth About Sunscreen

NINETY PERCENT OF LOTIONS DON'T OFFER ADEQUATE PROTECTION — AND A FEW CONTAIN INGREDIENTS THAT MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR HEALTH. HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW.

BEFORE YOU smear on sunscreen, check the label. If it contains octinoxate, oxybenzone, homosalate, or octisalate, throw it away. Those chemicals help protect you from ultraviolet rays, but the first three are potential hormone disruptors (oxybenzone can lower testosterone levels), and the fourth has been linked to dry, itchy skin. Plus, many sunscreens don't protect you the way they should. The Environmental Working Group, a watchdog on public-health issues based in Washington, DC, reviewed 1,755 sunscreens and found that only 8 percent blocked both UVA and UVB radiation, while also being free (or nearly free) of ingredients with known or suspected health hazards. No need to search for the winners: We found them for you.

—BERNE BROUDY

The Five Sunblocks *to* Use

RUNNING, BIKING & ROCK CLIMBING

Elemental Herbs Sunscreen Sport SPF 22, tinted; $19

It's a thicker formula that stays on even when you sweat, and its lighter tint means you won't have the ghostlike appearance that some other zinc-based sunscreens cause.

SWIMMING

Ocean Potion Natural Mineral Protective Lotion, Faces SPF 45, tinted; $8

Meets the new FDA guidelines that test for sunscreen effectiveness after 80 minutes in the water.

SENSITIVE SKIN

MyChelle Sun Shield SPF 28; $20

Contains aloe powder, which reduces inflammation, and glycine soja (soybean) oil, which strengthens and tightens the skin, reducing wrinkles.

LIPS

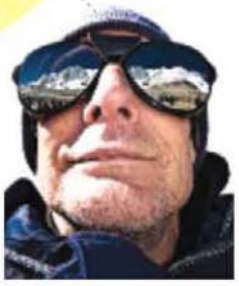
UV Natural Sport Lip Sunscreen SPF 30+; $13

Applying lip sunscreen more than once a day may cut your lip cancer risk in half. UV Natural is the top-rated lip balm by EWG.

SURFING

Beyond Coastal Natural Sunscreen SPF 30; $16

Smart surfers seek out a nongreasy, oil-free lotion like this, which will help keep you from slipping off your surfboard.



The Safer Way to Tan

HOME TANNING CREAMS TURN YOU orange, so if you want golden skin without the risk of cancer, your best bet might be to head to a salon that uses a better product to bronze you. Our man did; here's how it turned out.

The process: After I strip down to a Speedo, my tanning specialist, Anna, spends 10 minutes air-gunning me with dihydroxyacetone (DHA), an FDA-approved tanner often derived from beets that is found in most salons. She then fan-dries and powders me, and I'm done. I leave $85 poorer.

The test: I encounter a woman I haven't seen in months. "Oh, my God, you're so tan," she gushes, never suspecting it may be fake. All my friends are fooled too.

The analysis: It definitely gave me a nice tan, but I wish it lasted longer than seven days. Anna warned that a less experienced tanning specialist can go too heavy with the DHA, giving you that George Hamilton look, so it's important to find someone who has spent lots of time behind the gun.

—STEVE MAZZUCCHI

ATHLETES: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SCOTT MARKEWITZ/GETTY IMAGES; ALISTAIR BERG/GETTY IMAGES; CLAUDIA LOPEZ/AURORA; FRIEDEN/A-FRAME. PRODUCTS: MICHAEL PIROCCO (5); ILLUSTRATION BY JAY VOLLMAR

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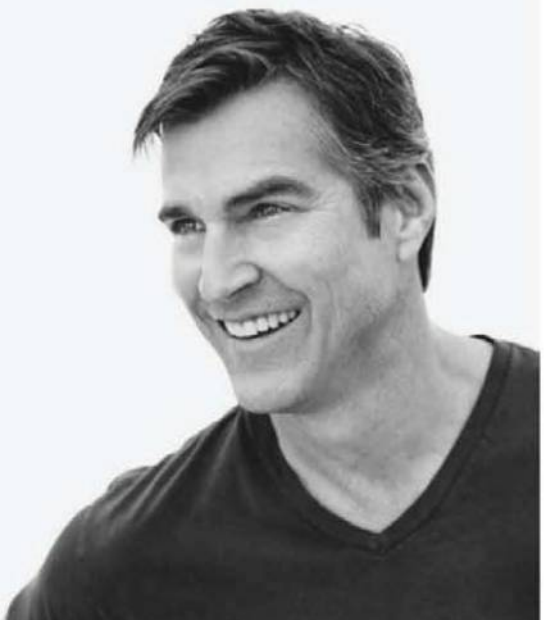

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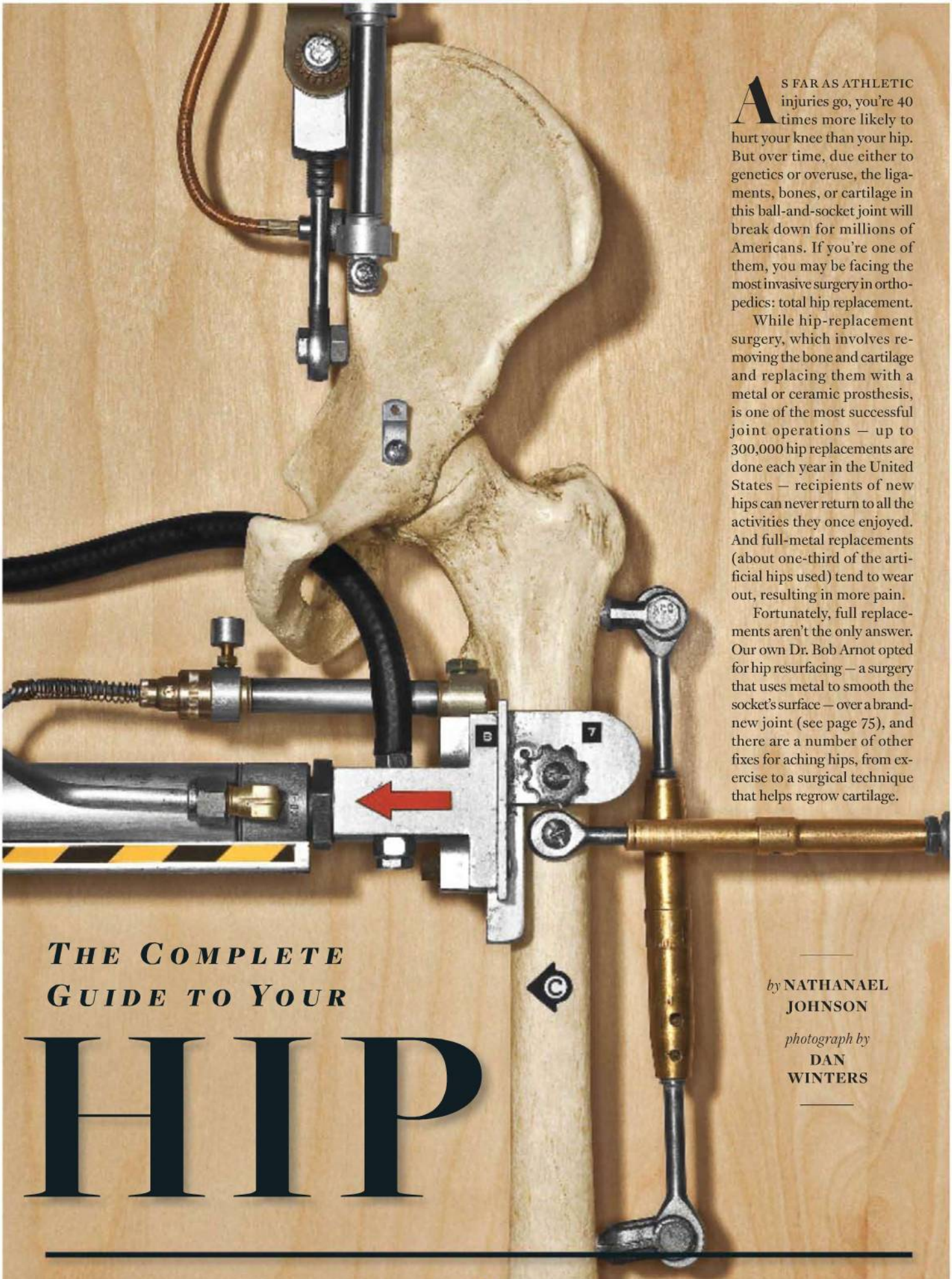


AS FAR AS ATHLETIC injuries go, you're 40 times more likely to hurt your knee than your hip. But over time, due either to genetics or overuse, the ligaments, bones, or cartilage in this ball-and-socket joint will break down for millions of Americans. If you're one of them, you may be facing the most invasive surgery in orthopedics: total hip replacement.

While hip-replacement surgery, which involves removing the bone and cartilage and replacing them with a metal or ceramic prosthesis, is one of the most successful joint operations — up to 300,000 hip replacements are done each year in the United States — recipients of new hips can never return to all the activities they once enjoyed. And full-metal replacements (about one-third of the artificial hips used) tend to wear out, resulting in more pain.

Fortunately, full replacements aren't the only answer. Our own Dr. Bob Arnot opted for hip resurfacing — a surgery that uses metal to smooth the socket's surface — over a brand-new joint (see page 75), and there are a number of other fixes for aching hips, from exercise to a surgical technique that helps regrow cartilage.

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO YOUR

HIP

by **NATHANAEL JOHNSON**

photograph by **DAN WINTERS**

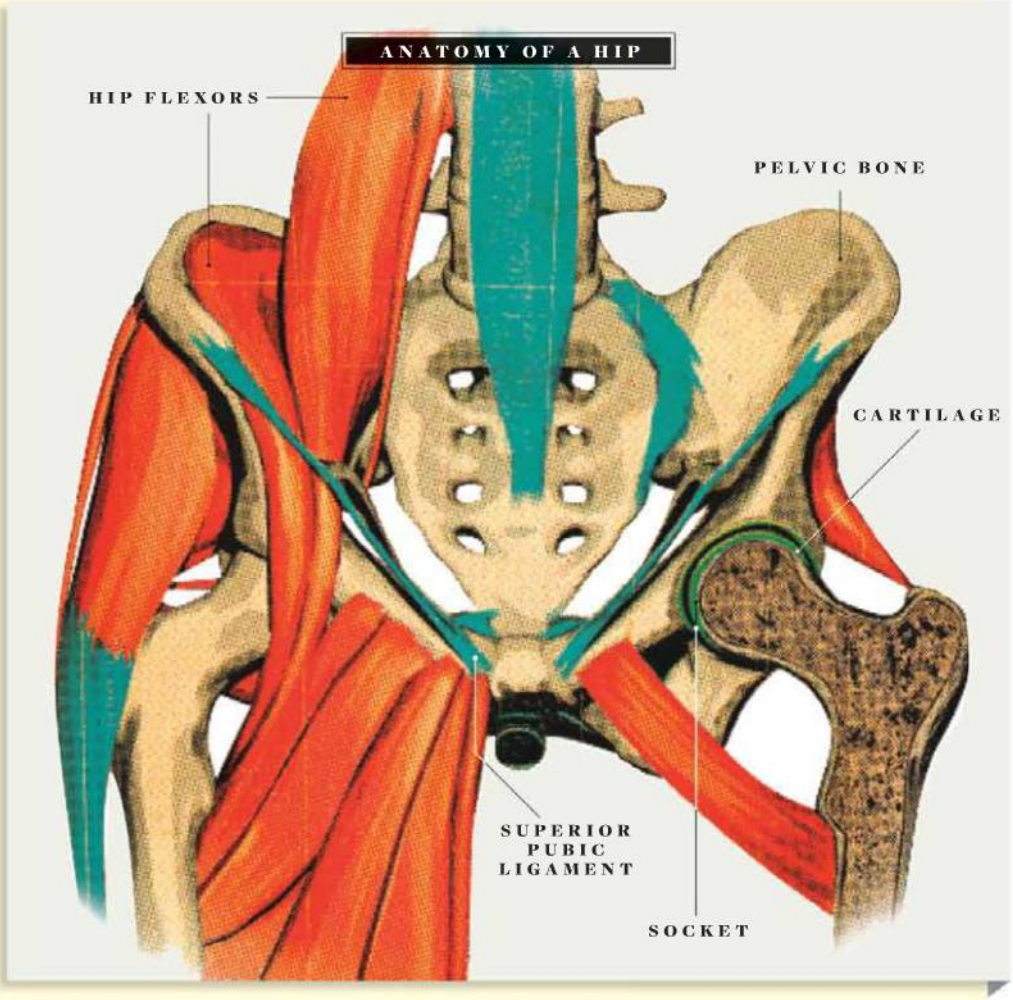
Problem No. 1:

Joint Degeneration

Doctors used to tell their patients to tough it out and delay hip-replacement surgery as long as possible. But if you catch degeneration early, there are far better, less invasive ways to save your hip.
AT RISK: Everyone.

DIAGNOSIS

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING: The essence of the problem is friction where the femur — the largest of the leg bones — meets the pelvis. The pelvis cups neatly around the head of the femur; both bones at this juncture are covered in cartilage and naturally lubricated by mucus-like synovial fluid. Problems start to crop up around age 30 if — after a couple hundred-million rotations — this slippery surface breaks down and bone begins rubbing on bone. That can cause arthritis and the formation of osteophytes, better known as bone spurs. Even before that, the feeling of slowly grinding away your soft tissue isn't pleasant.



CAUSES: Most hip degeneration can be traced to a single origin: an imperfect fit. If the femoral ball is infinitesimally oblong, or if there is a slight bump on the pelvic socket, eventually that imperfection can abrade the soft tissue. Many of these slight malformations may be genetic. Other irregularities may be caused by excessive strain on the developing joint. "Kids hitting their growth spurts shouldn't be going so hard on the hockey rink that they risk deforming that joint," says Dr. Bryan Kelly, a hip expert at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York. In most hips these deformations hurt only when you enter positions of risk — a ski turn, for example — that create friction between the hip bones. Often these are positions of extreme flexion combined with muscle strain — lifting weights from a deep squat, or exploding up from the tripod position at the line of scrimmage — but pain could even result from the rotation associated with a golf swing.

ADVICE: When meeting a patient, hip surgeon Marc Philippon, at the Steadman Philippon Research Institute in Vail, Colorado, always takes note of the patient's weight. That's because every unnecessary ounce puts stress on the hip with each footfall. "If you can lose a couple of pounds, there's that much less load on the joint," Philippon says. He also advises his patients to give sore hips a break by switching from high-impact running sports to gliding sports such as swimming, cycling, or skating. "Each injury is different," Philippon says. "You come in, and we'll figure out what causes the conflict in the hip. And then we'll work out a personalized training program with certain stretches and exercises [like those found in the prevention workout on page 77] to balance out the muscles."

illustration by **TAVIS COBURN**

CASE STUDY

NAME: Dr. Bob Arnot
OCCUPATION: Doctor/television personality
AGE: 62
ACTIVITIES: Cycling, alpine skiing

WHAT HAPPENED: Bob's hips started hurting when he was 47, and for a long time he dealt with it the old-fashioned way: He tried ignoring it. Despite himself, he was slowing down, hobbling around, and not living life the way he used to. He knew something had to change the moment he landed a jump on a heli-ski trip in British Columbia: "In an effort to protect my hips, I jammed my poles down so hard that I ripped a shoulder muscle right in half. My buddies said, 'You're not going to come another year unless you get those hips fixed.'"

WHAT IT FELT LIKE: A dull ache that grew worse each day. But, Bob says, "that didn't bother me. I have a high pain threshold." It did bother him that he couldn't go as hard as he once had and that he seemed to be getting old at a faster pace than he'd bargained for.

THE DIAGNOSIS: When he went to have his hips checked out, he learned that the protective lining of the joint was gone — the X-ray showed he was grinding bone against bone with every step. Initially, doctors told Bob he had no choice: total hip replacement. He asked what that would mean and recalls being told, "You can't cross your legs, you can't have sex in certain positions, you can ski on the flats but we really don't want you to ski on the bumps, we don't want you to run, etc." He decided he needed a second opinion and met with a doctor who deemed his bones strong enough for Birmingham Hip Resurfacing, a technique that shaves off only a sliver of bone and replaces it with an extremely hard, abrasion-resistant alloy. One patient finished an Ironman triathlon six months after this kind of hip surgery.

QUICK SELF-ASSESSMENT
Hip degeneration can be characterized by generalized pain in the hip area, especially while running. Eventually, those afflicted will feel better by walking bent at the waist.

THE FIX: "Luckily, I caught the degeneration soon enough to have resurfacing done," Bob says. "And if you look at the numbers, the operation has a great record." In the end, he had both hips resurfaced at the same time in a bid to reclaim his youth. "The dream is you can go right back in time and be 25 again," he says. When the surgeon asked if he was ready, Bob replied, "Ready? Let's do it! I'm psyched!" The surgery took four hours. The next day Bob was able to walk down the hall and back on crutches. "Now," he says, "I really am back to 25." Two years have passed and he's beating kids 40 years his junior in bike races. "If this had lasted just a year it would have been the best year of my life," he says.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

An achy hip can mean that the joint is degenerating in a number of different ways. All you need is an MRI to tell you which of the following five fixes is best for you.

PHYSICAL THERAPY

WHAT IT IS: Trainers work with the injured hip to maintain strength while increasing flexibility and building appropriate balance between the muscles. But most important, a physical therapist should help you identify and avoid the movements that caused the problem in the first place.
BEST FOR: Cases where the hip cartilage is not badly damaged; it feels more like an occasional twinge than a constant ache.

SIMPLE ARTHROSCOPY

WHAT IT IS: Using a scope, the surgeon can sew down cartilage and tighten up the ligaments. This tidying up can prevent an initial injury from worsening.
BEST FOR: Cases where the doctor determines that a torn flap of cartilage or a bone fragment is floating around in your hip capsule. You might opt for this minimally invasive surgery to clean up the mess.

MICROFRACTURE

WHAT IT IS: The surgeon makes a series of tiny holes in the bone at the site of the injury. This allows bone marrow to seep out, and in that marrow are stem cells: biological wild cards that can morph into any bodily material. In this case, the stem cells become cartilage. Microfracture is usually performed arthroscopically.
BEST FOR: Cases where a small area of cartilage is worn down to the bone; a surgeon may be able to stimulate its regrowth.

RESURFACING

WHAT IT IS: The doctor opens up the entire hip, removes some of the damaged bone, and replaces it with metal or ceramic. You're on crutches for a few weeks and ready to return to sports in three months.
BEST FOR: Cases where the hip cartilage is beyond repair, but the patient has strong bones; weak bone may not tolerate the additional hardware.

TOTAL HIP REPLACEMENT

WHAT IT IS: This surgery removes not just the surface of the joint, but the entire head of the femur. In place of the bone, the surgeon cements a piece of metal or ceramic engineered to serve the same functions as your joint. You're on crutches for a couple of months, and high-impact sports are out.
BEST FOR: Shot hips and weak bone.

FUTURE FIXES

Three Operations to Ask About

CEMENT-FREE REPLACEMENT
The jury is still out as to whether resurfacing and cement-free hip replacements are better, but there is some indication that without cement the bone is able to grow into the implant, making everything stronger.

NEXT-LEVEL MICROFRACTURE
The cartilage created by microfracture can be weak, but Vail, Colorado–based hip surgeon Marc Philippon is currently doing "top secret" research, using horses as test subjects, that he claims will lead to the formation of tougher cartilage cells.

MOSAICPLASTY
If the area of missing cartilage is too large to be repaired with microfracture, the doctor can try mosaicplasty, which involves trimming cartilage from one area (in either the hip or another part of the body) and using it to cover the exposed bone.

MICHAEL WARREN

Problem No. 2

Muscle Strains

Anytime you make a cut on the tennis or basketball court, you could damage one of the dozens of muscles attached to the hip. **AT RISK:** Athletes in stop-and-start sports.

DIAGNOSIS

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING: Your adductor, hamstring, and gluteal muscles are all subject to strains, but the flexors (in the front of the hip) seem to get injured most often. Strains occur when the force exerted on the structure of muscle, tendon, and bone is stronger than any one of the component parts and the muscle tears.

CAUSES: The ultimate cause of most strains is ego — you believe you're a lot fitter than you are, go for the big move, and next thing you know, you're rolling on the ground in pain. "[Muscle strains] are very common, especially if you are slightly out of shape," Philippon says.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

R.I.C.E. Standard treatment is rest, ice, compression, and elevation. Anti-inflammatory pills can help too. Give hip strains plenty of time to recover: Allow two to six weeks to build back up to full strength.

PLATELET-RICH PLASMA In what is still a somewhat experimental technique, the doctor draws some of the patient's blood and spins it in a centrifuge to separate out the platelets, releasing chemicals that promote healing. Scientists don't yet fully understand why this works, but injecting platelet-rich plasma into damaged tendons does seem to shorten recovery.

SURGERY Occasionally, what feels like a bad muscle strain is actually something much more serious: a torn tendon. If the MRI reveals a bad enough tear, a surgeon will have to stitch the tendon back together and suture it to the bone.

Patient Information

LEVITRA® (Luh-VEE-Trah)

(vardenafil HCl) Tablets

08918646IPM, R.7 12/08

Read the Patient Information about LEVITRA before you start taking it and again each time you get a refill. There may be new information. You may also find it helpful to share this information with your partner. This leaflet does not take the place of talking with your doctor. You and your doctor should talk about LEVITRA when you start taking it and at regular checkups. If you do not understand the information, or have questions, talk with your doctor or pharmacist.

WHAT IMPORTANT INFORMATION SHOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT LEVITRA?

LEVITRA can cause your blood pressure to drop suddenly to an unsafe level if it is taken with certain other medicines. With a sudden drop in blood pressure, you could get dizzy, faint, or have a heart attack or stroke.

Do not take LEVITRA if you:

- **take any medicines called "nitrates."**
- **use recreational drugs called "poppers" like amyl nitrate and butyl nitrate.**

(See "Who Should Not Take LEVITRA?")

Tell all your healthcare providers that you take LEVITRA. If you need emergency medical care for a heart problem, it will be important for your healthcare provider to know when you last took LEVITRA.

WHAT IS LEVITRA?

LEVITRA is a prescription medicine taken by mouth for the treatment of erectile dysfunction (ED) in men.

ED is a condition where the penis does not harden and expand when a man is sexually excited, or when he cannot keep an erection. A man who has trouble getting or keeping an erection should see his doctor for help if the condition bothers him. LEVITRA may help a man with ED get and keep an erection when he is sexually excited.

LEVITRA does not:

- cure ED
- increase a man's sexual desire
- protect a man or his partner from sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. Speak to your doctor about ways to guard against sexually transmitted diseases.
- serve as a male form of birth control

LEVITRA is only for men with ED. LEVITRA is not for women or children. LEVITRA must be used only under a doctor's care.

HOW DOES LEVITRA WORK?

When a man is sexually stimulated, his body's normal physical response is to increase blood flow to his penis. This results in an erection. LEVITRA helps increase blood flow to the penis and may help men with ED get and keep an erection satisfactory for sexual activity. Once a man has completed sexual activity, blood flow to his penis decreases, and his erection goes away.

WHO CAN TAKE LEVITRA?

Talk to your doctor to decide if LEVITRA is right for you.

LEVITRA has been shown to be effective in men over the age of 18 years who have erectile dysfunction, including men with diabetes or who have undergone prostatectomy.

WHO SHOULD NOT TAKE LEVITRA?

Do not take LEVITRA if you:

- **take any medicines called "nitrates"** (See "What important information should you know about LEVITRA?"). Nitrates are commonly used to treat angina. Angina is a symptom of heart disease and can cause pain in your chest, jaw, or down your arm.

  Medicines called nitrates include nitroglycerin that is found in tablets, sprays, ointments, pastes, or patches. Nitrates can also be found in other medicines such as isosorbide dinitrate or isosorbide mononitrate. Some recreational drugs called "poppers" also contain nitrates, such as amyl nitrate and butyl nitrate. Do not use LEVITRA if you are using these drugs. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure if any of your medicines are nitrates.
- **you have been told by your healthcare provider to not have sexual activity because of health problems.** Sexual activity can put an extra strain on your heart, especially if your heart is already weak from a heart attack or heart disease.
- **are allergic to LEVITRA or any of its ingredients.** The active ingredient in LEVITRA is called vardenafil. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DISCUSS WITH YOUR DOCTOR BEFORE TAKING LEVITRA?

Before taking LEVITRA, tell your doctor about all your medical problems, including if you:

- **have heart problems** such as angina, heart failure, irregular heartbeats, or have had a heart attack. Ask your doctor if it is safe for you to have sexual activity.
- **have low blood pressure or** have high blood pressure that is not controlled
- **have had a stroke**
- **have had a seizure**
- **or any family members have a rare heart condition known as prolongation of the QT interval (long QT syndrome)**
- **have liver problems**
- **have kidney problems and require dialysis**
- **have retinitis pigmentosa,** a rare genetic (runs in families) eye disease
- **have ever had severe vision loss, or if you have an eye condition called non-arteritic anterior ischemic optic neuropathy (NAION)**
- **have stomach ulcers**
- **have a bleeding problem**
- **have a deformed penis shape** or Peyronie's disease
- **have had an erection that lasted more than 4 hours**
- **have blood cell problems** such as sickle cell anemia, multiple myeloma, or leukemia

CAN OTHER MEDICATIONS AFFECT LEVITRA?

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. LEVITRA and other medicines may affect each other. Always check with your doctor before starting or stopping any medicines. Especially tell your doctor if you take any of the following:

- medicines called nitrates (See "What important information should you know about LEVITRA?")
- medicines called alpha-blockers. These include Hytrin® (terazosin HCl), Flomax® (tamsulosin HCl), Cardura® (doxazosin mesylate), Minipress® (prazosin HCl) or Uroxatral® (alfuzosin HCl). Alpha-blockers are sometimes prescribed for prostate problems or high blood pressure. In some patients the use of PDE5 inhibitor drugs, including LEVITRA, with alpha-blockers can lower blood pressure significantly leading to fainting. You should contact the prescribing physician if alpha-blockers or other drugs that lower blood pressure are prescribed by another healthcare provider.
- medicines that treat abnormal heartbeat. These include quinidine, procainamide, amiodarone and sotalol.
- ritonavir (Norvir®) or indinavir sulfate (Crixivan®) saquinavir (Fortavase® or Invirase®) or atazanavir (Reyataz®)
- ketoconazole or itraconazole (such as Nizoral® or Sporanox®)
- erythromycin or clarithromycin
- other medicines or treatments for ED

HOW SHOULD YOU TAKE LEVITRA?

Take LEVITRA exactly as your doctor prescribes. LEVITRA comes in different doses (2.5 mg, 5 mg, 10 mg, and 20 mg). For most men, the recommended starting dose is 10 mg. **Take LEVITRA no more than once a day.** Doses should be taken at least 24 hours apart. Some men can only take a low dose of LEVITRA because of medical conditions or medicines they take. Your doctor will prescribe the dose that is right for you.

- If you are older than 65 or have liver problems, your doctor may start you on a lower dose of LEVITRA.
- If you have prostate problems or high blood pressure, for which you take medicines called alpha-blockers, your doctor may start you on a lower dose of LEVITRA.
- If you are taking certain other medicines your doctor may prescribe a lower starting dose and limit you to one dose of LEVITRA in a 72-hour (3 days) period.

Take 1 LEVITRA tablet about 1 hour (60 minutes) before sexual activity. Some form of sexual stimulation is needed for an erection to happen with LEVITRA. LEVITRA may be taken with or without meals.

Do not change your dose of LEVITRA without talking to your doctor. Your doctor may lower your dose or raise your dose, depending on how your body reacts to LEVITRA.

If you take too much LEVITRA, call your doctor or emergency room right away.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF LEVITRA?

The most common side effects with LEVITRA are headache, flushing, stuffy or runny nose, indigestion, upset stomach, or dizziness. These side effects usually go away after a few hours. Call your doctor if you get a side effect that bothers you or one that will not go away.

LEVITRA may uncommonly cause:

- **an erection that won't go away (priapism).** If you get an erection that lasts more than 4 hours, get medical help right away. Priapism must be treated as soon as possible or lasting damage can happen to your penis including the inability to have erections.
- **color vision changes,** such as seeing a blue tinge to objects or having difficulty telling the difference between the colors blue and green.

In rare instances, men taking PDE5 inhibitors (oral erectile dysfunction medicines, including LEVITRA) reported a sudden decrease or loss of vision in one or both eyes. It is not possible to determine whether these events are related directly to these medicines, to other factors such as high blood pressure or diabetes, or to a combination of these. If you experience sudden decrease or loss of vision, stop taking PDE5 inhibitors, including LEVITRA, and call a doctor right away.

Sudden loss or decrease in hearing, sometimes with ringing in the ears and dizziness, has been rarely reported in people taking PDE5 inhibitors, including LEVITRA. It is not possible to determine whether these events are related directly to the PDE5 inhibitors, to other diseases or medications, to other factors, or to a combination of factors. If you experience these symptoms, stop taking LEVITRA and contact a doctor right away.

These are not all the side effects of LEVITRA. For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

HOW SHOULD LEVITRA BE STORED?

- Store LEVITRA at room temperature between 59° and 86° F (15° to 30° C).
- **Keep LEVITRA and all medicines out of the reach of children.**

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT LEVITRA.

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions other than those described in patient information leaflets. Do not use LEVITRA for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give LEVITRA to other people, even if they have the same symptoms that you have. It may harm them.

This leaflet summarizes the most important information about LEVITRA. If you would like more information, talk with your healthcare provider. You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for information about LEVITRA that is written for health professionals.

For more information you can also visit www.LEVITRA.com, or call 1-866-LEVITRA.

WHAT ARE THE INGREDIENTS OF LEVITRA?

Active Ingredient: vardenafil hydrochloride

Inactive Ingredients: microcrystalline cellulose, crospovidone, colloidal silicon dioxide, magnesium stearate, hypromellose, polyethylene glycol, titanium dioxide, yellow ferric oxide, and red ferric oxide.

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Rx Only

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You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch <http://www.fda.gov/medwatch>, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Creating a Flexible Hip

Doing two sets of the following stretches five times a week — holding each for 30 seconds — can help prevent muscle strains and even ward off degeneration by reducing tightness in the hip joint.

EXERCISES

▼1. PIRIFORMIS STRETCH
Lying down, cross one leg over the other. Hold your knee and ankle and pull the crossed leg to your chest.

▼2. GLUTEUS STRETCH
Lying down, cross one leg over the other. Lift the leg that is on the ground, pressing the crossed leg toward your chest.

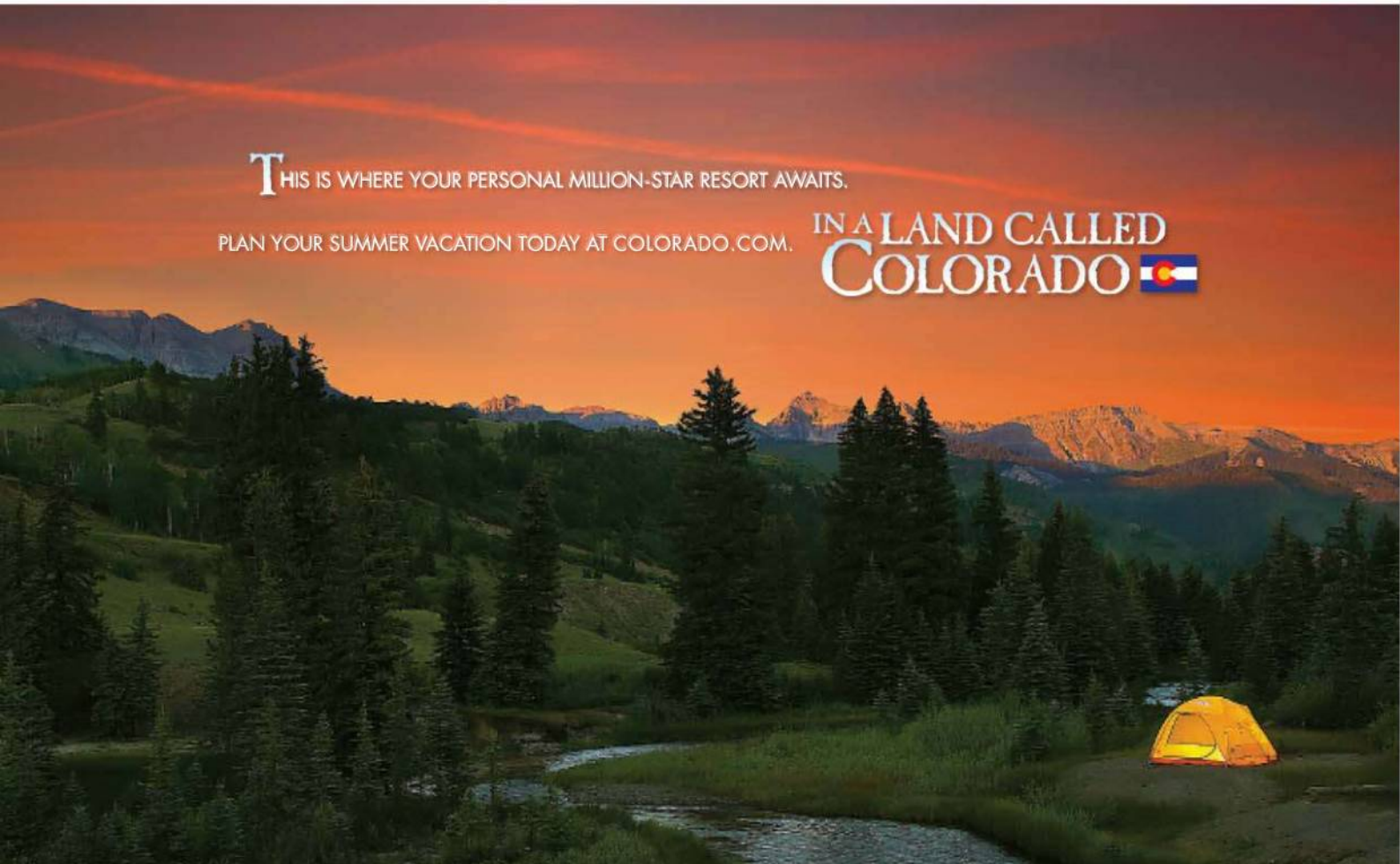
QUICK SELF-ASSESSMENT
Muscle strains are usually characterized by a sharp, stabbing pain in the groin area or in the front of the hip. Climbing stairs or even getting out of the car can be painful.

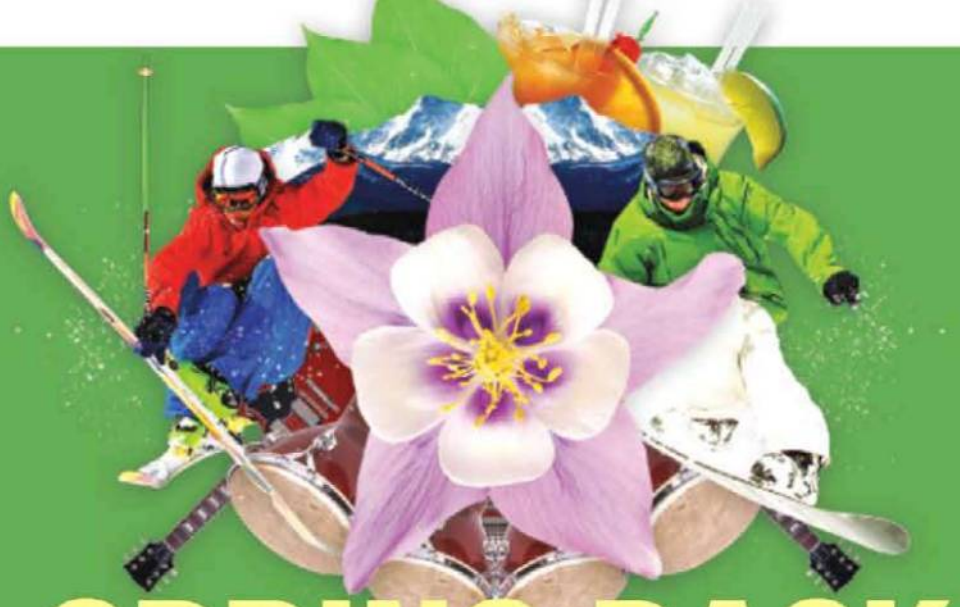
◀4. HIP-FLEXOR STRETCH
Lying on one side, loop a strap around your foot and pull up. Resist the pull, keeping the knee at 90 degrees.

▶3. EXTERNAL-ROTATOR HIP STRETCH
Sit up straight with the heel of your right foot anchored against your left leg. Twist, allowing your hip to roll as you turn.

EXERCISES COURTESY OF MACKIE SHILSTONE

photographs by **JUSTIN STEELE**





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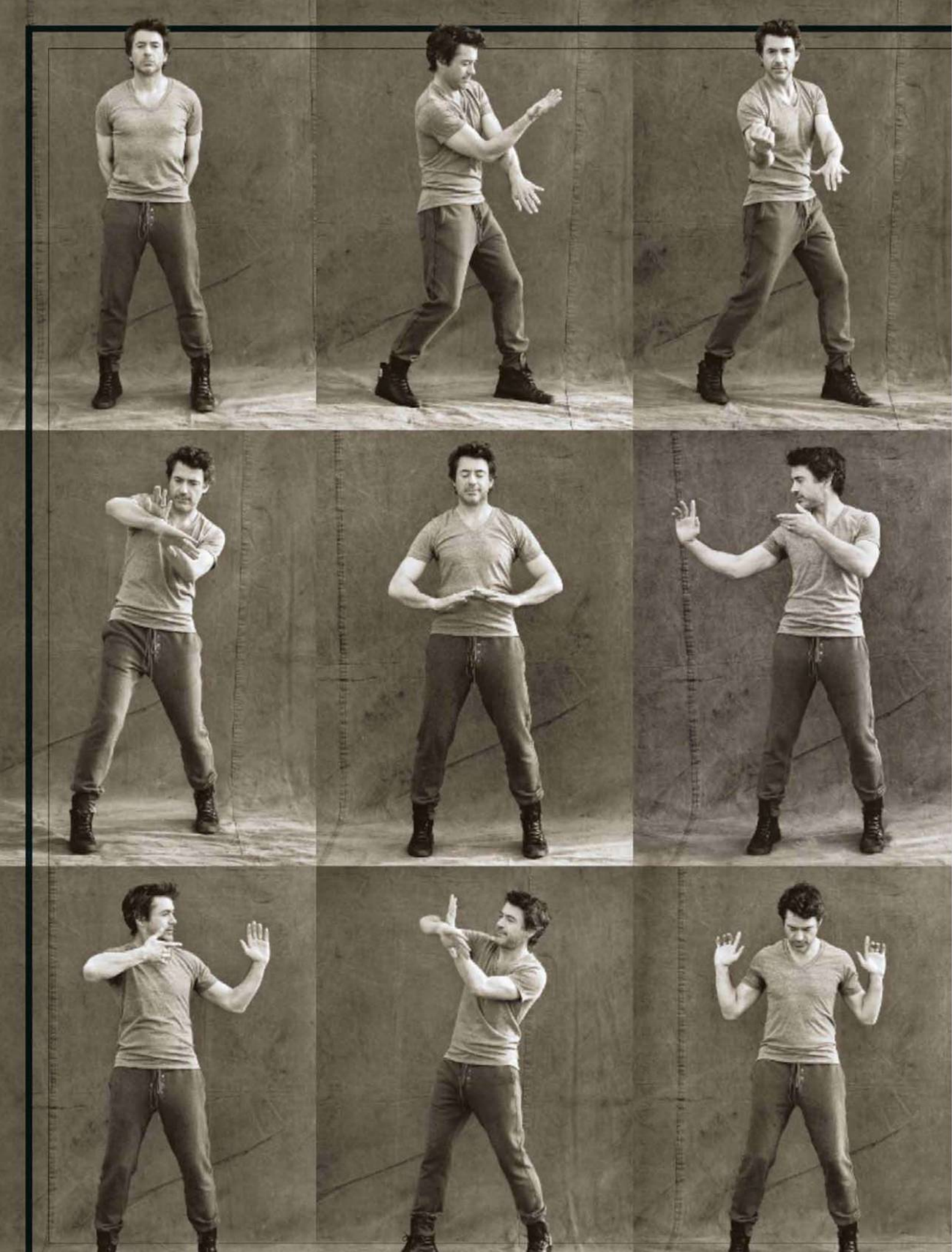
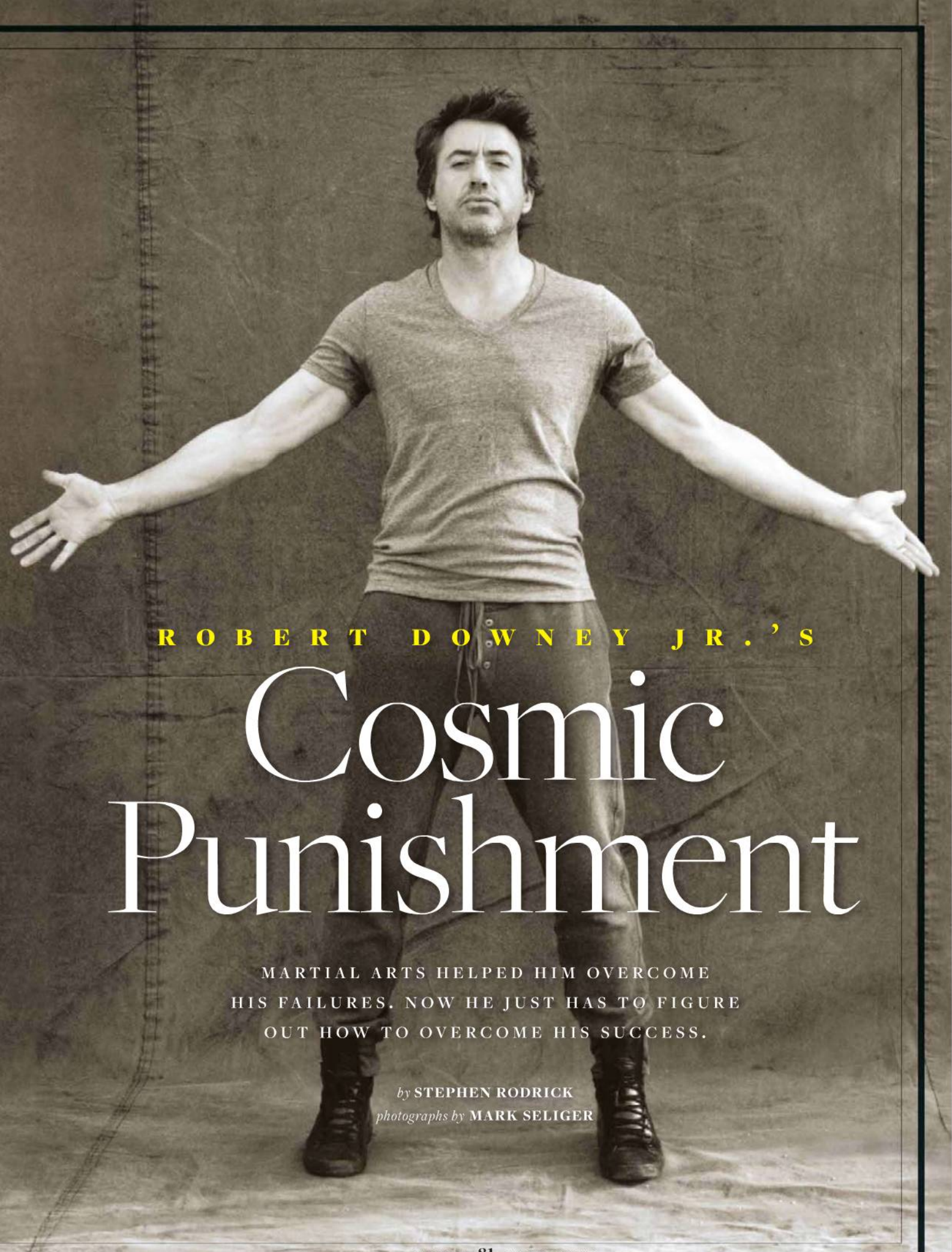




ROBERT DOWNEY JR.'S

Cosmic Punishment

MARTIAL ARTS HELPED HIM OVERCOME HIS FAILURES. NOW HE JUST HAS TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO OVERCOME HIS SUCCESS.

by **STEPHEN RODRICK**
photographs by **MARK SELIGER**

Robert Downey Jr. doesn't work out like us regular folks. Adulation bathes him from the moment he arrives at his Los Angeles martial arts studio. He opens the front door and is greeted by a framed photo of himself with his trainer and his 16-year-old son, Indio. The inscription reads: SIFU, INDIO AND I ARE AVAILABLE FOR PERSONAL PROTECTION. He takes another step. Before you can hum the opening bars to "Cult of Personality," there's an even larger blowup of a *Los Angeles Times* story, about some dude named Robert Downey Jr. slaying all the bad guys in his mind. Six-pack abs would be so much easier if this kind of positive reinforcement were available at the Y.

Downey is carrying a small black box. The box's contents are not readily apparent. He puts the box down gently and pulls on a prison-orange hoodie. The effect enlarges his brown puppy-dog eyes to Japanese anime proportions. He bows to Eric Oram, the owner of the studio.

"Good morning, *sifu*."

Sifu is what instructors are called in Wing Chun, a martial arts discipline that has been Downey's religion since 2003. That's around the time he dropped the drugs that molted him from Oscar nominee to celebrity death pool nominee. Wing Chun is considered the sensitive artist's kung fu — Bruce Lee was its first celebrity spokesman — because it's all about balance, peace, and, if all else fails, ass-whipping. These skills are particularly important in Hollywood.

We step onto the mat. While Downey has been practicing Wing Chun for almost seven years, I have been practicing Wing Chun for almost seven minutes. "Seriously, don't worry about looking like an idiot," he tells me. "It's like life: The less self-conscious you are, the better it works. And remember, lots of ice and Advil afterward. Trust me on that one."

We do breathing exercises, stretch a while, and then toss a small ball around, working on reaction time. Downey muffs one. He shoots Oram a busted schoolboy look. Oram flashes a sadistic smile.

"That's 10," he barks at Downey.

Downey drops and gives him 10 push-ups. Many former addicts talk of trading the addiction of drugs for the addiction of exercise. Downey's one of them. The more he sweats, the more he enters an opiate-free nirvana. "I love this," he whispers. "Isn't it awesome?"

I'm just trying not to hurl. We move to a hand-to-hand fighting exercise. "You don't want to fight the truck," says Oram, a bald man with intense eyes and even more intense eyebrows. "You want to step out of the way of the truck. Once you step out of the way, you can start throwing rocks at the truck." Downey nods and tugs at his hoodie.

"This is all about focus," Downey tells me between reps. "Wing Chun teaches you what to concentrate on, whether you're here or out in the world dealing with problems. It's second nature for me now. I don't even get to the point where there's a problem."

Oram raises his hand to punch, and Downey slaps away his elbow and then counters to Oram's neck. The two do an elaborate, fistic dance for five minutes. There's just one hitch in Downey's giddyap. He repeatedly raises his right hand to block a phantom ear punch Oram never throws, perhaps a leftover ghost from having to protect himself in the jails he frequented in the late '90s. No amount of Wing Chun can make that go away.

AFTER AN HOUR, WE'RE DONE. WELL, I'M DONE. DOWNEY keeps working. He pounds on a wooden dummy, blocking with one hand and then delivering a combination to a padded face. He lets out a series of grunts and grimaces. A grin slips across his face.

"The word to describe Robert is *hard*," says Guy Ritchie, Downey's director on *Sherlock Holmes*. "I know that's fucking ridiculous in describing an actor, but he can really scrap. He's done time in jail, which didn't exactly soften him up. He has a real physicality that is pretty fucking amazing."

In the Arthur Conan Doyle books, Holmes dabbles in martial arts, so Ritchie, Downey, and Oram took some liberties and collaborated to make Sherlock a buff badass. During a key fight scene, Holmes boxes with a behemoth, and Downey was reluctant to punch the British stuntman full in the mouth at first.

"I was like, 'I can't or he's not going to be able to play with his kids this weekend,'" recalls Downey. "And Guy was basically saying, 'He doesn't have any kids.'"

Downey complied. By the end of the day, the stuntman's face was red and swollen.

No one gets beaten up that bad at the martial arts center today, but Oram finally has to tell Downey that's enough.

"Sifu, I'm worried about my exam," says Downey, after a shower. He hopes to move up the Wing Chun achievement ladder from green to brown belt — one level away from black belt.

"You will do fine," says Oram solemnly. "Or you won't."

Oram and Downey have a classic codependent relationship that goes something like this: Oram teaches Downey three to five days a week, Downey stays clean and sane, and Oram comes to his movie sets, where he serves as confessor, guru, and fight consultant. He then gets to plaster Downey's name and picture all over his gym and literature.

"When he first came to me, insurance companies wouldn't bond him for movies; he couldn't get roles," Oram says. "I told him if he didn't show up to a lesson, I was going to chop off his toes and feed them back to him. One day he didn't turn up, and I told him goodbye.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: STYLING BY ANNIE PSALTIRAS AT THE WALL GROUP. GROOMING BY DAVY NEWKIRK AT TRACEYMATTINGLY.COM. SET DESIGN BY CHRIS GASKILL FOR ART WORKS HOLLYWOOD, INC. PRODUCTION BY MAURA KIERNAN. DOWNEY WEARS A T-SHIRT BY ALTERNATIVE APPAREL. SWEATPANTS BY PROPRIÉTÉ DE. AND SNEAKERS BY YVES SAINT LAURENT

EVERYBODY WING CHUN "It's all about guarding your center line," says Downey. "Don't fight force with force."

Then he had a couple of producers call me and vouch for him, saying, 'He was with us in a meeting; he didn't have a phone. It's our fault. Don't cut his head off.' He has committed himself to it ever since and turned his life around."

"Wing Chun is all about guarding your center line," Downey tells me, talking about the place where touchy-ouchy martial art meets philosophy of life. "Don't fight force with force; use two hands at the same time; concentrate on your own thing; and after you have that dialed in, effect the balance, look for openings, look for arms to be crossed."

So that's the secret to his newfound prosperity?

"Oh, yeah, dude," says Downey.

I'D MET DOWNEY ONCE BEFORE UNDER LESS SERENE circumstances. It was in 1992 at the Republican National Convention in Houston. The heat was nearly as oppressive as Pat Buchanan. Downey was filming a gonzo political documentary, and I was self-medicating with a friend who was working for the Bush-Quayle campaign. Downey and I had a happily incoherent conversation that ended with one of us excusing ourselves, possibly to vomit.

The trip for me was a boys' weekend gone horribly wrong. It was Downey's daily life for more than a decade. After a brilliantly diffuse early career — there were starmaking turns in *Chaplin* and, uh, *Weird Science* — he seemed hell-bent on reenacting all the drug scenes from his early classic *Less Than Zero*. It's hard to remember if the most depressing part of Downey's downward spiral was his going to prison for heroin possession and a gun charge; passing out in his neighbor's bed, thinking it was his own; or getting hired and fired from *Ally McBeal*.

By 2006 Downey was longtime clean, but he was still playing the sixth lead in a remake of *The Shaggy Dog*, the thespian equivalent of opening for a puppet show. But then came *Iron Man*, *Tropic Thunder*, and *Sherlock Holmes*. The three films together grossed $1.25 billion — more than the 50-plus Downey films that preceded them.

Now, at 45, everyone wants a piece of him, including sifu's earlier client, a director who would just love to meet Robert. "He's done commercials," says Oram, without pushing too hard. Downey remains serene, nods affirmatively, and speaks few words — a rarity for him.

This meeting is never going to happen.

Downey, of course, is grateful he has moved from Tom Sizemore problems to Tom Cruise problems. Still, there's a paradox: The success of *Iron Man* has opened the world to Robert Downey Jr., but making too many soulless popcorn flicks may be replacing his former Sunset Boulevard buddies as the biggest threat to his sanity. Even before *Iron Man 2* hits, *Iron Man 3* is already in the works, and a *Sherlock* sequel is in development. All the filming and promoting has left Downey exhausted. I ask if he is worried about burnout.

"You don't worry about something that has already happened," he says with resignation. "You don't need to worry about your car breaking down when you're already on the side of the street with the hood up. Worrying is done. The hubcaps have already come off going around the corners."

DOWNEY BOWS A GOODBYE TO ORAM. THE ACTOR IS hungry, so his driver/babysitter, Jimmy, drives us over to a chic Italian place in Brentwood. Jimmy's been with Downey for years. They have an endearing Bertie and Jeeves relationship, if Bertie were an ex-con movie star and Jeeves were the size of Steelers linebacker Jack Lambert, who is actually Jimmy's cousin.

Downey sprawls in the backseat, still clutching the little black box. We make small talk for a bit, or, more precisely, I make small talk and Downey answers with big talk. A conversation about fatherhood swoops and rises ("You realize you've got this amazing kid, and all of a sudden you don't want to have more days behind you than in front of you") until he tells me of a recent visit he made to the Rubin

SHIRT BY ALLSAINTS, PANTS BY JOHN VARVATOS, BOOTS BY CHUCK'S VINTAGE, LOS ANGELES

Museum of Art in New York for an exhibit on Himalayan art and mortality. "You keep going up these stairs, and it's all about death, and by the time you get to the top, I was like, 'Wow, my life is so minuscule and pointless.'"

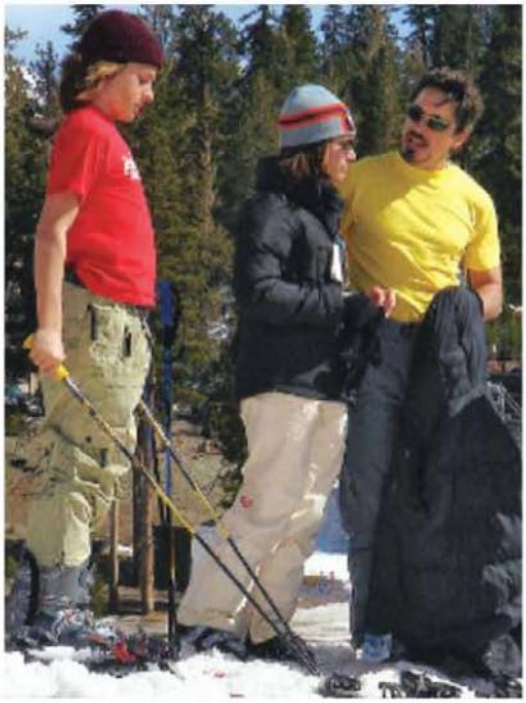
The car goes quiet. Jimmy turns up Howard Stern on satellite radio to fill the void. Downey does a bit of a spit take and slaps me on the shoulder. "Dude, no, minuscule is good! Trust me, it's much better than thinking everything you do is important and meaningful. That is not good."

When we get to the Italian place, where Downey is a regular, we settle into a window table. Downey orders a cranberry juice with a lemon. The waiter brings him a cranberry juice. He also brings a bowl of approximately 20 lemon wedges. Every five minutes, Downey adds another lemon to his glass. Within an hour, the glass is a lemon compost pile. He then places the black box on his lap and pops it open. Inside, there's everything but a bunny rabbit: half a dozen containers of vitamins, multiple pieces of Nicorette gum, a nice pen, and a wrapped cigar.

"It's just stuff to keep me healthy," says Downey. His brain is just as happily cluttered. At one point, he makes it clear that despite his recent success, he has not forgotten how low he can go. But he doesn't say it that simply. He speaks in double helixes of metaphors and allusions, taking a straightforward question about how he's doing and answering with a Grateful Dead space-jam drum solo. Some of it sounds beautiful, some of it sounds like the surreal small print of a rental car agreement, which is why I'm shrinking the type size:

"I've seen the folks who the second they hit their critical mass, they essentially shut the door on the story of their past, who they really are, and they become this narcissistic personality disorder version of what they thought they would want to get away from, whatever injury got them to having half of their drive being to get somewhere, because then they could no longer be seen as they see themselves. It's really tricky to see it happen. It's another thing to be put in check by people that I'm close to that sometimes are an accessory in a creative burst. I still have little pilot fish that want to overstate that or centralize that or make it about me. I've noticed more and more lately that, say, we're in a writing session, and Act Three is in desperate need of a breakthrough, and I come up with the idea. I want to, occasionally, parade around and do my *Where the Wild Things Are* paw-print stomp, and I'd say, 'First of all, it's nice to celebrate, it's nice to be excited, it's another thing to sully that with your own character defects.' Worse still, it's a shame to not see that it's not true, because without the context — and that's why I love partnerships — without the context of somebody who's actually holding the entirety of what we're looking at and what we're doing and what we have to accomplish, rather someone who knows all the challenges inherent in Acts One and Two, and believes, even though we're using a bookmark where the movie ends, where the final image is, that just because it works for now, it works for now because it's comforting, because you believe you have an end. I've been noticing more and more lately how partnerships and small groups of well-matched people are all equally responsible, whether you're the front man in the band or whether you're just mixing behind the scenes. It's awesome."

I know what you're thinking: pilot fish, narcissistic personality disorder, and *Where the Wild Things Are* all in one thought burst. Downey has fallen off and is now being dragged behind the wagon, right? Not true. It's just Downeyspeak. I mention Downey's tendency to verbally meander to his *Iron Man 2* co-star Don Cheadle, and he can't stop laughing. "Yeah, I don't know how you're going to pull that off. You're going to need a pictograph, or change the color of the text so people know where he's going. Or just start talking about his socks." Ritchie sums up the Robert Downey Experience succinctly: "Do I have any idea what the fuck he is talking about most of the time? No fucking way. He fucking rants, sounds very clever, and then I have to tell him: 'Repeat that, but this time fucking speak English.'"



FAMILY MAN Skiing in Mammoth in 2007 with his wife, Susan, and son, Indio, now 16

TOM VICKERS/SPLASH NEWS

DOWNEY'S BRAIN WAS MOLDED IN A CHILDHOOD THAT could be described as bohemian or, less charitably, profoundly fucked up. His father is the indie filmmaker Robert Downey Sr., and in 1970, Dad cast his five-year-old son in the black comedy *Pound*. Junior's first cinematic line is addressed to a freaked-out bald man: "Have any hair on your balls?" Not exactly the pinewood derby. The storied legend is that Downey Sr. gave Bobby Jr. his first hit of pot when he was eight. Downey's parents split up when he was 12, and he spent a peripatetic childhood shuttling among New York, England, and, finally, Los Angeles, where Downey dropped out of high school just as his father's career began to dry up.

Downey's own son had to endure his addled father being carted off to jail and rehab multiple times. Still, Downey is reluctant to give Indio the "Do as I say, not as I do" speech as he raises his kid on L.A.'s posh west side, not far from many of the places where he first lost his mind to drugs.

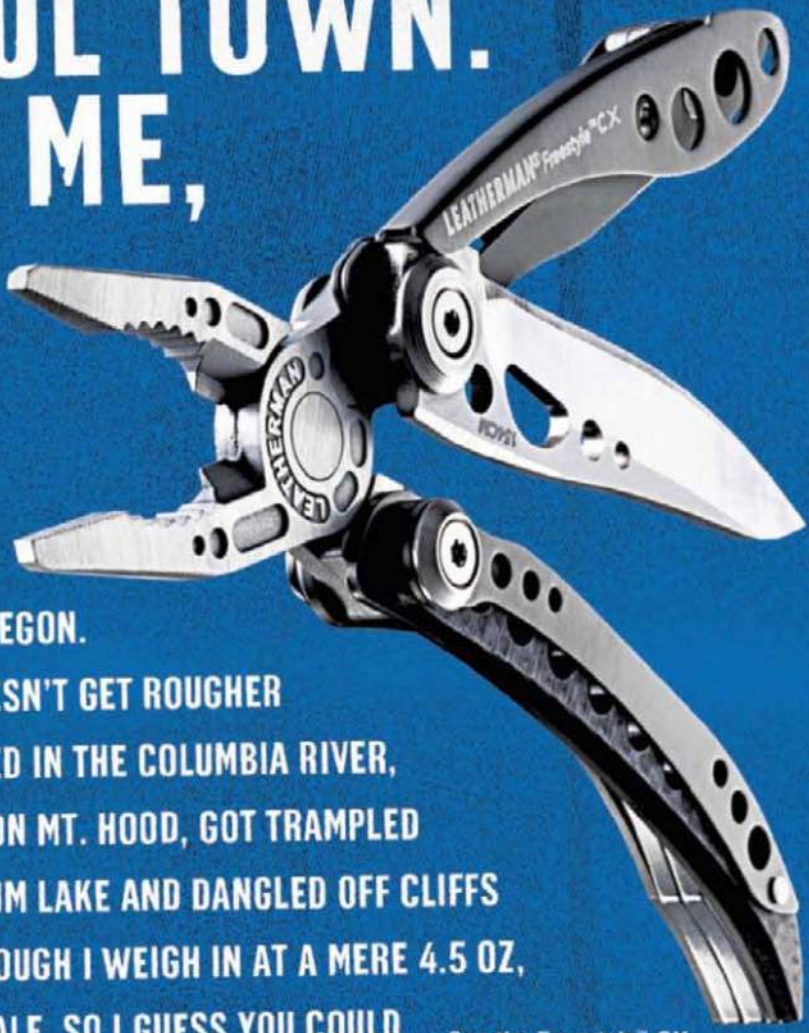
"I go through periods of wanting to join hands and sing 'Kumbaya' with everyone, and sometimes I want to firebomb the entire area," he says. "All I want, and I think all any parent with a semblance of a moral psychology wants, is for my kid to have his own experience, uninhibited. You want to feed the good dog, because the shadow side of any of us is going to pop up at some point."

Downey doesn't blame his hard times on Pop never scaring him straight. "I grew up with a lot of people whose whole prime mover was dad rage. I never really had it — it always seemed so empty. It always seemed to be masking something else, which was really their own lack of initiative."

He clearly has great respect for his father's left-of-center work — Senior is best known for 1969's *Putney Swope*, a satire of a black man working in an all-white advertising firm — and cringes at memories of his dad banging his head against Hollywood's studio system. But to say he's worked out his relationship with his 73-year-old father, who now lives in New York, is way too simplistic for a man as smart as Downey. When we talk about *Iron Man 2*, he largely parries questions — until the subject turns to his character Tony Stark's relationship with his dead father.

"We're having Tony go back and really deal with the ramifications of his lack of connection to his dad, his almost professional-stock, prop-smile answers, and how he'd been using Dad's memory as a weapon against others," Downey says. "He's really feeling hugely conflicted by assumptions about his dad's feelings about him and whether or not there's any real connection between them at the most basic level, which is: You're not here anymore for this. Is there some-

PORTLAND'S A BEAUTIFUL TOWN. BUT FOR ME, IT AIN'T PRETTY.



I WAS BORN IN PORTLAND, OREGON. AND FOR A MULTI-TOOL IT DOESN'T GET ROUGHER THAN THAT. I'VE BEEN DROPPED IN THE COLUMBIA RIVER, SEEN BLIZZARD CONDITIONS ON MT. HOOD, GOT TRAMPLED BY SNOWSHOES UP AT TRILLIUM LAKE AND DANGLED OFF CLIFFS AT SMITH ROCK. BUT EVEN THOUGH I WEIGH IN AT A MERE 4.5 OZ, I'M STILL HERE TO TELL THE TALE. SO I GUESS YOU COULD SAY I'M MORE THAN A MULTI-TOOL. I'M A SURVIVOR.

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thing you have for me, is there something you left for me, is there some sort of bread-crumb trail I can find that will help fill me at this point in my life?"

I ask the logical follow-up: Is your relationship with your own dad good? He gives me the only brief answer in the day we spend together.

"Yeah."

Then he squeezes more lemons.

WHEN JON FAVREAU FIRST RAISED THE IDEA OF casting Downey as Tony Stark, Marvel Studios was so against it that the *Iron Man* director had to campaign just so that Downey could audition for the part — something he hadn't done since *Chaplin*, the 1992 film that earned him his first Oscar nomination. Downey said no problem. "You say no if you don't want to do the job," says Downey. "If you want the job, you do whatever's required to meet the specs to have the job."

He started prepping. "I wanted to be perceived as just a little bit more handsome, just a little bit taller. It's all about colors. Sometimes if you're wanting to look just a little bit taller, then you want to dress with just more of a thin cut. Most of all it was to leave them with no option other than to hire me." Downey wore a tailored English suit and slipped on Hogan dress boots to add another inch. But that was all just frosting on the Pop Tart. He already owned the Stark character, a hard-drinking, out-of-control outsider whose swagger camouflages a lifetime of regret and superficial living. In short, the role was not a stretch.

The box office and critical buzz led to Downey being cast as Sherlock Holmes in the Ritchie remake, with Jude Law playing second-banana Watson — a billing hierarchy that would have seemed unthinkable just two years ago. In between those films, Downey scored his second Oscar nomination with *Tropic Thunder*, playing the dude playing the dude disguised as another dude. According to Downey, the role was the "cathartic experience of my creative life," but in the wrong hands could have won a Razzie, not to mention a censure from the NAACP.

The question now is not whether Downey has the chops to continue as a major movie star, but whether he has the capacity to deal with the bullshit part of the job. It's one thing to always be the dissolute man of great promise; it's another thing to simply be the man.

He rhapsodizes about his experience playing a pompous architect trying to get home for the birth of his child in the recently wrapped *Due Date*, with *The Hangover* team of co-star Zach Galifianakis and director Todd Phillips. "My inner asshole was required, and all that stuff that sometimes falls out I was able to use constructively," says Downey. "Working with those guys was probably one of the great experiences of my life."

So far, so good. But then, unprompted, he starts talking about another film that did not take him to his happy place. "There are times when you know you're pushing it and you don't have a great vibe about where things are going creatively. You have to be collarbone-deep in molasses for four months and just go, 'I have no solace in my work whatsoever, and it's 12 hours a day of cosmic punishment.'" He stirs the contents of the black box looking like he might cry. "All I have is what I'm doing when I'm not working, and hopefully that has something to do with taking care of myself."

I ask him which film.

"I will not say its name."

Was it recent?

"Absolutely."

We talk about other things for a while, and I start eliminating movies. I've got it down to two.

Surely, it was *The Shaggy Dog*, right?

He leans forward and stares hard at me. He gulps down a triple espresso. "*Shaggy Dog* was a very, very important movie for me. It was a very enjoyable experience." He sounds sincere.

STUDENT AND SIFU Sparring with martial arts mentor Eric Oram on the *Iron Man 2* set

Jimmy walks in and reminds Downey of a pending meeting with Ritchie to discuss *Sherlock Holmes 2* script revisions. We start to wrap things up, and I tell him through my powers of deductive reasoning that his cosmic punishment film must be *Iron Man 2*. Downey flinches a little, like at the gym trying to ward off the imaginary ear punch.

"This is still art for commerce, at best," says Downey about his chosen profession. "I consider myself to be a pain-in-the-ass artist who's self-aware enough to still be tolerable. While I have a little bit of juice, I try not to rub it in anyone's face, because it's just disgusting. And I use the term 'artist' loosely."

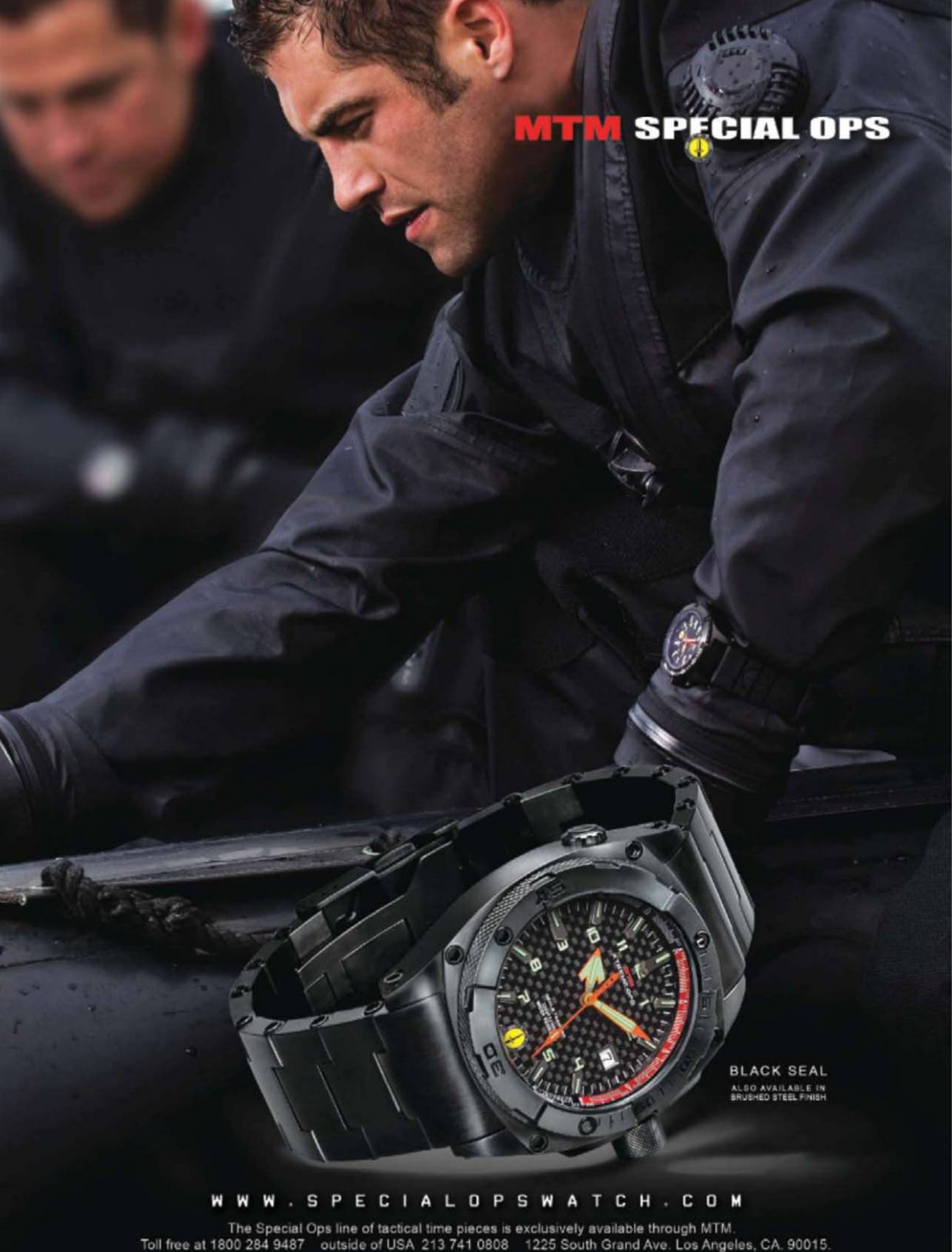
DOWNEY TAKES A COUPLE more vitamins, rummages around the debris in the little black box, closes it, gives a yank at his heart-covered socks, and heads for the door. Jimmy awaits, and we head toward Santa Monica Boulevard and his conference with Ritchie.

"Meetings. I never thought I'd be in so many meetings," says Downey. He's soon off on another tangent, speed-talking about being at a dinner party at producer Joel Silver's house and talking to his Venetian chef and deciding to take his son, Indio, on a cultural vision quest to Italy, staying in three-star-or-less hotels. "Just take a week, just him and me. He's into it; maybe in a year he won't be." Downey, stretching out in the backseat, has put on a long, grandmotherly black sweater. "This is going to happen soon," he insists.

I get the sense that between the production meetings, media junkets, and the next *Sherlock* flick, the trip probably won't happen. Somehow, Downey has lived long enough to have a "Cat's in the Cradle" moment. But like with most busy, middle-aged fathers, his heart is in the right place. The charismatic, sad, naughty, self-destructive man-child I met in 1992 is long gone, replaced by a sometimes self-rationalizing, sometimes solipsistic grown-up who now knows how to get out of the way of the truck. Something has been lost, and something has been gained.

They drop me off at my car a few minutes later. Downey shakes my hand and slides into the front seat. He gives a wave and, with a little actorly flair, puts on his seat belt. For the first time, I can imagine Robert Downey Jr. living to be a nice old man. The car drives away slowly, never crossing the center line.

PEGASUS/SPLASH NEWS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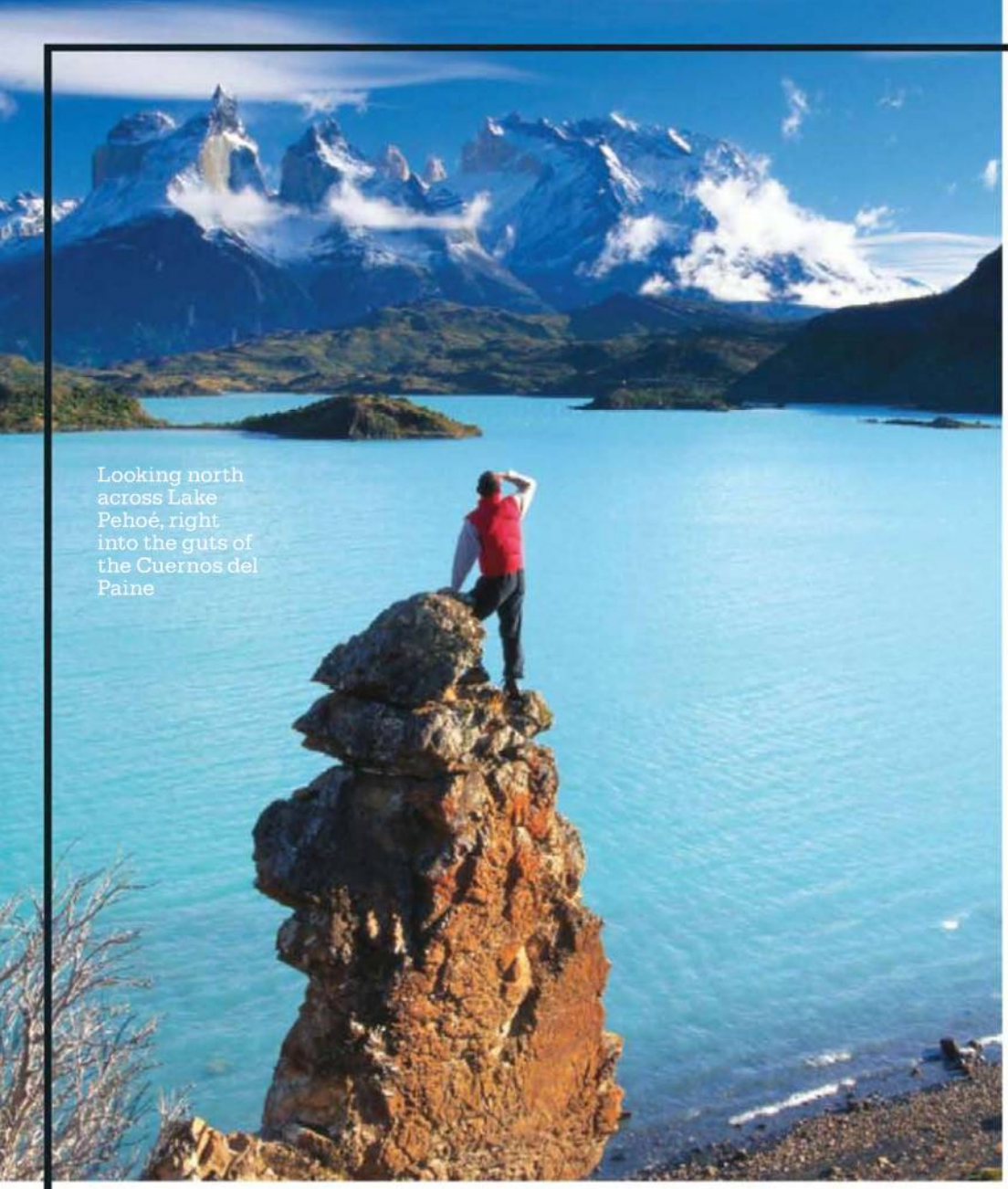


Looking north across Lake Pehoé, right into the guts of the Cuernos del Paine

1 Hike *the* Torres del Paine

PREP TIME
Three months

TIME OFF WORK
One week

BEST TIME TO GO
February

AS YOU CREST THE LAguna Alejandra saddle on day two of the iconic Torres del Paine trekking circuit in Patagonia, the wind can literally lift you off your feet — 40-pound pack and all. Patagonia's famous gusts are so strong, in fact, they're partly responsible for shaping the crown of majestic stone towers you spend nine days circumnavigating during this self-supported backpacking trip at the bottom of the Western Hemisphere.

The Paine (pronounced PIE-nee) Circuit, a storm-prone, 65-mile track, is one of the most photographed landscapes in the world, alongside Half Dome in Yosemite and Zion's canyonlands, but photographs don't do it justice. "You just have to go," says Sue Ibarra, who has hiked, climbed, and biked all over the world, and just returned from Chile's renowned national park this February. "I'd never experienced the juxtaposition of towering granite walls with glaciated peaks. It's extraordinarily rare." The real beauty of this circuit is how close it brings you to living glaciers — the roar of calving, the gaping crevasses, the blue spears of seracs.

The classic way to approach the hike is to bunk and eat each night in a series of well-placed *refugios* (hostels) along the way. But Ibarra and her hiking partner made a key adjustment to the usual itinerary right off the bat: They didn't "trek" it; they backpacked. Trekking — hiking hut to hut — may sound romantic, but after completing the equally famous Haute Route in Switzerland, Ibarra found that the weight savings wasn't worth the noise at all hours. Sleep is more sound in your own tent, and besides, being self-contained gives you more flexibility since the refugios require reservations (best made at least three weeks in advance).

The trip starts off easy — but don't be fooled. From the trailhead at Hosteria las Torres, you'll pass through vast fields of blooming daisies and camp on grass before rising above the Paine River and into the Scotland-like moorlands. Then it's on through dripping Tolkienesque forests to a wet campsite with cold showers, sometimes slogging along muddy trails, sometimes tiptoeing over verglassed boulders. If you look up, you'll begin to make out Patagonia's fabled pinnacles.

Throughout the route, the trail is a deep rut, marked with orange dots painted on rocks or orange stakes so you can't get lost. Still, there are places along the circuit, such as Paso John Gardner, that feel extremely remote: nothing but stone and sky and snow. Down in the valleys, because you can camp only in designated areas, you'll have plenty of neighbors and hear a dozen different languages. On a clear night, stay up late and search for the Southern Cross before marmoting deep into your bag.

Field Notes

- HIKE THE CIRCUIT COUNTERCLOCKWISE TO AVOID HEAVY TRAFFIC FROM DAY HIKERS ON SHORTER TREKS. START BY MIDMORNING TO AVOID AFTERNOON SQUALLS AND TO INCREASE YOUR CHANCES OF GETTING A GREAT CAMPSITE — THEY FILL UP IN THE EVENING.

ART WOLFE: FIELD NOTES: THROUGHOUT PACKAGE: MICHAEL PIRROCCO

- LIGHTEN YOUR LOAD. SOME HUTS HAVE AN ALMACEN — A SMALL GROCERY STORE — AND A KITCHEN THAT SERVES DINNER AND BREAKFAST. TAKE A BREAK FROM COOKING BY EATING A FEW MEALS IN THEM, AND KNOCK UP TO 10 POUNDS IN FUEL AND FOOD OFF YOUR PACK WEIGHT.
- CELEBRATE AT THE END WITH A BOTTLE OF CARMEN RESERVA SYRAH, $15 AT CAMPAMENTO LOS CUERNOS.

Soon come the steep ascents and knee-aching descents. You gain 2,000 feet from the Perros campsite up to Paso Gardner, marching through snowdrifts and hopping across talus. The brilliant *cuernos*, or snow-encrusted horns of rock, rise above you as you fight the wind coming off the glacier, which knifes through the granite like butter.

Coming off Gardner Pass, you suddenly get a wide-angle view of the oceanic Glacier Grey, with its deeply crevassed surface and dirty meringue-like seracs. Glaciers are what created the topography of the park, bulldozing out the valleys before retreating. You don't backpack here just to see the three famous towers, which are often hidden in snowstorms anyway; you go to be close to gargantuan glaciers and their offspring, rivers and lakes. "We heard thunder rolling and crashing all night," Ibarra recalls, "but it never rained." In the morning, they discovered that those tremendous explosions were actually coming from the massive French glacier calving above camp.

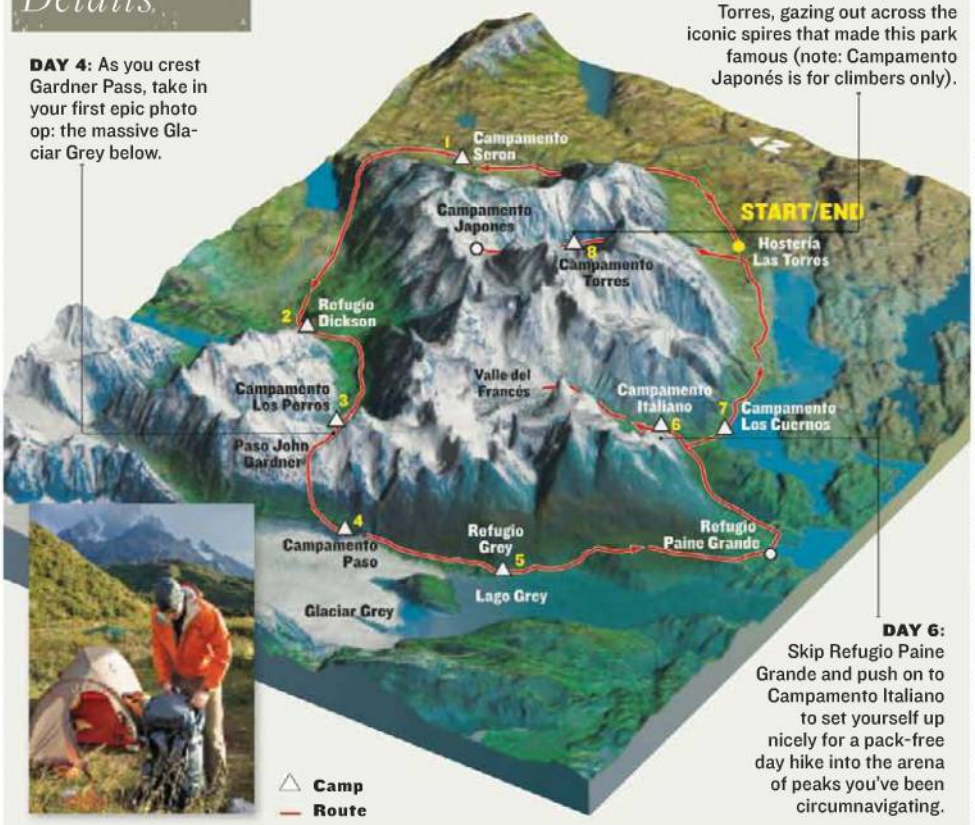
Finally, toward the end of the trip, a short detour from the main circuit will bring you right into the theater of spires you've spent a week circling. Have patience and wait for the clouds to clear. The reward: a 360-degree panorama of forbiddingly sharp mountains and sheer rock walls unlike anyplace else on Earth. —MARK JENKINS

CAMPING: MIKE TITTEL. MAP BY STEVE WALKOWIAK

Route Details

DAY 4: As you crest Gardner Pass, take in your first epic photo op: the massive Glaciar Grey below.

DAY 8: Spend your last night at one of the most popular campsites on the route, Campamento Torres, gazing out across the iconic spires that made this park famous (note: Campamento Japonés is for climbers only).



DAY 6: Skip Refugio Paine Grande and push on to Campamento Italiano to set yourself up nicely for a pack-free day hike into the arena of peaks you've been circumnavigating.

Prep & Gear

LEKI CORKLITE AERGON SPEEDLOCK TREKKING POLES; $120, LEKI.COM

12 WEEKS OUT

Break in your boots: Buy some ankle-high, waterproof hikers and wear them throughout your training so they'll be more comfortable for your trip.

Start hiking: Hike at least once a week, working up to five- to six-hour hikes at the end of the first month. In the beginning carry a daypack and work up to a fully loaded, 40-pound backpack.

EIGHT WEEKS OUT

Pick up essentials: Start carrying your actual kit to get used to packing and unpacking it. For wet-and-windy Patagonia, a complete rainproof shell — jacket, pants, gaiters — is necessary, and trekking poles will help bear the brunt of big mileage.

Build leg strength: Start complementing your hiking regimen with running trails and stadium stairs, shifting to X-C skiing and snowshoeing (with a pack) as the weather changes.

FOUR WEEKS OUT

Hit the gym: Really push yourself twice a week at the gym by putting the treadmill at its steepest incline, and walk briskly for an hour with your fully loaded pack.

Go camping: Plan at least one overnight to smooth out kinks — making sure you know how to use your stove and that your tent doesn't leak, your foam pad doesn't have holes, and your three-season bag is warm enough.

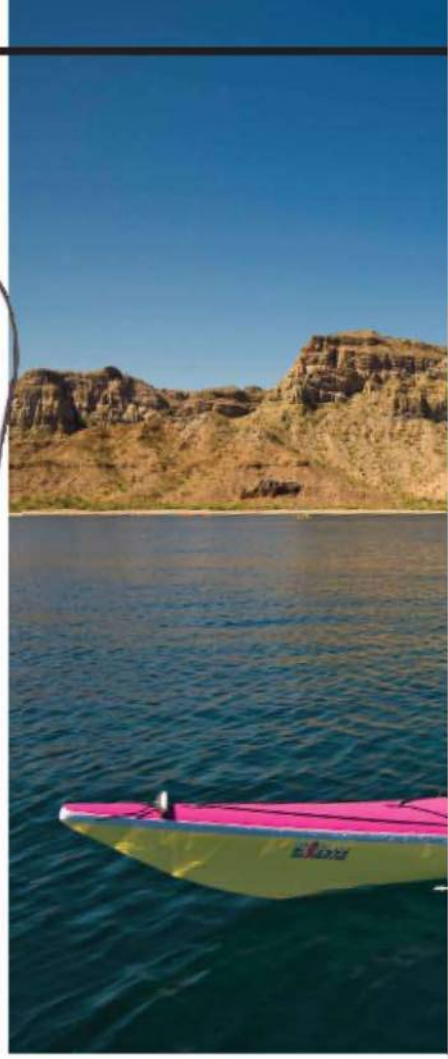
VASQUE SWITCHBACK GTX; $160, VASQUE.COM

MARMOT MINIMALIST JACKET AND PANTS; $200 AND $160, MARMOT.COM

ONE WEEK OUT

Plan your meals: One of the most common mistakes is to bring too much food; 1.5 pounds per person per day is enough. Only bring packaged food into Chile — buy anything fresh in Punta Arenas.

2 Kayak *the* Sea *of* Cortez



PREP TIME
Six months

TIME OFF WORK
Ten to 14 days

BEST TIME TO GO
February to April

Field Notes

- **WALK INLAND.** WHEN YOU'VE SPENT FOUR HOURS ON A WINDBLOWN BEACH, THE EXPOSURE GETS UNBEARABLE. "WALK ABOUT 300 YARDS INTO THE DESERT, WHERE IT'S ABSOLUTELY STILL AND SILENT," SAYS GUIDE STEVE HAYWARD. "IT'S LIKE ASPIRIN."
- **CHECK THE WAVES.** WALK TO THE WATER'S EDGE IN THE MORNING. "IF THERE ARE ALREADY LITTLE RIPPLES AT YOUR TOES — EVEN SIX INCHES — THEN THERE'S WIND UPHILL SOMEWHERE," HAYWARD SAYS. THAT MEANS YOU'RE LIKELY TO SEE 15-KNOT NORTHEASTERLIES BY MIDAFTERNOON.
- **PLAN YOUR HYDRATION.** YOU HAVE TO CARRY EVERY DROP OF WATER YOU'LL NEED FOR THE ENTIRE TRIP, RIGHT FROM THE START. THAT MEANS A GALLON PER PERSON PER DAY. BRING ELECTROLYTE TABLETS, TOO.

THE DESERT COASTLINE of the Baja California Peninsula — 760 miles of warm water and white sand, coyotes and whales and soft desert nights — offers the quintessential sea-kayaking journey. Like no other North American landscape, Baja puts the desert wind and the gentle waves where they belong, right at your back, with fresh fish under your boat and pristine beaches as far as the eye can see. As you float down the most talked-about and sought-after stretch of kayaking in all of Baja — the classic 65-mile run from Loreto to La Paz, along the Sierra de la Giganta mountains, on the Sea of Cortez — you feel like a conquistador exploring a world newly made, except with better tequila.

But this is still a committing expedition in every sense. You'll be paddling with all your food and every drop of drinking water you'll need: High winds can trap boats onshore for longer stretch, just in case. At least three of these prep days should involve moderate wind and two- to three-foot waves.

Prep & Gear

24 WEEKS OUT

Evaluate your skills: The American Canoe Association (*americancanoe.org*) offers a crystal-clear self-rating system. Every member of a Loreto-to-La Paz crew ought to be the equivalent of an ACA Level 3 Coastal Kayaker, which means proficiency in dealing with things like capsized paddlers and basic nautical navigation. At least one person in the group should be the equivalent of a Level 4 Coastal Kayaker, having also mastered skills like navigating high winds, waves, and currents; rafting boats together for stability in bad conditions; using rescue tools like radios and flares; and making field repairs on damaged boats. Kayak schools around the country offer ACA Level–specific courses and skills evaluations.

20 WEEKS OUT

Get in shape: Two words: core and flexibility. You need to have the hamstring flexibility to sit in a kayak for up to eight hours a day, and you need rock-hard abs and shoulder muscles to maintain stability and drive that paddle mile after mile. Try yoga to loosen up, and focus gym sessions on rotational core exercises, like cable wood-chops or medicine-ball swings.

Start paddling: At least once a month, sea kayak all day. You'll want to be capable of 20 miles at a stretch, just in case. At least three of these prep days should involve moderate wind and two- to three-foot waves.

SPOT SATELLITE GPS MESSENGER; $169; FINDMESPOT.COM

12 WEEKS OUT

Buy your safety gear: This will give you more time to familiarize yourself with it. You'll need a SPOT Satellite GPS Messenger, which can send SMS messages to prearranged contacts, telling them you're okay and pinpointing your location. If you're in life-threatening trouble, it will prompt the GEOS International Emergency Response Coordination Center to alert appropriate agencies worldwide. Also pick up a VHF radio so you can tune in to Channel 22 every morning for local weather forecasts. You won't be able to do that during the southerly half of the trip, when reception is poor, but you can still use the radio to reach passing yachts.

Do an overnighter: At least one person on the trip needs to have done one multiday kayak before the big expedition; everybody else needs to have done at least one overnighter.

ONE WEEK OUT

Grab last-minute gear: A satellite phone is a pricey toy, but it provides peace of mind on a trip with limited cell reception and no regular shipping traffic. You can rent one for about $50. Also pick up a Storm broken back, the one fishing lure guaranteed to work. Just tie 40 feet of line to the bungee on your boat and you'll be eating cabrilla every night.

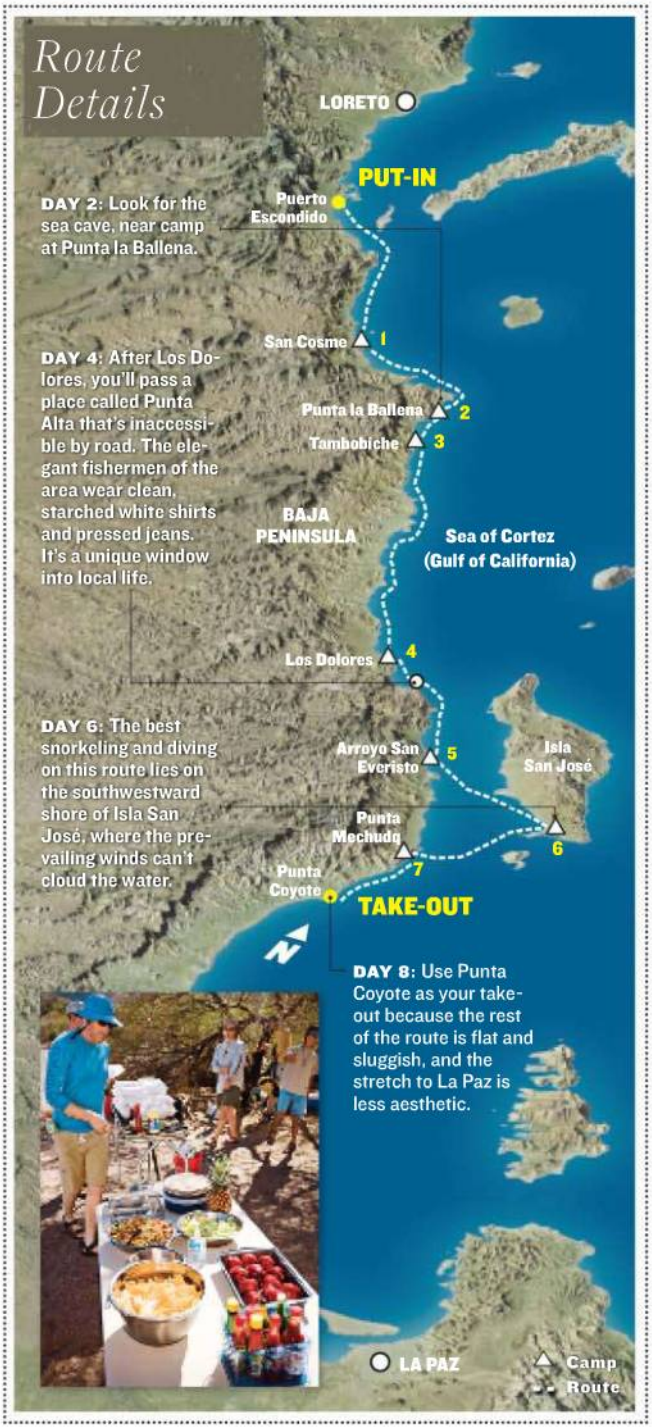
Enlist the experts: Sea Trek can arrange kayak rentals, hotels, gear packages, and meals, and it can provide a guide for your entire trip. It can also pick you up at the take-out, in Punta Coyote — a clutch service, when you consider that this fishing camp is three hours down a bad dirt road from the highway (*$2,000–$3,000; seatrek.com*).

COBRA MR HH125 VHF MARINE RADIO; $80, COBRA.COM

STORM KICKIN' STICK FISHING LURE; $10–$15, STORM LURES.COM

SEA OF CORTEZ: CHRIS SANDERS (2); MAP BY STEVE WALKOWIAK

Getting into a groove just after putting in at Puerto Escondido



than you'd like, and the physical challenge is very much on par with that of other marquee outdoor-athletic achievements, like hiking the 215-mile John Muir Trail or running your first marathon. From that initial windless morning, when you shove your 16-foot touring kayak into the azure waters, to that blustery afternoon eight days later, when you reluctantly strap it back onto a van, you're 100 percent on your own.

You won't even get halfway through that first day's eight-mile shakeout paddle before your cell phone becomes thankfully useless and stays that way. And when it comes time to pick a truly spectacular beach for that first cookout and campfire, your only question will be, "Gee, which one?"

Spend the next few days getting into that long-range paddling groove, as the hours and miles fly by. Hundreds of dolphins leap spontaneously from the sea, a little effort pulls you even with a pod of blue whales, manta rays breach, and gray pelicans form long V-shaped formations, soaring overhead. Northeasterly winds can hit 16 knots by the afternoon, hard across the back of your left shoulder, pushing you the way you want to go — south. Soon you'll be catching and riding every scrap of open-ocean windswell, flying like a bird and doubling your travel time, surfing from crest to crest in a constant downwind ride. But the wind can blow much harder, too — up to 35 knots — and that's when you'll get off the water and haul up the boats.

By late afternoon, your tent is pitched and you'll be on the hunt with your speargun, mask, and snorkel, following tropical fish among the reef rocks, plucking urchin for some fresh uni, and, hopefully, carrying a fresh West Coast halibut back to your buddies. Maybe the boys will pass a little tequila and blow the harmonica while you gut the fish and grill that white fillet over a bed of searing embers built from deadfall mesquite branches. Then you realize you haven't seen another soul since the day before yesterday.

Green animal eyes appear in the blackness, watching; off to the east, you can almost certainly see the desert moon beginning to rise and practically demanding that you stand up in all that space and howl at the top of your lungs, just because. The wind dies off and the heat drops from scorching to merely wonderful, so that you can sleep out on the warm sand, under all the stars, wondering why this should be a once-in-a-lifetime adventure instead of a way of life.

"The biggest mistake guys make," says veteran Baja kayaking guide Steve Hayward, "is not bringing enough tequila." Hayward's only half-joking: "Guys always stand on the shore at the beginning and say, 'Nah, we don't need that much,' but three days in, life's as good as it's ever been for you, in all your 40 years or whatever, and you go, 'Man! Why did we say that?!'" —DANIEL DUANE

3 Bag *an* Unclimbed Peak

PREP TIME
Four months

TIME OFF WORK
Three weeks

BEST TIME TO GO
September

NO MOUNTAINEER HAD set foot upon the Teke-Lutor Glacier in Kyrgyzstan before Leif Iversen and his Russian guide, Vladimir Komissarov, trekked up the stone-covered ice in the autumn of 2007. Above them, blowing clouds wreathed an unnamed peak along the spine of the Tien Shan mountains. Back home in Denmark, Iversen had wondered if he was even qualified for such an expedition: The management consultant was 53 years old and hadn't climbed seriously for about 25 years. For the first week of the trip, he was unsettled by the bleary 4 AM starts and the creeping exhaustion of expeditionary life. But then, as the two men kicked steps up the steep snowfield, the gray mists parted and a screaming falcon dived at them out of the blue, and Iversen's spirits lifted.

"Vladimir was ahead of me," Iversen recalls, "and suddenly he says, 'Leif, you go first; this is your peak.'" Improbably, the erstwhile climber had become a bona fide explorer, the first man ever to summit this 16,158-foot mountain. Iversen named it Shumkar — Falcon Peak.

Field Notes

- ORGANIZE AND DRY YOUR GEAR EACH NIGHT AT BASE CAMP. "THE PEOPLE WHO SUCCEED LOOK AFTER THEMSELVES WELL," EXPLAINS GUIDE PAT LITTLEJOHN.
- CARRY TWO PAIRS OF GLOVES OR MITTENS ON CLIMBS, AND STASH A DRY SHIRT AT CAMP — THAT WAY, YOU'LL ALWAYS BE WARM AND DRY ONCE YOU STOP MOVING.

Among the hot spots of guided mountaineering — Rainier, Mont Blanc, Everest — most ascents follow well-trod trenches in the snow. But in certain remote ranges, believe it or not, average Joes can still inscribe their names in the annals of exploration. Iversen's climb was written up in *The American Alpine Journal*, an honor dreamed of but rarely achieved even by expert mountaineers. In the Tien Shan, a range inaccessible to Westerners until the breakup of the Soviet Union, hundreds of unclimbed mountains still line the border between the Kyrgyz Republic and China. For less than a 10th of what climbers pay to join the conga line slogging up Mount Everest, adventurous clients of English guide Pat Littlejohn can literally go where no man has gone before.

In each of the past 15 years, Littlejohn's International School of Mountaineering has led small teams of up to nine clients (usually including Komissarov, president of the Kyrgyz Alpine Federation of Alpinism) and their guides to a different unexplored valley of the Tien Shan, the fabled Celestial Mountains of Central Asia.

"It's a proper expedition," Iversen says. "The guides are not there to trot you up well-known routes. They want to explore too." When the team ventures up the unnamed glacier east of Mustyr, the ice-draped fin that's the highest peak in the

Prep & Gear

PATAGONIA DAS PARKA; $300, PATAGONIA.COM

16 WEEKS OUT

Sign up: The International School of Mountaineering's three-week Virgin Peaks of the Tien Shan expedition this September already has a waiting list, but Littlejohn is likely to add a two-week trip in late August; contact him immediately to join the expedition (*$4,150/$5,150 including flights; alpinism.com*).

Dial in your skills: Unless you're an experienced mountaineer, you'll need real-world instruction and practice in snow, ice, and rock climbing before heading to Kyrgyzstan. "We don't want to dedicate time to teaching people on the trip," says Littlejohn. There are ample opportunities to learn alpine climbing in the U.S., even among the diminutive peaks of the Northeast. Contact an IFMGA guide (*hireaguide.amga.com*) and explain where you're headed. Expect to spend a week and $1,500 to $2,500 learning the alpine basics from scratch.

Start training: A climbing expedition requires very sturdy legs and lungs. By far the best way to get in shape is to hike up and down hills wearing a loaded pack, in snow if possible. But office-bound flatlanders are still very worthy candidates for these trips and can train successfully if they're willing to put in enough time hiking, stadium climbing, or StairMastering.

SCARPA OMEGA BOOTS; $369, SCARPA.COM

Focus on two things:

- **All-day endurance** Plan a full day (six hours or more) of hiking, climbing, or cycling at least one to two weekends each month during the summer — good training for mental endurance as well as physical stamina.
- **Tricky terrain** Negotiating the loose, slippery gravel and boulders of glacial moraines and talus slopes is much more tiring than trail walking. Train by hiking off-trail in your mountain boots.

12 WEEKS OUT

Go camping: A remote high-altitude expedition is no time for your first camping trip, so unless you've got albums of photos from past wilderness adventures, plan several backpacking weekends to perfect your systems for sleeping, nutrition, and coping with foul weather.

Buy your gear: Patagonia's revamped DAS Parka has ultralight Primaloft One insulation and a climber's fit for double duty on summit pushes as well as cold nights at base camp. Scarpa Omegas are ultralight double boots that provide necessary insulation without the bulk; removable liners allow drying. Hike in new boots as often as possible to get the feel of them and work out any hot spots.

FOUR WEEKS OUT

Sort logistics: U.S. citizens require a visa to enter Kyrgyzstan (*$100; kgembassy.org/c-visa-requirements.html*). Rescue and evacuation insurance is strongly recommended. Members of the American Alpine Club (*$75; americanalpineclub.org*) get $5,000 of rescue services from Global Rescue (*globalrescue.com*).

The summit of Pik Bakshi (14,547 feet) in Kyrgyzstan sees its very first visitors.

range, they'll assess hazards and choose climbing lines together. If a storm pins them in their tents, no Sherpa will bring them dinner. For many clients, this taste of genuine adventure is addictive — one man has joined seven of Littlejohn's annual expeditions.

Iversen was hooked after once following snow leopard tracks to the summit of another unclimbed peak above the Teke-Lutor Glacier. Now he's completed two expeditions and is planning a third. "I'm not a very skilled mountaineer," he says. "But I love doing it, and going with that team. You're not nursed all the way up."

And though many things can disrupt an expedition, Littlejohn's teams have bagged more than 60 virgin peaks over the years. Even when waist-deep snow fell one season, the climbers managed three first ascents. "That's the great thing about going into untouched areas," Littlejohn says. "You can't fail."

—DOUGALD MACDONALD

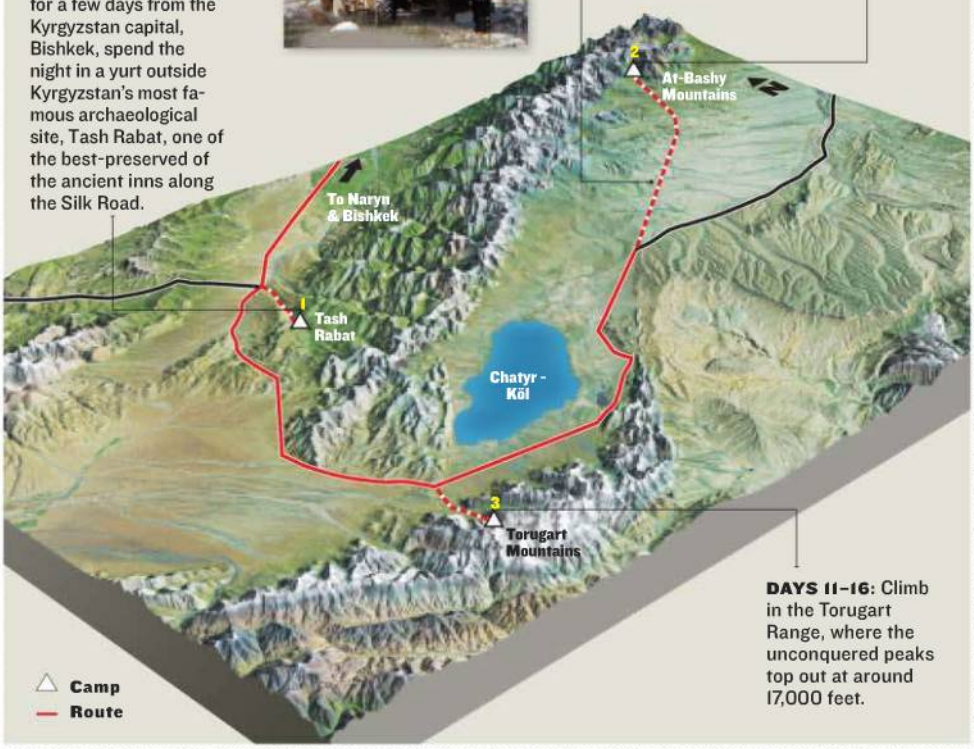
FROM TOP: TOMASZ DUDEK; STEPHEN TAYLOR. MAP BY STEVE WALKOWIAK

Route Details

DAY 4: After traveling for a few days from the Kyrgyzstan capital, Bishkek, spend the night in a yurt outside Kyrgyzstan's most famous archaeological site, Tash Rabat, one of the best-preserved of the ancient inns along the Silk Road.

DAY 5: Travel off-road to reach your first base camp in a Russian-made six-wheel truck called a Kama.

DAYS 6–10: Climb in the At-Bashy range, where the slightly smaller mountains will help with acclimatization.



DAYS 11–16: Climb in the Torugart Range, where the unconquered peaks top out at around 17,000 feet.

Dropping into a bowl full of corn snow below Midway Mountain on the Sierra High Route

Field Notes

- BRING SKIN WAX, LIKE GLOP STOPPER. IT KEEPS WET SNOW FROM STICKING TO THE BOTTOM OF YOUR SKINS.
- DRINK FROM A WATER BLADDER WITH A HOSE THAT FEEDS THROUGH YOUR BACKPACK. IF YOU CAN HYDRATE EASILY ON THE FLY, YOU'LL GO MUCH FASTER THAN IF YOU HAVE TO CONSTANTLY STOP AND FISH A WATER BOTTLE OUT OF YOUR PACK.

4 Ski *the* Entire High Sierra

PREP TIME
Four months

TIME OFF WORK
One week

BEST TIME TO GO
May

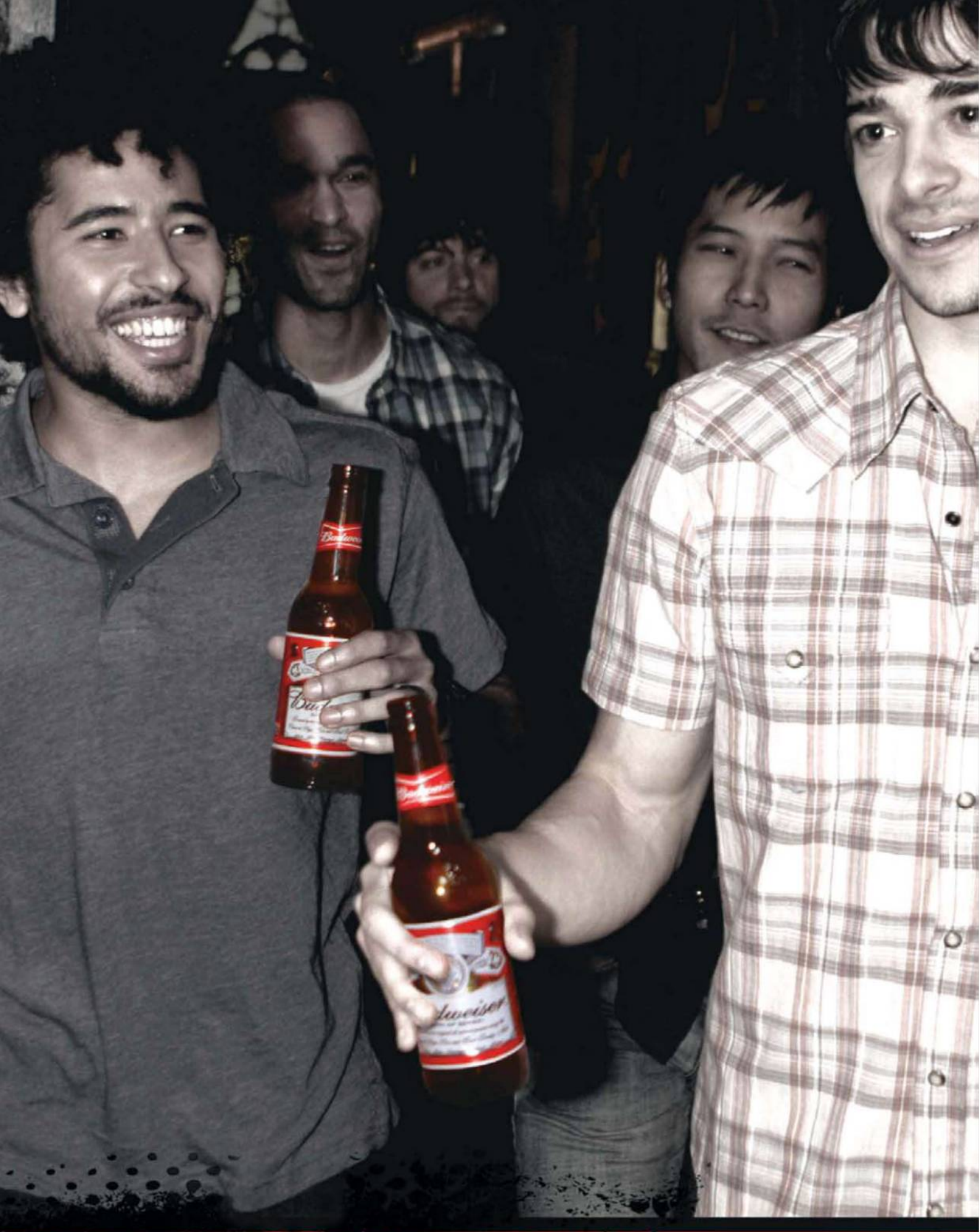
THE SIERRA NEVADA range erupts with the tallest peak in the lower 48 (Mount Whitney) and contains the most breathtaking national park (Yosemite). As mountain ranges go, it lacks for nothing. In fact, the Sierra, like those badass Alps, even beckons backcountry skiers with a Haute Route of its own — a grand traverse across the heart of the range.

Covering some 40 miles — most of them above 10,000 feet — the Sierra High Route ski tour takes six days to complete. The payoffs: huge descents, mind-warping views, and prolonged solitude. After crossing a high pass, says High Route veteran Evelyn Spence, you often "find an entire valley, the size of a couple of Vail's back bowls, with the only obstacle being the tiredness of your own legs."

Tracing the border between Sequoia and King's Canyon national parks, the route gains up to 15,000 feet of elevation in total, hovering around 12,000 feet for much of it. The area sees few visitors in summer, and even fewer when there's snow on the

Route Details

FROM TOP: JOHN DITTLI; JIMMY CHIN. MAP BY STEVE WALKOWIAK



Responsibility Matters® ©2010 Anheuser-Busch, Inc., Budweiser® Beer, St. Louis, MO

Field Notes

• CONSERVE YOUR ENERGY BY GETTING INTO A GOOD FREE-HEEL SKIING RHYTHM. ON A LONGER TRIP LIKE THIS, EFFICIENCY AND TECHNIQUE ARE KEY: KICK YOUR SKI FORWARD WITH EACH STRIDE, LIFTING YOUR LEG JUST ENOUGH TO CLEAR THE GROUND, BUT NOT SO MUCH THAT YOU'RE WALKING OR STOMPING YOUR SKIS WITH EACH FOOTFALL.

ground. Skiing it gives people in California a rare gift: the chance to get the hell away from each other.

Such solitude doesn't come cheap. It takes damn strong fitness to be a ski mountaineer and a damn fit ski mountaineer to complete the Sierra High Route. The altitude and remoteness prevent any kind of junior path or easy route. Unless you pull a U-turn on the first day, there's no way to even bail out. And unlike Europe's Haute Route, California's contains no huts or refuges. Skiers must schlep heavy packs, stuffed with camping gear and food, the entire way.

"The classic route," says High Route pioneer Bela Vadasz, "is east to west. That's how it was conceived when it was more of a nordic-ski tour." But no one skis it on flimsy cross-country skis anymore. Huge improvements in gear mean skiers ply the route with the same wide skis you see at resorts, using free-heel bindings for the ascents. Either way will take you over nine high cols or passes, each with its own ecstatic drop.

Vadasz, the owner of Alpine Skills International, which guides Sierra trips every May, says: "It's the highest way to cross the Sierra Nevada. And you earn it, climbing those passes." In good weather, you can detour up a selection of peaks with 45-degree descents. Milestone Mountain presents a perennial challenge: a dark obelisk that requires some rock scrambling and traversing above an 80-foot cliff, then rewards the effort with a schuss down an alpine bowl.

Utahns and Coloradans often lambaste California for its heavy, wet maritime snowpack, dismissing it as "Sierra Cement." But in spring that snow turns soft and forgiving under daily melt-freeze cycles, producing easy-skiing corn. The ultimate prize of skiing the High Route this time of year is catching the melt-freeze metamorphism — classic Sierra spring snow.

On the Sierra High Route, days tend to unwind like so: Wake up in your tent once dawn's light gets too bright; scarf coffee and breakfast; break camp and stuff it all into backpacks; shoulder the pack and get climbing while snow remains firm; gain a pass as the snow turns to corn; ski down, making huge turns on open snowfields (although it's never easy to ski with 50 pounds on your back, you get used to it); reach the next camping spot, where you can dump the pack and strike off for a sunset ski. After six days, your knees and shoulders will ache, and you'll truly deserve the beer you've stashed in a cooler in the shuttle vehicle (or a cold stream). If you've any sense of place, the beer is California's own Sierra Nevada Pale Ale. —ROB STORY

Prep & Gear

BLACK DIAMOND ASCENSION SPLITSTS SKINS; $190, BLACKDIAMONDEQUIPMENT.COM

DYNAFIT TLT VERTICAL FT 12 BINDINGS; $570, DYNAFIT.COM

BLACK DIAMOND DEPLOY SHOVEL; $60, BLACK DIAMOND EQUIPMENT.COM

16 WEEKS OUT

Choose your skis: Unless you're an experienced telemarker (constant free-heel skiing), go with Alpine Touring (AT) skis, which allow you to lock the heel for descents, mimicking standard downhill gear. AT skis, boots, and bindings have become much more user-friendly and lightweight in the past few years. Locked heels mean you can ski as easily as you do in-bounds.

Break in your gear: Local ski areas should be open by early December. And if you're lucky enough to live near one, you'll want to spend at least three hard days growing accustomed to your AT setup.

Fit your climbing skins: This is easy to screw up, and although some skiers prefer to have their local ski shop do it, it's best to know how to do it yourself for an extended wilderness trip like this.

Get fit: If you can't get to a ski resort often, you can still prepare for a long ski tour by running and spending time at the gym.

Increase your cardio fitness: Since the High Route rarely dips below 10,000 feet, you'll definitely feel the altitude, and you'll gain thousands of feet per day. In the weight room, concentrate on squats. First, do two-legged squats on the sled machine. Next, lighten the weight a bit. Thrust up with both legs, then lift your off leg above the platform, keeping all the weight supported using just one leg. Lower the weight back down slowly with that one leg. Then push off again with both. Do 12 reps, then switch legs. Finally, consider the one time-tested ski exercise that doesn't require a slope or even a gym. The Wall Sit — putting your back against a wall in a sitting position, then holding yourself there for one minute, keeping your thighs parallel to the floor — has strengthened ski muscles for decades.

10 WEEKS OUT

Go camping in the snow: Ideally you can combine this with a short ski tour into nearby backcountry, but the important thing is to get used to winter camping. It will have a big influence on your layering system, what type of sleeping bag you bring, and how you secure your tent. Tip: Learn how to dig a deadman, a T-shaped trench in which to bury a stick that you can tie tent cords to when trees are scarce (*mensjournal.com/deadman*).

EIGHT WEEKS OUT

Get avalanche aware: You can rent avalanche gear, but for a committing trip like this, it's smart to own it and know it intimately. You'll need a transceiver, a lightweight shovel, and a probe. Practice by burying a transmitting beacon under snow (or brush) and conducting searches. In May avalanche danger is relatively low, but this is still the single most important skill you can learn.

FOUR WEEKS OUT

Consult the pros: If you're not quite where you need to be with your backcountry skiing, you can always turn this into a guided trip, and now's the time to book your spot. Alpine Skills International (*alpineskills.com*) pioneered the High Route in the 1980s and has led dozens of crossings since ($990; *alpineskills.com*).

ARC'TERYX ARRAKIS 65 PACK; $500, ARCTERYX.COM

Contact us at 1-800-PORSCHE or porscheusa.com. ©2010 Porsche Cars North America, Inc. Porsche recommends seat belt usage and observance of all traffic laws at all times.

Fermentation began in 1955. That explains the kick.

If it's your first time, take small sips. Distilled from race-bred DNA, the Boxster Spyder is the leanest, most agile member of the Boxster family. Designed from the outside in to reduce weight by over 175 lbs, there's nothing extra to get between you and an undiluted driving experience. Its six-cylinder Boxer engine with Direct Fuel Injection (DFI) was engineered to be remarkably efficient, yet deliver 320 hp, 10 hp more than the Boxster S. It's roadster performance at its most potent. Porsche. There is no substitute.

The Boxster Spyder

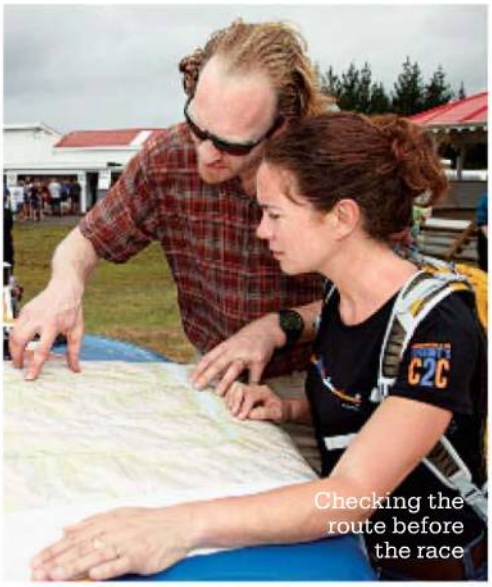
100 years
Ferry Porsche

porscheusa.com/spyder

PORSCHE

During the previous six months, I've been a slave to a man I've never met, a guy who delighted in calling me a douchebag and told me to "make friends with pain." I've wrecked my left wrist on a kettlebell, puked foam at the local high school track, and frozen my balls off on the Lehigh River in Pennsylvania. I've eaten like a caveman, gone on the wagon, and known the special nausea of Creamsicle-flavored electrolyte drink on an empty stomach.

I've also shelled out more on a new bike than I've ever spent on a car and made my peace with road cycling (except for the dorky helmets, clumsy cleats, fey costumes, and cyclists themselves). I've kept three separate journals — one for workouts; one for gear and travel; one for every last thing I ingested. And all of it was so I could be where I am now: standing in line for the Porta-Potties at dawn on a desolate beach on the west coast of New Zealand's South Island, hoping whoever's in there hurries it up so I don't shit myself.



Checking the route before the race

Over the next two days, my wife, Mary, and I plan to run, bike, and kayak 151 miles across this spectacular and ridiculously fit country as a two-person relay team in the Speight's Coast to Coast, the world's original multisport adventure race. (The "adventure" part just refers to the fact that the course cuts through wilderness areas.) Although I've long had a taste for pushing the limits of fun and stamina, until recently, Mary's idea of an endurance event was more along the lines of how long she could remain prone on the beach without burning. But today, in her stage of the race, she's due to run 21 miles up through two alpine watersheds on an unmarked trail, ford thigh-deep streams, and scramble over vehicle-size boulders. Compared to Mary's near-marathon in the mountains, my stage this morning is a sprint: a 1.6-mile dash to our bikes followed by 36 miles of cycling over rolling hills.

PREP TIME
Six months

TIME OFF WORK
One week

WHEN TO GO
February

It could all come off beautifully — adventure racing as breakthrough couples therapy. Or it could turn out to be just the opposite — that I signed us up for ritual humiliation at the bottom of the world.

"It's how we Kiwis do midlife crisis," is how a New Zealander first described the Coast to Coast to me, and the competitors gathering on the beach bear this out. There's a good mix of men and women; scores of hard-bodied young jocks, but plenty of ruddy-faced bucket-listers, too, a bit of extra gut pinched above the elastic of their cycling shorts.

On the walk to the start this morning, I met a South Island native, Andy, who looked to be about 50. Andy told me that on his only previous attempt, he'd been medevaced by helicopter from the mountains midrace for hypothermia. When I mention that this is Mary's great fear, he cuts me off with typically brusque Kiwi optimism. "Oh, she'll do fine, mate."

With a few minutes left until the start, race director Robin Judkins clambers up a sea-wall boulder, bullhorn in one hand, air horn in the other. Judkins, 60, is a stout former house painter, recovered alcoholic, and genre novelist. Picture Dom DeLuise in a Santa beard and dressed like a Jimmy Buffett–lovin' Parrothead. He staged the first Coast to Coast in 1983 and has run it every year since. At the pre-race briefing last night, he became startlingly severe as he implored competitors not to tackle him at the finish — he has suffered too many back injuries and other ailments to have jubilant finishers knocking him to the ground. Unfortunately for him, the rock he's standing on now is directly between us and the official start, and Judkins shakes with laughter when a few racers yell, "Tackle him!"

After that, it grows quiet, and I hear the distinct detonation of a single wave behind us on the beach, the hiss-fizz of it washing up the sand, and then the pinched squeal of the air horn. *It's on.*

MARCH 2009: A DUMB IDEA IS BORN

The first time I proposed that we enter the Coast to Coast, I hadn't planned to bring it up at all. The boys were finally down for the night, we were sitting on the floor in our living room, on our third glasses of wine, and Mary and I were enjoying the kind of fully awake but relaxed conversation we rarely had anymore. For the 12 years before our older son was born, we'd lived largely month-to-month, one of us working, the other freelancing or back in grad school, rarely spending nights in, skipping town on short notice. Twelve years where we got very good at doing our own thing; and for most of that time, starting a family never even came up.

Now look at us: in the New York 'burbs, thrust into outmoded gender roles — commuter husband, homemaker wife — living someone else's platonic ideal. And because I'd come around to wanting kids first, everything that was hard about our new life could seem, at times, my fault. Worst of all was a creeping sense that we'd had our heyday as a couple — that we existed for our boys now, not each other. It helped to talk about it, but that had begun to feel like the only thing we did together: talk and drink too much wine. We needed a challenge that wasn't wiping little boys' butts, something for us. And that's when I remembered the Coast to Coast.

"Can we really do it?" Mary asked.

"Absolutely!" I bluffed.

Prep & Gear

SIX MONTHS OUT

Learn to kayak: Master the prerequisite skills for Class II whitewater — breaking in and out of swift current, ferry-gliding, self-rescue.
Start budgeting: Back-of-the-envelope, all-in estimate: $7,625 per person, including the $656 (U.S.) entry fee.

FOUR MONTHS OUT

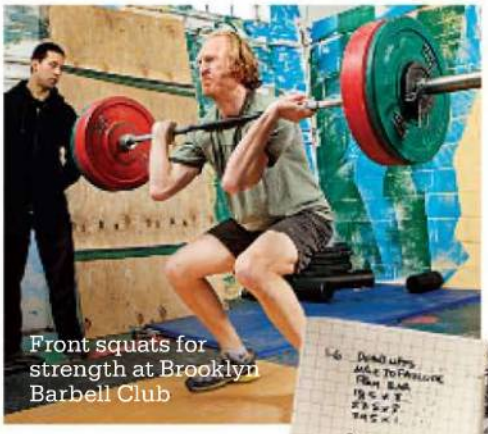
Buy your ride: No niche racing bike required, just a versatile, fast road bike. Because of my height (6-foot-7), I bought a custom Seven Axiom S for $5,300. It's built on a straight-gauge titanium frame that I plan to be riding 20 years from now.
Go long: Add weekly bike rides of up to two hours, and to build running mileage without injury, incorporate one-minute walk breaks every mile or so, as advised by marathon guru Jeff Galloway.

MOUNTAIN HARDWARE FLUID 26; $100, MOUNTAINHARDWARE.COM

SIGMA BC 1606L DTS WIRELESS; $80, SIGMASPORT.COM

THREE MONTHS OUT

Pick up essential gear: With winter arriving here in the States, you'll need a warmer set of layers for your training sessions than you will for the race itself. Dress as if it's 10 degrees warmer on runs and 10 degrees colder on bike rides. Pick up a dry top (the Kokatat Rogue; $400 is a worthy investment) for frigid whitewater sessions — on the river it's always easier to cool down than to warm up. Buy a hydration pack just big enough (25 liters) to fit the mandatory first-aid gear and extra clothing layers for the mountain run. Go even smaller by ditching the hydration bladder and drinking from streams as locals do.



Front squats for strength at Brooklyn Barbell Club

TWO MONTHS OUT

Dig deeper: It's time to transition from fitness to performance. First, make your workouts more precise and efficient. Buy a bike computer to track mileage, cadence, distance, speed, etc., and a heart-rate monitor. Next, add CrossFit training for core strength and conditioning. At Crossfitendurance.com, a virtual trainer can supervise your progess with simple calendar software.
Book travel: Fly Air New Zealand, which offers 13-hour nonstops (a must) from SFO and LAX to Auckland, then book an 80-minute connection to Christchurch. Leave yourself two hours between flights to clear customs.
Reserve your kayak and other race gear: The folks at TopSport in Christchurch aren't cheap, but they'll hustle to get you exactly what you need (*topsport.co.nz*).

THREE WEEKS OUT

Recruit a support crew: Post a request for help on the Coast to Coast website, or ask for referrals from your innkeepers.
Do the race distances at least once: Pick a Saturday and prove to yourself that you can run 20 miles and kayak 40.
Make a fueling plan: In *The Paleo Diet for Athletes*, the authors provide excellent formulas for carbo-loading (while being vehemently opposed to the traditional pre-race plate of pasta).
Experiment with energy gels: Disgusting but essential for a huge physical challenge like this. Also sample electrolyte mixes and recovery powders well before race day to find the ones that agree with you.

On a January trail run in New York's Hook Mountain State Park

ONE WEEK OUT

Practice reassembling your bike: Keep a record of key measurements, such as effective seat height (center of the bottom bracket to the top of your saddle).
Choose race day attire: You need at least one lightweight shell for sudden squalls. Icebreaker's LS Velocity is the ideal base layer.
Recon the route: Once in-country, study the stages of the race up close, but don't hire a private guide; keep costs down by joining a group tour.

For more gear picks, go to mensjournal.com/nzgear.

ICEBREAKER LS VELOCITY ZIP; $90, ICEBREAKER.COM

The couple at home with their boys in New York

TRAINING AND JOURNAL: CAL CRARY (4)

5 Race *Across* New Zealand

What Doesn't Kill Us Will Save Our Marriage

Two kids under five. 50-hour-per-week desk job. Three-hour daily commute. Wife struggling with mommy-track blues. Taking on your first three-sport adventure race — out of the question, right? No, the solution.

by **BRAD WIENERS**

photographs by **CHRIS MCLENNAN**

The author (and MJ editor) Brad Wieners on day one of the Coast to Coast. Opposite page: celebrating at the finish with race partner and wife Mary

"Let me see," she said, grabbing a laptop. Mary trusts my instincts but knows to check my facts. She quickly found the Speight's website and confirmed that novices can enter on a first-come, first-served basis (the field is capped at 800 entries) and that we could still make the deadline (November for "internationals").

We checked out the course map. In addition to the 21-mile mountain run, the Coast to Coast includes 84 miles of cycling on paved, two-lane country roads and 42 miles of kayaking, nearly a third of which is Class II whitewater on the Waimakariri River and the main event of day two, which I quickly volunteered for. Mary noticed how in the two-day relay version of the event (some elite athletes do the whole course themselves in one day), most competitors camp out at the midway point in tents or camper vans.

"It's how we Kiwis do mid-life crisis," is how a New Zealander first described the Coast to Coast to me.

"So after you basically run a marathon on rocks, you have to sleep on the ground?"

"After that, you won't even notice what you're sleeping on," I said. She gave me a look. "Maybe I can find us an inn?"

Mary had good reason to be wary. On those occasions when I'd tried to convert her to my fringe ideas of a good time, I'd often blown it, marching her up 3,000 feet of switchbacks, for example, on her very first overnight backpacking trip. "Travel with Brad," as such episodes became known, and the phrase covers not only suffer-fests but anytime you're out of your depth, rushing to make connections, or simply making it up as you go along. If you're Mary, it means you're freaking out because far too much has been left to chance.

The Coast to Coast was Travel with Brad to the nth degree. We had none of the particular skills or gear required to take it on. Mary had never completed more than a 10-K charity run (and then only once) and had never clipped into the pedals of a road bike. I had also never used clip-in pedals or raced on a road bike, and even though I row and have messed about in a sea kayak, I had never run rapids in one. But — and maybe this was the fourth glass of wine talking — this all struck me as the point: If we were really going to get this done, we'd have to become different people. The kind who don't drink but who do get up superearly six or seven days a week to complete a serious workout before their kids wake up. The kind who actually have a plan.

"No matter what happens," I enthused, "we'll be in New Zealand."

Sensing that I might plot a way to enter the race alone if she declined, Mary said, "There is *no way* you're going back to New Zealand without me."

I took that as a yes.

FEBRUARY 12: THE RACE'S FIRST LEG

The first hour of the Coast to Coast brings a revelation: Cycling can be exhilarating. The initial run completed, we swarm over rolling hills, three dozen strong, our pedals whirring, our tires making a soft zipping sound as they lick the previous night's rain from the asphalt. At the front of our cycle pack, a pair of self-appointed taskmasters bark orders and rotate lead riders to break the wind, while the rest of us jockey in and out of an improvised formation, three cyclists wide. There is no question that I am far faster in this aerodynamic vacuum than I could be on my own. And while I know the burn will come, I feel as if I could go on like this forever. At one point, I'm actually coasting uphill. Then, around a bend, we see the first pack of cyclists — the only large group ahead of us in the whole race — and a collective shot of adrenaline courses through our group: Let's catch them!

In New Zealand the vibe in the pack is aggressive but not cutthroat, and that's another eye-opener. During my six months of training, I've become familiar with several subspecies of athlete — from data-driven, can't-shut-up-about-it triathletes to aggro,

KAYAK: PAUL'S CAMERA SHOP. MAP BY STEVE WALKOWIAK

Map Detail

△ Camp
— Standard Route
--- Revised Route

DAY 1, MILES 0–2: "Just pin it, mate!" That was the best pre-race advice I received, and it came from Tom Butler, our host at the Grasmere Lodge (*grasmere.co.nz*). Don't pace yourself off the start, he said. "Go hard, so you're in one of the faster packs of cyclists."

DAY 1, MILE 57: At Klondyke Corner, two-day competitors overnight in tents and camper vans. It's a great time: lamb sausages on the barbie, a beach-party atmosphere. Pack bug spray with DEET; the sand fleas are fierce.

DAY 1, MILES 35–57: With 3,200 feet of elevation gain and up to 30 stream crossings, the mountain run is demanding, but don't lose sight of the rewards, too, such as the splendid waterfall soon after the eighth crossing of the Deception River.

DAY 2, MILES 58–99: One-third of the kayaking is Class II whitewater. By February the river is usually low, so you have to avoid running aground in shallow braids. Stay river-right at Rock Gardens Rapids Two, where some competitors take an unintended swim.

Near Goat Pass, the high point in the course's first-day traverse of the Southern Alps

Field Notes

- **STAY CLOSE.** THE NIGHT BEFORE THE RACE, STAY AT THE KAPITEA RIDGE LODGE, A SIX-ROOM B&B ONLY FIVE MINUTES FROM THE START (FROM $195; KAPITEA.CO.NZ).
- **SUNSCREEN IS ESSENTIAL** ON NEW ZEALAND'S SOUTH ISLAND, WHERE THE KIWIS ARE QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT ANTARCTICA'S OZONE HOLE HAS STRETCHED TO THEM.

DAY 2, MILE 151: On Sumner Beach, race maestro Robin Judkins (pictured), per custom, hands each finisher a can of Speight's (rhymes with "eights"), the event's primary sponsor and an easy-drinking beer. (Think: the Coors of New Zealand.)

ascetic power lifters — but cyclists are among the worst. Because I'm tall (6-foot-7), I bit the bullet and went custom, shelling out five grand and change for a Seven Axiom S. The featherweight titanium goosed my speed but also got me hazed.

"Seven, huh?" asked one cyclist who came up from behind me on a county road in January. He wore clear wraparound Oakleys to keep from tearing up in the wind and Gore-Tex booties over his cleats to keep his toes warm (it was 40 degrees). We chatted briefly about how I liked the Seven (a lot) and the company's pedigree (Merlin, the titanium mountain bike specialist). Then he mused, pointedly, "Yep. A lot of money on these roads. Makes you wonder if they'll ever learn to ride." *They?*

In the Coast to Coast, I get to believe I am finally learning to ride. It takes a mile or two, but we reel in the front-runners, and then, in a flurry of derailleur noise and chains slipping onto ring teeth, our swarm invades theirs and we're a new pack, five dozen strong. When I pull into the transition minutes later (where I'll transfer our race bib and anklet to Mary for her run), I've put us in the top 25 percent. Not bad. Less than 30 seconds after I arrive, Mary's headed into the hills.

OCTOBER 2009: LOST RING, DAMAGED PRIDE

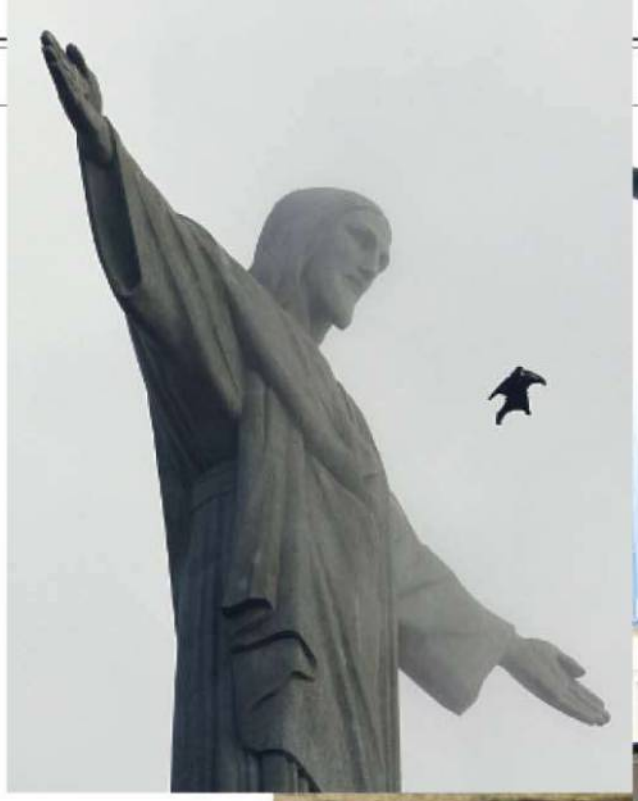
In the spring, Mary and I had begun our training slowly, adding a mile or two to our weekend runs, building a cardio base. Predictably, Mary went about it smarter, recruiting friends to run and cycle with, pacing herself on the advice of marathon guru Jeff Galloway. She found a trainer who cured her shin splints with pose running techniques and helped her build a weekly program. She started a blog where family and friends followed her progress and cheered her on. In contrast I tended to run and cycle alone *(continued on page 138)*

by **BILL GIFFORD**

photograph by **HUGH KRETSCHMER**

The Evel Knievel of BASE jumping, **Jeb Corliss**, is at his best dropping from the sky and buzzing cliffs inches from death. It's when he's on the ground that things get dark.

Falling Man



On the afternoon of April 27, 2006, Jeb Corliss rode the elevator up to the 86th floor of the Empire State Building wearing a fat suit and a stick-on handlebar mustache.

This was nothing special for the 34-year-old Corliss, the world's most famous BASE jumper. Over his 14-year career, he has jumped off some of the world's most iconic structures, including the Petronas Towers in Malaysia, the Golden Gate Bridge, and the Stratosphere casino in Las Vegas (smuggling his parachute through security inside an enormous stuffed puppy). He has jumped down the inside of the Eiffel Tower — turning a couple of twisting reverses on the way just to make it more exciting. Compared with those, the Empire State Building leap would be cake. A parachute was hidden inside the fat suit, but as he scrambled over the safety fence on the observation deck and prepared to jump, two security guards grabbed him through the rails. He was arrested and charged with "reckless endangerment with depraved indifference to life." The last part of the charge particularly irked him: He had made sure to time his jump so he'd land on Fifth Avenue when the lights were red. In the ensuing media frenzy, an unrepentant Corliss appeared everywhere from the front page of the *New York Times* to *Geraldo*; later, he chatted with the *Today* show while flying in a wingsuit above Florida.

"My life is very, very simple," he likes to say. "Life is a bunch of experiences you have...until you die. And my goal is to make those experiences as amazing as I possibly can." He fully believes, he says, that "everybody has a gift, something they're good at — and my gift is fear. I can do things with fear. When most people are crippled by fear, on the ground, puking, that's when I'm at my best."

The Empire State debacle turned out to be bad news for the small, secretive world of BASE jumping — the New York City Council passed a law banning the sport in all five boroughs. But the attention was great for Jeb Corliss. Although the nonjump jump nearly landed him in jail (he got off with three years' probation), it kept him in the headlines for nearly three years and helped attract independent filmmakers looking to chronicle his exploits — attention that will make it easier to line up both sponsors and media coverage for his next big project, the one he's been dreaming about for years: becoming the first man to jump from a plane and land (alive) without a parachute.

He's convinced it can be done. All he needs, he says, is $2 million to build a meticulously engineered landing structure. It's a visionary idea, a dream of skydivers for decades, but it's also wildly dangerous, with a high probability he'll die in the attempt.

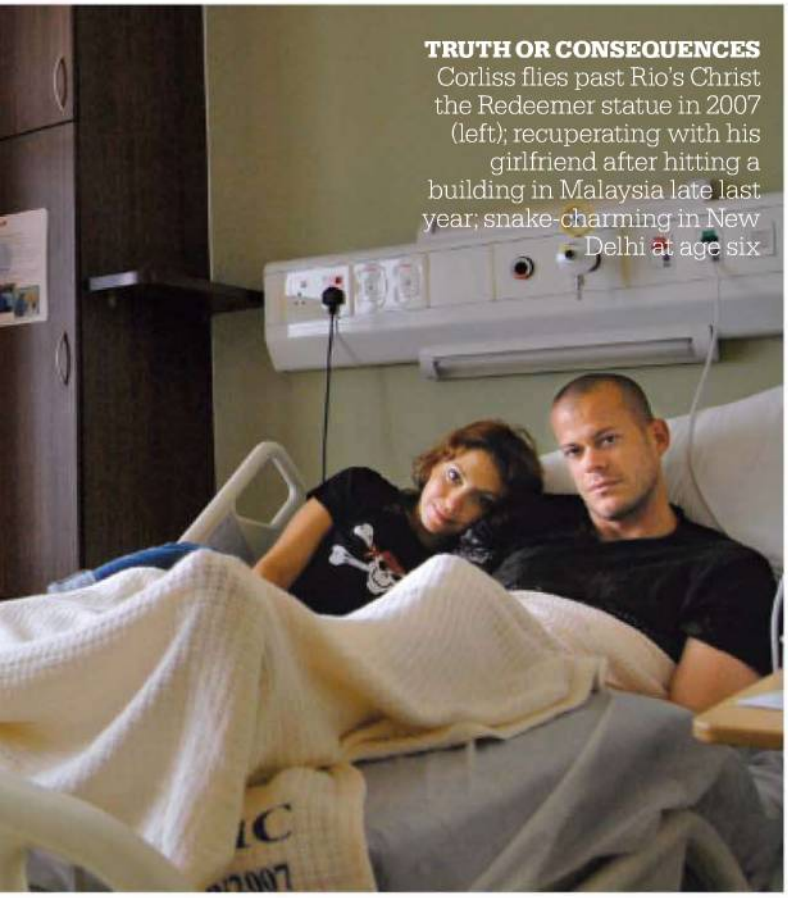
That's a perception Corliss cultivates. "I don't like to sugarcoat things," he says, "and it's a guarantee that if you get into BASE jumping, you're going to hurt yourself. You're going to break bones. You are going to see people die, and guess what? Some of them are going to be your very good friends. And if you keep BASE jumping long enough, it will kill you."

As Corliss well knows, it's also a guarantee that if you keep talking like that, people will keep watching you.

IN ESSENCE, BASE JUMPING IS LIKE PLAYING CHICKEN with the ground. The moment a jumper launches off an object or cliff (*BASE* stands for Building, Antenna, Span, and Earth), he has just a few seconds — as little as one or two, or as many as 10 or 12, depending on the height of the precipice — to accelerate in free fall and "track," or fly his body free and clear of whatever he leaped from, and then throw the pilot chute, which in turn extracts the main canopy from its container. If something goes wrong — an "off-heading" chute opening sends the jumper hurtling back into the building, say, or a stray wind gust pushes him someplace he'd rather not be, or maybe he just waits too long to pop the chute — there's not much chance to fix the situation. (There are no backup chutes in BASE jumping because there's no time to activate them.)

Jumpers not only live for the free fall but also try to make it last as long as possible, traveling to places like the fjords of Norway, which feature 5,000-foot cliffs. (Switzerland has a few 6,000-footers.) As BASE jumping has surged in popularity over the past decade or so, the sport's leading athletes — including Corliss — have pushed its boundaries, adding high-level acrobatic moves to their jumps and, increasingly, using wingsuits made of tough, reinforced nylon that let them soar like flying squirrels and execute basic aeronautic maneuvers at 100 mph. Chances are you've gotten a knot in your stomach watching a wingsuited BASE jumper on YouTube. Corliss is one of the world's top wingsuiters; his résumé includes buzzing the famous Christ the

PREVIOUS SPREAD: PROP STYLING BY KIM PRETTI FOR ZENOBIA. THIS PAGE: FROM TOP: PATRICK MCFEELEY; COURTESY JEB CORLISS



TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES Corliss flies past Rio's Christ the Redeemer statue in 2007 (left); recuperating with his girlfriend after hitting a building in Malaysia late last year; snake-charming in New Delhi at age six

COURTESY JEB CORLISS

Redeemer statue that towers above Rio de Janeiro.

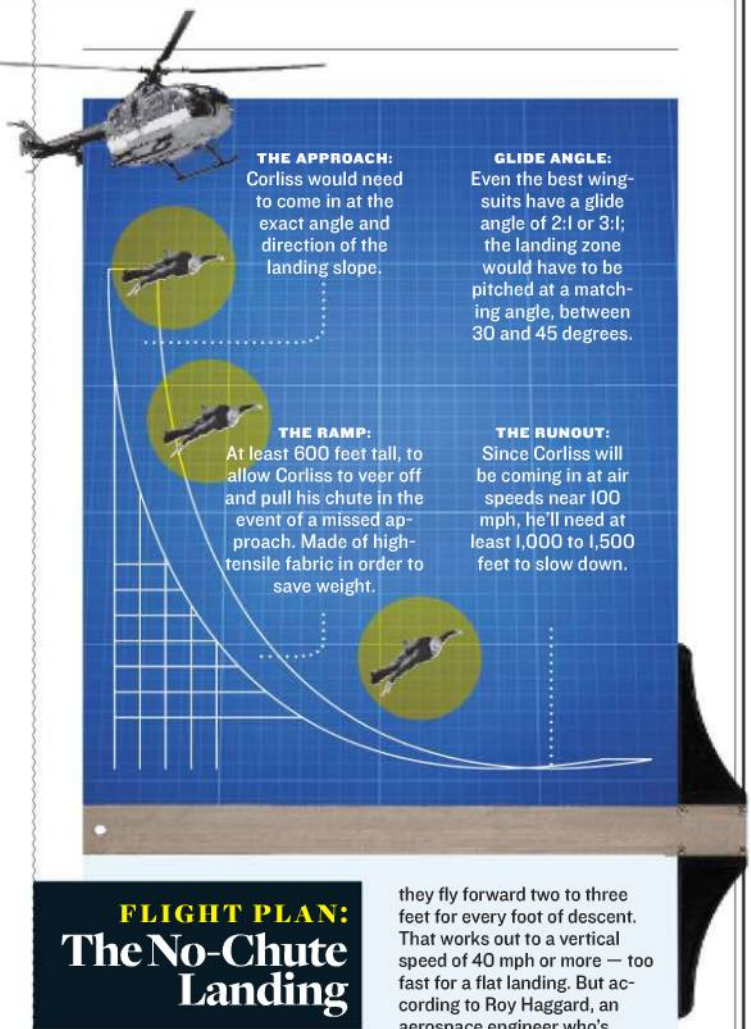
When I caught up with him last fall in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Corliss was obsessed with taking his wingsuit technique to the next level of so-called "proximity flying": gliding as close as possible to cliff faces and solid objects without touching them. In the spring of 2009, he leaped from a helicopter and flew down the spine of the Matterhorn while being filmed for a Channel 4 documentary that aired in September. It's a terrifying display, with Corliss's body skimming past jagged outcrops as he screams down the mountainside. Even scarier: He did four separate runs to ensure that the producers would have enough footage. "The Matterhorn was some of the best proxy flying I've ever done," he says. "The second time, when I almost touched, I was really, really close. I almost went in."

He'd come to Kuala Lumpur, Australian film crew in tow, to take part in the KL Tower International BASE Jump, a multiday festival that draws about 70 top jumpers from around the world. Here he could jump without violating his probation and teach his girlfriend, the ridiculously hot Italian model and champion skydiver Roberta Mancino, a thing or two (she wanted to notch the B on her BASE belt).

Even in a crowd of extremists, Corliss is easy to spot. Standing well over six feet, he has a hollow, severe face and a quarter-inch of fuzz on his head; dressed entirely in black, from his Oakleys down to his cargo pants and Converse boots, he looks like a punk-rock commando. His T-shirt is emblazoned with the international "no smoking" symbol and a slogan: THERE ARE COOLER WAYS TO DIE.

"In some ways his public persona is like a real-life superhero," says his friend Iiro Seppanen, a Finnish jumper and filmmaker who has made many trips with Corliss. "He's almost like a frickin' cartoon figure."

Corliss doesn't really make small talk; he holds forth, his words pouring out in a hot torrent. When he laughs it's unsettling, a high-pitched, whinnying cackle. As Corliss's close friend, the Norwegian pro skier Karina Hollekim, explains: "He's not one of those people you don't have an opinion about. When people meet Jeb, it's either-or."



FLIGHT PLAN: The No-Chute Landing

Strictly speaking, Jeb Corliss would not be the first human to fall from the sky and land without a parachute; he'd merely be the first to do so intentionally. A few dozen lucky people have survived long falls, including a couple of flight attendants; a handful of WWII tailgunners who landed in deep snow or rode their plane's wreckage to the ground; skydivers who landed in ponds or, in one case, bounced off high-tension power lines; and Steve Fossett, who in 1998 plummeted 29,000 feet into the Coral Sea with his collapsed balloon.

More interesting for Corliss's purposes is the case of I.M. Chisov, a Russian aviator whose plane was shot down in 1942. Chisov bailed, but delayed opening his parachute, as it would make him a target for German gunners. He passed out in mid–free fall and landed at the edge of a steep, snowy ravine before sliding to the bottom. The combination of the snow and the slope's angle had absorbed his speed and allowed him to survive.

Landing a wingsuit would rely on similar principles. Most wingsuits have a "glide ratio" of between 2:1 and 3:1, meaning they fly forward two to three feet for every foot of descent. That works out to a vertical speed of 40 mph or more — too fast for a flat landing. But according to Roy Haggard, an aerospace engineer who's worked with Corliss, an extremely skilled wingsuiter could come in on a slope of between 30 and 45 degrees, or about the same as a steep ski run. "As long as they land tangent to the surface, they're fine," he says.

Corliss wouldn't try to land on a mountainside — there's no bailout option. Rather, he'd have a unique structure — something like a huge ski-jump hill — built. The "ramp" would have to be built of special fabric that would slow the pilot's momentum over a 1,500-foot runout; the surface would have to be angled at a precise curve with almost zero "give," so the pilot wouldn't bounce off of it, trampoline-like; and the lip of the ramp would have to be at least 600 feet tall to allow Corliss to veer off and throw his chute safely in the event of a missed approach. Even then, Corliss would have to come in perfectly.

There's also the option of waiting for a wingsuit with a glide ratio of 6:1 or 7:1 to be developed — though such a contraption, which would resemble a flying machine more than any current wingsuit, is not on the horizon. None of this is about to stop Corliss, though. "Jeb's a showman," says Haggard. "He wants a traveling circus."

As the film crew zooms in, a group of jumpers is glaring daggers at Corliss from across the room. "Count how many times he says 'I,'" a European jumper mutters to me under his breath.

Reaching the top of the tower, 1,000 feet up, we shuffle off the elevator into a panoramic ballroom that serves as a staging ground for the jumpers. Corliss and Mancino quickly get ready, folding their canopies, their nylon lines stretched out carefully on the carpet, side by side. As he works, Corliss rocks steadily back and forth to an invisible rhythm, keeping one eye on Mancino's work. "What's this?" he says, pointing to her lines. "You want this, up here," he says, making a slight adjustment in her rig.

Aside from his big mouth, Corliss is known for bringing a new level of acrobatics to BASE jumping. He studied for years with an Olympic-caliber dive coach at USC. At KL, however, he's taking it easy, throwing nothing more complicated than a gainer (a single reverse flip before straightening out); otherwise he's content to coach Mancino, sometimes jumping in tandem to film her as she falls.

Coming back up in the elevator after one such two-way jump (they'll complete four nearly flawless jumps before calling it quits for the day), Mancino is glowing, though Corliss is wearing an exasperated-boyfriend face. "She tried to kill me," he says, after one jump in which he thought she waited too long to throw her chute.

"I keel you," she says, squaring off at him in a kickboxing stance, clearly trying to lighten the mood. "I keek you in the knots," she adds, her foot hovering inches from his crotch. Mancino competed nationally in kickboxing before she switched to skydiving. "She could totally kick my ass," Corliss admits.

As they repack, the Aussie cameraman takes Corliss to task for teaching his girlfriend such a dangerous sport. "C'mon, mate," he says good-naturedly. "Look after that girl!"

"I am looking after her," Corliss replies. "I'm a little different from most people. A lot of guys would be, 'Oh, you can't do this.' I'm not like that. I will never stop someone from doing something they want to do. If she wants to do it, I know she can. So I'm gonna try to teach her the safest, best way possible."

What does her family think of this?

"Her parents are all. Pissed. Off," he says, getting indignant. Mancino nods. "And I'm like, You guys are being selfish. You get to live your life the way you wanted to; now you need to let her live the way she wants to. And if something happens, who's gonna feel sad? You. So, I'm sorry, fuck you."

FLYING SQUIRREL Trying out the wingsuit at a 2007 test flight in California

THE MIDDLE CHILD OF THREE, CORLISS WAS born to an adventurous pair of artifacts dealers who traveled the world in search of exotic religious totems to sell in their gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico. By the time he was seven, Corliss had circled the globe three times. When the family lived in Kathmandu, five-year-old Jeb would often wander over to the Buddhist monastery and hang out with the monks. "He was a very, very different child," says his mother. "He had a really strong way of being, from the moment he first existed. He had an aura."

Moving so frequently, Corliss found it hard to make and keep friends. Even in Santa Fe he changed schools, it seemed, once a year. "For me, school was not a place to go learn," he says. "It was a place to go fight."

After his parents divorced when he was eight, Corliss and his sisters and mother settled in Palm Springs, California. By the end of sixth grade, he was pulled out of school for good (except for a three-month attempt at 12th grade). "School is evil," he says. "It made me a very dark, unhappy person."

His home life didn't help. When he was 15, his mother "just disappeared," he says. She was gone for four months, and didn't even call on his birthday. Then one day the phone rang. "My mom was like, 'Hey, Jeb, how would you like to go to Cancún?'"

Turns out she'd met a new boyfriend, who had decided to take her on an extended trip through Central America — over her strong initial objections. "She basically got abducted," Corliss says. Still, he and his younger sister ended up joining her and the boyfriend, a man named Barry Fitzmorris, for what turned into a nine-month odyssey through Central and South America. Soon after, his mother married Fitzmorris and the new family moved into an oceanfront house in Malibu, which is where Corliss lived until about a year ago, when his mother and Fitzmorris separated. (Corliss and Mancino now share a rented house in Venice, California, with Corliss's mom.)

In Malibu, Corliss grew even more disaffected and depressed. Things got so bad for him that when the Columbine killings happened, he understood why the killers did it. "Everybody was like, Oh, my God, how could this happen?" he says. "I'll tell you what: I know exactly how it happened. I was one inch from being one of those guys."

Luckily for everyone, he discovered skydiving instead. When he turned 18, he began hanging out at the drop zone in nearby Bermuda Dunes. To pay for his skydiving courses, he worked in a local movie theater where, after too many run-ins with the public, he was moved to the solitude of the projectionist's booth. "I actually liked that job," he says. "If it paid better, I'd still be doing it."

His goal, even then, was not just to skydive: He knew he wanted to be a professional BASE jumper, a job that barely even existed in 1994, before sponsors like Red Bull started underwriting the top jumpers. When he'd logged the requisite number of skydives, he enrolled in a jumping course offered by Apex BASE, a husband-and-wife team that operated out of the drop zone in nearby Perris.

"Before he'd ever made his first BASE jump," recalls Todd Shoebotham, owner of Apex, "he was pretty much already saying, I know I'm gonna love this."

He didn't tell anyone why he was doing it; in fact, he didn't say much of anything at all. Corliss had turned *(continued on page 136)*

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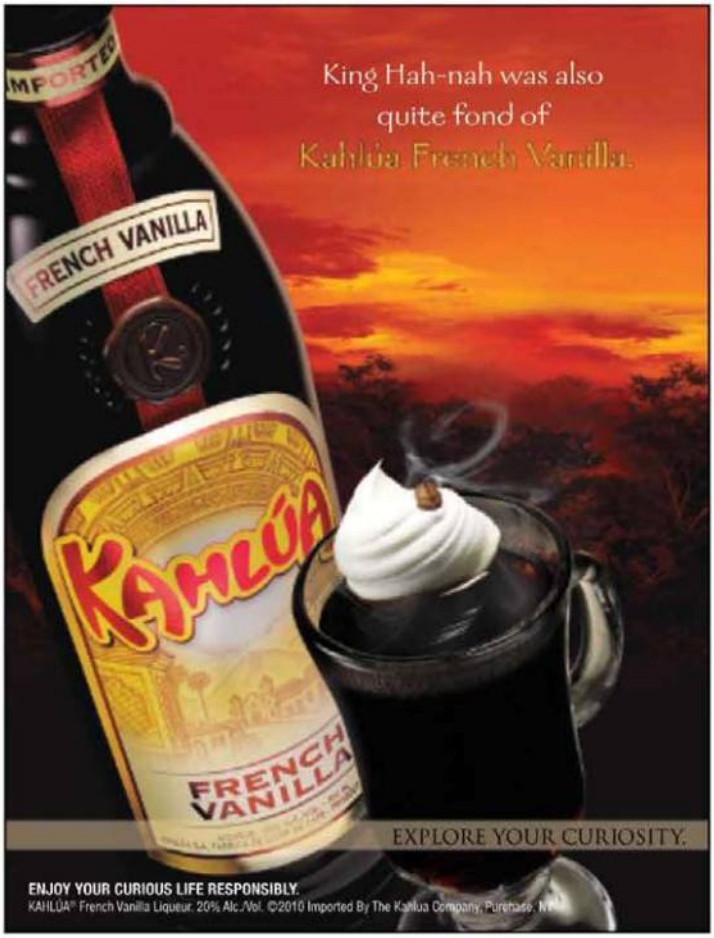

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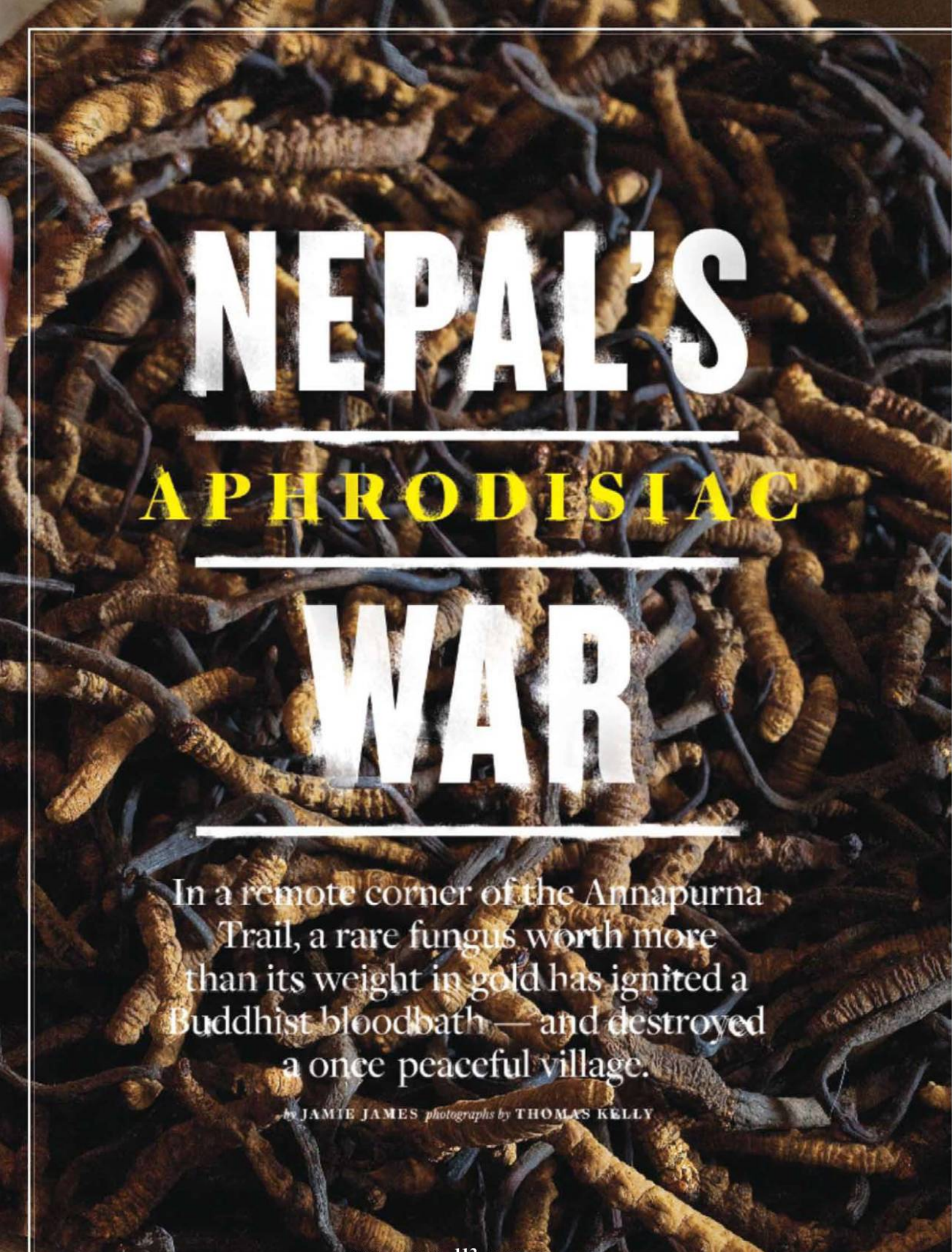


NEPAL'S APHRODISIAC WAR

In a remote corner of the Annapurna Trail, a rare fungus worth more than its weight in gold has ignited a Buddhist bloodbath — and destroyed a once peaceful village.

by JAMIE JAMES *photographs by* THOMAS KELLY

CAPTURED
The men of Nar, in the Annapurna region of the Himalayas, are escorted to stand trial for their part in the massacre of seven rival Gurkhas.

As twilight falls across the snowy peaks of central Nepal, just over a steep ridge from the iconic Annapurna trekking trail, a herder scans the shadows with binoculars, searching for a lost yak. From a perch high above the tiny cliffside village of Nar, he spots a stealthy movement in a desolate meadow below the snow line. He sharpens the image. It's a young man, a stranger. Behind him is another. Eventually five more men creep into view, most still boys in their late teens, led by a man in his mid-30s. The herder knows immediately who they are and why they are there.

The Annapurna region is the ancient homeland of the Manang people; the intruders are from the Gurkha tribe, dirt-poor neighbors of the Manang in Nar. This ragged band of men has come 60 rugged miles to plunder Nar's riches: its fields of *yarsagumba*, a tiny, wrinkled fungus that is, by weight, the most valuable tonic in Chinese medicine. It has been prized for centuries as a potent aphrodisiac and elixir of youth; tradition holds that it will prolong virility through long winter nights and throughout a long life. On a good day, a yarsagumba picker can bag 400 pieces, gently yanking up the subterranean fungus by the gracile fruiting stem it sends up. He can then sell his harvest for as much as $1,000 — in a country where the average annual income is $500.

His lost yak forgotten, the herder quickly clambers down the scrubby hillside to spread the alarm. The village elders convene a hasty meeting to organize a posse. *Mukhya*, the communal law of the Himalayas, requires that one adult male from each of Nar's 63 households join the posse, so the guilt will be collective. During the night the men lay an ambush, surrounding the poachers' high, isolated position. As the mild June night wanes, the group's fury at the violation builds: They will do whatever it takes to protect their wealth.

At dawn a force of the fittest Manang youths storms the Gurkha camp, attacking with sticks and iron farming tools. The enraged Manangi beat two of the intruders to death on the spot and throw the bodies into a deep icy crevasse. They round up the other five and herd them down the mountain, where more men are waiting. There the beatings continue and quickly escalate. The angry mob rips the life from the poachers, bashing their heads with rocks. Every member of the group, including boys as young as 12, is required to strike a blow.

They then cut the five corpses into small pieces, wrap them in plastic, and throw them into a glacial torrent that carries them far away. Hands spattered with blood and splinters of bone, the 65 men and boys of the village sit in a mountaintop conclave and swear a solemn oath, promising never to tell anyone what they've done, not even their wives. It takes only a month for the murderers' pact to unravel and their secret to come out, as blood secrets always do.

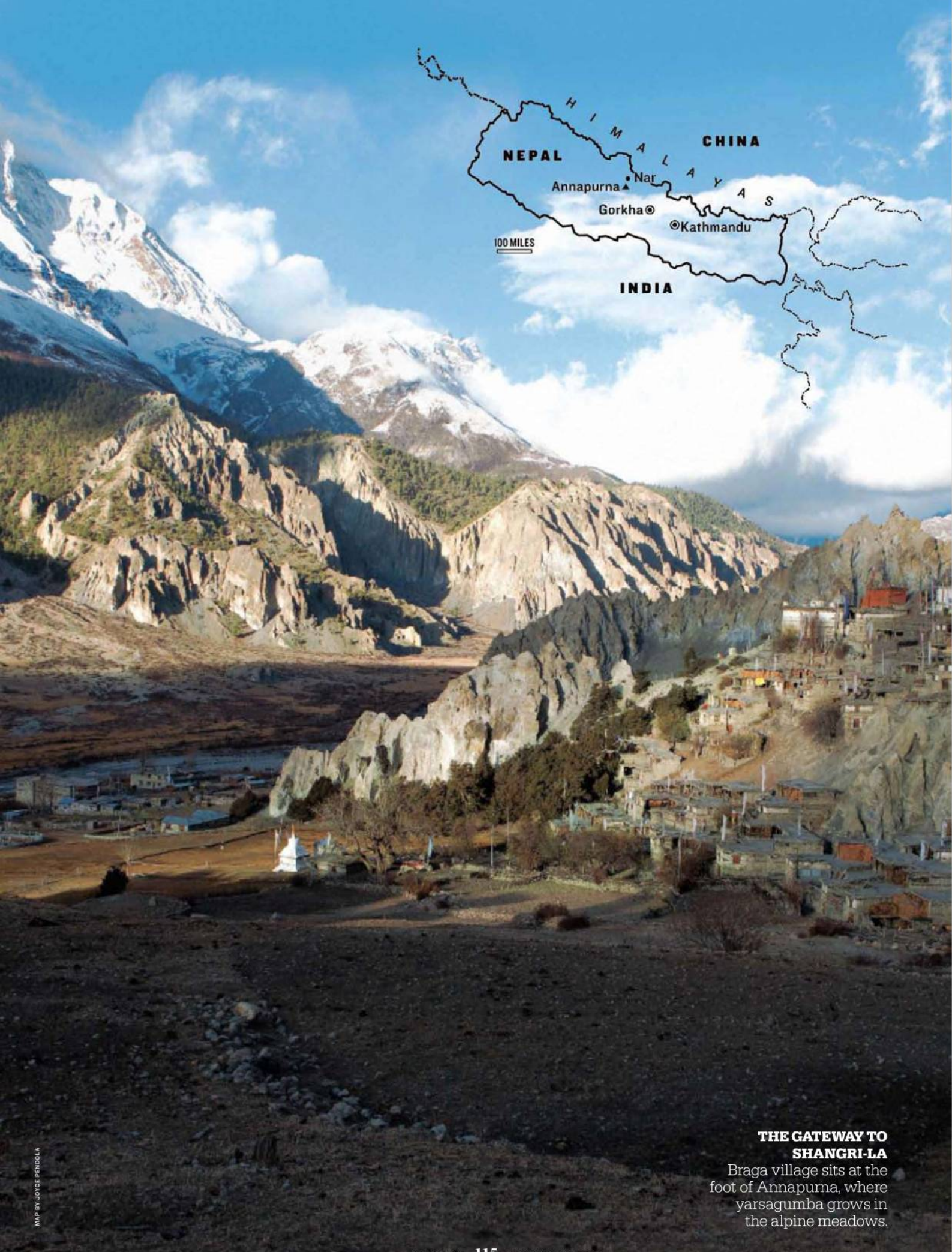
LIVING IN ASIA, YOU GET USED TO THE IMPOSSIBLE. I've lived in Bali for more than 11 years now, and most people in this part of the world believe in magical cures. If they get sick, they may seek Western-style medical treatment, but just to make sure, they also visit a faith healer, who dispenses the right herb or animal part to heal them. Of all these time-honored remedies, none is more sought after than those reputed to enhance male sexual performance.

Centuries before erectile dysfunction drugs, purveyors of traditional medicine were ransacking treasures of the wilderness for easy ways to stay hard. Some of them, such as seahorses and boiled swallows nests, are as innocuous as they are ineffective. Others are criminal: One of the principal causes for the continuing decline of the rhinoceros is butchery for its horn, said to resemble an erect penis. There are "medical" restaurants in China that specialize in serving animal penises to enhance virility, ranging from dog-dick sushi to tiger-penis soup. But the power of these elixirs is largely myth, arising from the primeval veneration of the great mammals, infused with their rarity.

Yarsagumba is by far the most precious of the Eastern aphrodisiacs. It's basically a mummified caterpillar that was once the larva of the Himalayan bat moth, which has been attacked by spores of the mushroom *Cordyceps sinensis*. Once harvested, the pale, delicate caterpillar carcasses are carefully kept whole until they reach the consumer's table, where they're crumbled into breakfast cereal or added to soup. Recent medical research has shown that unlike most natural aphrodisiacs, yarsagumba might actually work. A study at Stanford medical school found an increase of the 17-ketosteroid in the urine of men taking it, which indicates an increase in the subject's sexual drive and function and directly affects the sexual center of the brain and sexual organs. Controlled animal tests offer credible evidence that regular yarsagumba use decreases recovery time between orgasms and increases the volume of semen production. In another study on human subjects, 64 percent of *Cordyceps* eaters reported an enhanced sex drive.

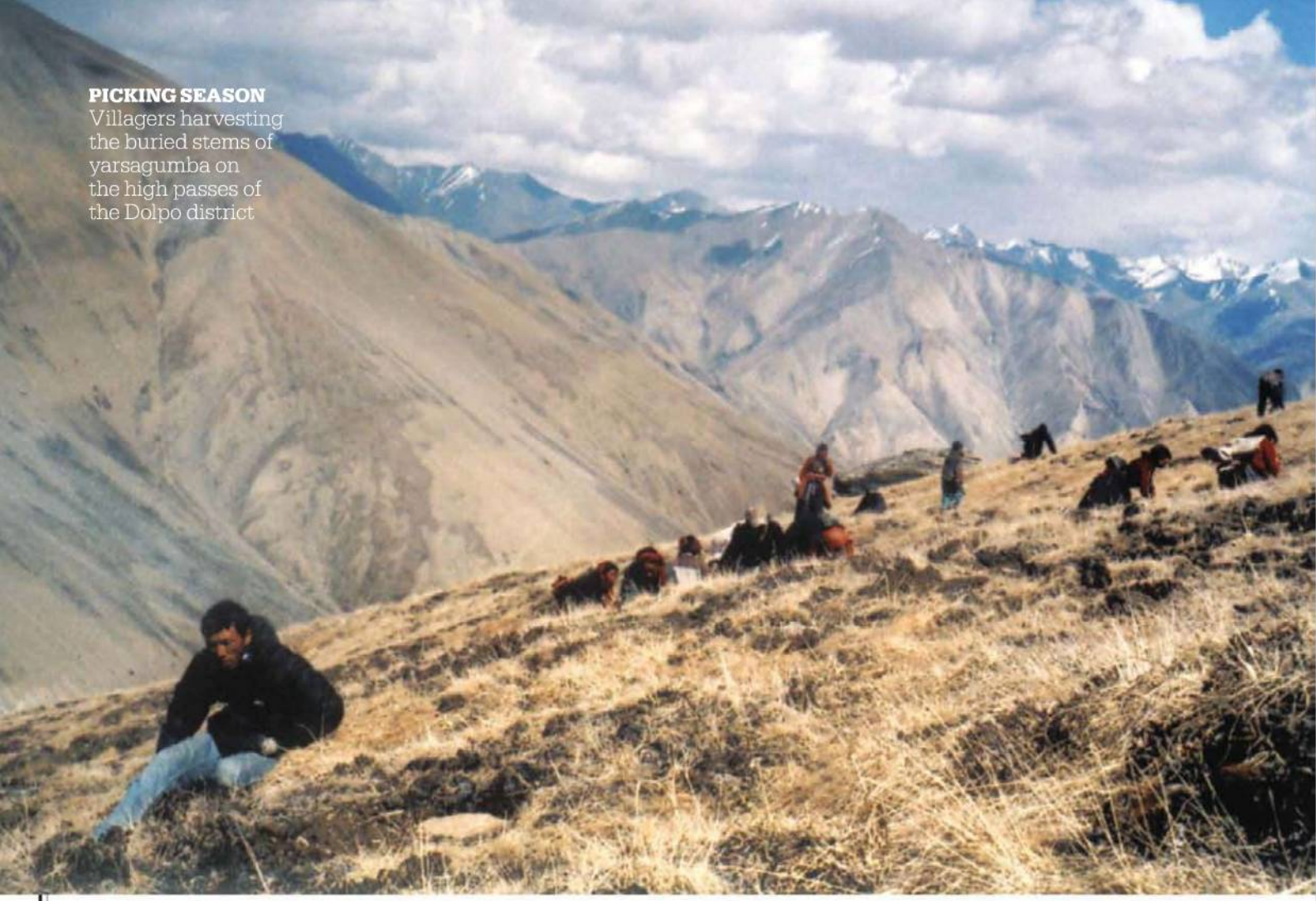
36 Nar locals jailed for murder

HEADLINE COURTESY NEPALNEWS.COM



MAP BY JOYCE PENDOLA

THE GATEWAY TO SHANGRI-LA
Braga village sits at the foot of Annapurna, where yarsagumba grows in the alpine meadows.



PICKING SEASON
Villagers harvesting the buried stems of yarsagumba on the high passes of the Dolpo district

MEN WHO EAT IT "WILL ENJOY THE DELIGHTS OF HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF BEAUTIFUL WOMEN."

In other words, *Cordyceps* doesn't work like Cialis — you don't pop one before a big date. To benefit from it, you must take it every day. Healthy Asian men of a certain age and income pay thousands of dollars yearly for a regimen of yarsagumba to hold on to what they've got — to cheat time. One ounce, comprising around 60 pieces — a scant one-month supply for a daily user — retails at urban Chinese apothecaries for up to $1,300, which means that it's literally worth more than its weight in gold. But these men are buying youth, the one thing even more precious than love.

It took centuries for the legend of yarsagumba to accumulate its power. A Chinese manuscript from A.D. 620 first recorded the tale of a charmed creature that metamorphoses in summer from animal to plant. By the 15th century, the fungus's reputation as an aphrodisiac was proverbial. A Tibetan monk named Nyamnyi Dorje Palden Zurkhar wrote a long poem in its praise called *An Ocean of Aphrodisiacal Qualities*, which promises that men who eat yarsagumba "will enjoy the delights of hundreds of thousands of beautiful women."

Yarsagumba first became known in Europe in 1726, when a Jesuit priest posted at the court of the Chinese emperor brought some specimens to Paris and presented them at a scientific meeting. It was even marketed in the United States in the mid-19th century by the Lloyd Brothers pharmaceutical firm in Cincinnati, but it soon disappeared from view except in traditional Chinese apothecaries, where it has always been venerated.

As the market for the fungus has grown, entrepreneurs have tried to cultivate it, but, so far, artificially incubated yarsagumba has lacked the mojo of the wild mushroom, which grows only in the alpine meadows of the Himalayas. Most of the yarsagumba harvested in Nepal comes from the Humla district, in the country's far north; undoubtedly, more prime yarsagumba fields await discovery.

Traditionally, the wealth of a village like Nar was its livestock, but in the early 1990s the economy of the Manang was revolutionized by the discovery of yarsagumba. Suddenly, simple farmers could earn more money in a few weeks than their fathers did in a lifetime. Every year in picking season, late March through June, itinerant Chinese merchants move in to sell the Manang people TVs and DVD players and set up impromptu brothels. While most of the fields in Nepal are in wilderness and open to all, Nar is so poor that it was given a special dispensation that allowed it to prohibit outsiders from picking in the mountains surrounding the village. Yarsagumba was supposed to save Nar.

TOP: COURTESY PREM NAMDOL LAMA

A month after the massacre, life in Nar continued at its slow, pastoral pace, but the inner turmoil of the 65 murderers, all devout Buddhists taught to revere life, was as violent as their crime. The conspiracy began to fall apart when a delegation from Gurkha arrived seeking news of their missing kinsmen. They were brusquely turned away; nobody knew what they were talking about. Then a non-Manangi cowherd named Taghu Gurung Langzung took the group aside and told them where they could find the bodies of the victims.

The Gurkha visitors then went to Chame, the district capital 10 miles to the south, and told authorities, who dispatched a force of more than 60 policemen. They soon discovered the two bodies in the crevasse, decomposing in the summer heat and swarming with maggots. The police, well aware that *mukhya* required collective guilt, rounded up all the men in the village who were physically capable of having participated in the crime and herded them down the mountainside like sheep. It was the first time any Manang had ever been arrested.

Violent crime is so rare here that Chame didn't even have a jail; the authorities decided to transform the district education office into a prison large enough to hold the suspects. In the meantime they incarcerated them in a rustic lamasery nearby.

A curse had fallen on Nar: Women grieved; children were fatherless. The economy spiraled into entropy; untended, herds mingled together randomly until no one could tell which yaks belonged to whom; new houses were abandoned in the middle of construction; the hired hands, with no one to pay them, stole away by night. A village that had survived for centuries in one of the most extreme environments on Earth tottered on the brink of extinction.

THE FLIGHT UP TO MANANG WAS terrifying, as our Nepal Airlines Twin Otter turboprop skimmed like a well-aimed quoit through a deep V-shape gorge that was scarcely a hundred feet wider than the plane's wingspan. As the saffron-robed Buddhist monk next to me chanted under his breath and urgently clicked his prayer beads, I could make out the leaves on the shrubs I saw through the starboard window.

We landed with a bump at an airstrip in a village called Humde. It was a portal to a different world, chilly and pure, where the gaze is always drawn upward. White mountain peaks glistened as spidery drifts of snow caught in the updraft curled into flickering rainbows. A hand-painted sign on the hut that served as terminal read HUMDE AIRPORT, MANANG. 11,000 FEET. I was headed to Braga, a two-hour walk away, with Karma Gurung, a 26-year-old manager of a hotel along the Annapurna trekking circuit. He had been recommended to me as a reliable guide into the shadowy world of the area's yarsagumba trade.

"This wasn't the first time yarsagumba poachers were murdered in Nar," Karma told me the day before, as we sat in a dimly lit cafe in the Thamel district of Kathmandu, formerly the highest stop on the hippie trail, now a warren of alleyways lined with guesthouses and cheap restaurants that cater to a new generation of wanderers. "But before, they kept it a secret. The people in Nar are very dangerous.

"I used to collect it," he went on. "Most of my family is in the business. Almost everybody in Manang is involved." Karma explained that the yarsagumba trade in Manang started seven years ago, when yak herders noticed that animals grazing up near the snow line were healthier, more active — and hornier. "The people in Nar knew about it long before that," he said. "Everyone else wondered why they were up there with the yaks all the time. It was a secret then."

On the outskirts of Braga, we arrived at the entrance to the protected area, where we stopped to show our credentials at a police checkpoint. When I flashed my press badge, the officer at the desk, a beefy man with a bushy mustache, asked me what I was writing about. I told him, and he smiled back broadly and said, "I am taking it." I asked him if it worked, and he gave his head a noncommittal Indian wobble. But after Karma and I set off and started climbing the trail, I looked back. The policeman shouted, "It works!" He lifted his right fist in the universal gesture of triumphant manhood.

As I traveled through the land of the Manang, virtually everyone I met was involved in the yarsagumba trade in one way or another. On the road to Braga, I met an intensely serious 10-year-old boy named Lakhba Tsering, who wore a leopard-print silk scarf tied over his head. He said his whole family picked yarsagumba. "On a good day, I can collect 400 pieces," he boasted. "I give it all to my father."

Old Braga village clings to the steep hillside like an Anasazi cliff pueblo, its mud-brick walls blending harmoniously with the terrain. The village is halfway between the airport and Manang village, the regional hub for tourism. In Manang they have Italian coffee machines and French wine for sale in the shops, but Braga retains a rustic feel. Karma's hotel, the New Yak, is situated just across a rushing creek from Annapurna III (elevation 24,786 feet), the third-tallest peak in the massif. In the morning the mountain looks close enough that a good shake would bring it crashing down on the hotel, and by early afternoon its shadow covers the village.

Karma took me to meet Samdu Tsering, a farmer from Phoo. Phoo is Nar's sister village, but smaller and even more remote; the Nepalese usually refer to the area as Nar-Phoo. Like most people in the Annapurna, Samdu has seen his fortunes rise, following the trajectory of the yarsagumba trade, from extreme poverty to relative prosperity. Now he lives near an ancient lamasery in a snug, low-ceilinged house, dark as a cave and fragrant with juniper incense, which he shares with his daughter. "Everyone in Nar-Phoo collects yarsagumba," Samdu told me. "The women same as the men, and children as young as four." He said that children make the best pickers because they're closer to the ground and better able to see the spindly stem poking up from the dirt.

I asked him if he ever used yarsagumba himself, and he shook his head, looking slightly amused. Despite the intense romance surrounding the fungus, it's perfectly legal, more like the trade in saffron or orchids than that in narcotics, but Manang people like Samdu who harvest it rarely use it themselves, just as gold miners rarely wear gold jewelry: It's far too precious.

In fact, many people here have a moral objection to collecting yarsagumba. Later that night, over a dinner of dried yak meat, Karma told me that his cousin in Kathmandu had offered him 20 lakhs — nearly $30,000 — to run the trade in Braga, *(continued on page 137)*

Aphrodisiacs Worth Killing For

SEA-TURTLE EGGS

Found in Mexico and Central America, turtle eggs were first coveted by the Mayans. Today, despite zero scientific evidence that the eggs boost libido, machete-wielding poachers regularly clash with federal agents; in 2003 a Mexican Navy officer was killed trying to protect endangered turtles.

TIGER PENIS

In restaurants, tiger penis sells for thousands of dollars, and poachers have decimated tiger populations from Siberia to India. In the latter, the number of tigers has dwindled by 98 percent, despite Chinese-medicine experts insisting it's a sham (deer and horse members are endorsed instead).

YOHIMBE

The alkaloid from this West African evergreen "appears to have a modest benefit in erectile disorder," according to the *British Journal of Clinical Practice*. But in several countries it can't be purchased legally without a prescription; thus, a lucrative black market has emerged.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOE MCKENDRY

STYLE

MUD WARRIORS

Die-hard cyclocross riders showcase technical clothing designed to shrug off dirt, sweat, and rain.

THE EASIEST WAY TO DESCRIBE cyclocross racing is to call it a two-wheeled steeplechase staged across various terrains, dramatic inclines, and obstacles that can be negotiated only by shouldering the bike and sprinting. But as these six men will tell you, that's missing the point. It's WWI in bike form — a grueling battle fought in mud-filled trenches and fueled by a cocktail of pain, adrenaline, and aching willpower. Here, a mix of the best American pros and near-pro amateurs tell their war stories while decked out in combat-ready activewear: jerseys that breathe, gloves that keep hands warm in bone-biting cold, and jackets that shed splatters.

text by **TAYLOR ANTRIM** *photographs by* **DYLAN COULTER** *fashion by* **PATTI O'BRIEN**

FROM LEFT: Kyle Peppo wears a jacket by RAPHA, $375; bib shorts by LOUIS GARNEAU, $150; sunglasses by OAKLEY, $125; gloves by DAKINE, $30; socks by DEFEET, $11. Jamey Driscoll wears a jacket by ZEGNA SPORT, $395; bib shorts by SUGOI, $140; knee warmers by RAPHA, $65; sunglasses by SMITH OPTICS. Nick Bennette wears a jacket by EA7 EMPORIO ARMANI, $745; bib knickers by GORE BIKE WEAR, $110; sunglasses by OAKLEY, $250. Jeremy Powers wears a jacket by LUIGI BIANCHI MANTOVA, $595; tights by PEARL IZUMI, $120; sunglasses by OAKLEY. Tim Johnson wears a jacket by RALPH LAUREN BLACK LABEL, $695; bib shorts by CANNONDALE, $138; knee warmers by PEARL IZUMI, $35; gloves by DAKINE, $35; socks by CANNONDALE, $12; sunglasses by OAKLEY.

KYLE PEPPO, 29
Even though 2009 marked his first full season in 'cross, the Wall Street risk analyst and road racer managed to notch four third-place finishes in amateur events. "I started doing cyclocross to work on skills in the road racing off-season; then I realized it's probably one of the more fun things you can do on a bike. I learn technique by watching the pros on the course. I'll remember taking some turn and really struggling, and those guys have this intuition: They know how to keep their bikes up."

CORT CRAMER, 32
After suffering a spate of stress fractures, the former marathon runner needed a new sport. Four years ago he landed in cyclocross, and since then he has become a top amateur as well as a coach. "This year it poured the day before and the day of the race in New Gloucester, Maine. Mud was six to eight inches deep. In that stuff your cadence goes down to 60 or 65 rpm, making it a test of power. The hardest feature? A tight 180-degree turn. Those are incredibly difficult, and if you're not at the front, forget it — you're looking at a 30-second gap to the leaders."

Driscoll wears a jacket by CALVIN KLEIN COLLECTION, price upon request; jersey by SUGOI, $100; tights by UNDER ARMOUR, $60; gloves by ASSOS, $66; socks by RAPHA, $20.

Peppo, far left, wears a jacket by NEW BALANCE, $100; jersey by SUGOI, $130; T-shirt by NIKE SPORTSWEAR, $85; tights by NEW BALANCE, $65; gloves by DAKINE, $30; booties by SUGOI, $60. Cramer, near left, wears a vest by NIKE SPORTSWEAR, $110; jersey, $130, shorts, $130, and cap, $28, all by SUGOI; arm warmers by ASSOS, $48; gloves by LOUIS GARNEAU, $35; knee warmers by SMARTWOOL, $25; socks by RAPHA, $20; sunglasses by RUDY PROJECT.

JAMEY DRISCOLL, 23
One of the sport's rising pros, he grabbed the spotlight with a win against a stacked field at last year's CrossVegas, the country's largest cyclocross race. "You crash a lot more often in cyclocross than you do in a road race, but it's not high-stakes crashing — unless you eat it on the first corner after the start. That's when you're going into it at a full-on sprint. Riders lock handlebars, and chain reactions happen. You have to mentally prepare for it."

NICK BENNETTE, 27
A Ph.D. candidate in chemistry at Princeton, the ex-collegiate road racer has risen from a dabbler in cyclocross to a championship contender at the highest amateur level.
"In cyclocross you rev yourself up and hit your threshold for the duration of the race, but what's really brutal are those moments when you have to accelerate, and you're feathering over your body's redline. You get that taste of battery acid in your mouth. That's where people fall apart. You have to respect 'cross — it's not for the faint of heart."

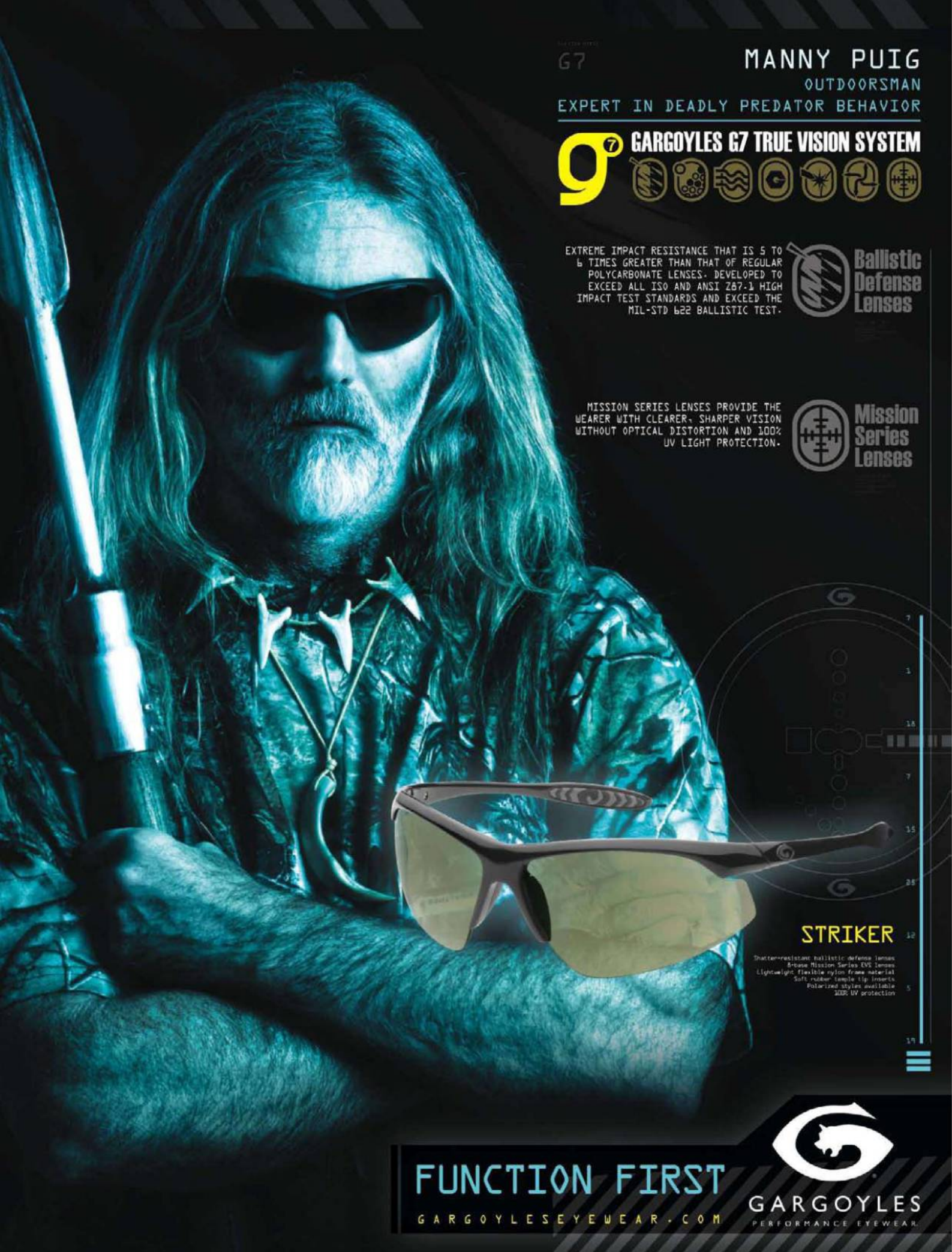
JEREMY POWERS, 26
According to teammate Tim Johnson, this pro is a "total nutjob" known for jumping out of bushes to scare pals on practice rides. On the course he's a real monster, with nine of the Cannondale-Cyclocrossworld.com team's 22 wins in 2009.
"As a junior racer, I had really bad ADD, so the short, bursty effort of cyclocross suited my style. Back then cyclocross was the redheaded stepchild of cycling — really underground. It was a hard man's sport, always cold and shitty out, plenty of mud. Actually, it's still that way."

TIM JOHNSON, 32
The Michael Jordan of U.S. cyclocross has six national titles and finished as the top American in this year's World Championships in the Czech Republic, taking 14th place overall. "'Cross in the U.S. used to be a joke, and now all the Europeans want to come and see what it's like here. Each part of the U.S. has its own style, which is what makes us so appealing to them. In New England people really get into the racing side of cyclocross. In Portland guys enjoy the uniqueness of the sport — meaning they'll race you to death, but they might do it in a dress."

Johnson wears a windbreaker by LOUIS VUITTON, $1,930; jersey, $195, and bib shorts, $205, both by RAPHA; gloves by SUGOI, $35; socks by PEARL IZUMI, $11.

Bennette, far left, wears a jacket, $370, and tights, $230, both by ASSOS; gloves by SUGOI, $35; socks by SMARTWOOL, $16; sunglasses by TIFOSI OPTICS. Powers, near left, wears a vest by STONE ISLAND SHADOW, $560; jersey by LOUIS GARNEAU, $85; shorts by SMARTWOOL, $125; hat by RAPHA, $50; arm warmers by ASSOS, $48; gloves by SUGOI, $55; socks by PEARL IZUMI, $10.

Fashion assistant: ANYA WOLFE. Grooming by HAGEN LINSS. Special effects by PETER KUNZ. For more information, see Where to Buy, page 140.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GARGOYLES G7 TRUE VISION SYSTEM
EXTREME IMPACT RESISTANCE THAT IS 5 TO 6 TIMES GREATER THAN THAT OF REGULAR POLYCARBONATE LENSES. DEVELOPED TO EXCEED ALL ISO AND ANSI Z87.1 HIGH IMPACT TEST STANDARDS AND EXCEED THE MIL-STD 662 BALLISTIC TEST.
Ballistic Defense Lenses
MISSION SERIES LENSES PROVIDE THE WEARER WITH CLEARER, SHARPER VISION WITHOUT OPTICAL DISTORTION AND 100% UV LIGHT PROTECTION.
Mission Series Lenses
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Shatter-resistant ballistic defense lenses
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Lightweight flexible nylon frame material
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GEAR

Pack Light, Pack Right

No need to saw your toothbrush in half just to save ounces on the trail. We've assembled an ultralight 10.4-pound bag for weeklong hikes, filled with all of the basics (turn the page) and none of the compromises. Just add food.

by SARAH ROSE

▸ ULA Catalyst Backpack
It's easy to make a lightweight backpack, but it's much harder to make one that won't fall apart after two years. ULA trims the fat by constructing the 75-liter Catalyst from a thin nylon woven with tear-resistant Dyneema — a thread that's stronger than Kevlar. By saving weight on the fabric, ULA is able to build a full-featured internal-frame bag with a twin-stay framesheet and zip pockets on either side of the generously padded hip belt. [*$250; ula-equipment.com*]

DETAIL
The integrated hydration sleeve fits two-liter (and some three-liter) bladders.

48 oz

ALSO COVERED THIS MONTH

MY GEAR: GEOFFREY KENT *pg. 128*
TENNIS RACKETS *pg. 132*
WINE OPENERS *pg. 134*

MICHAEL PIROCCO

Sleeping Arrangement

The 32-degree, down-filled Western Mountaineering SummerLite (*$315; westernmountaineering.com*) is a rare species — a bag that's warm in freezing temps, breathes in summer heat, and crushes to a fraction of its size. And we haven't found a better ultralight hiking pad than the inflatable Therm-A-Rest NeoAir since giving it a 2009 Gear of the Year award. It's supportive, stable, and warm thanks to the heat-reflective inner lining. [*$150; thermarest.com*]

DETAIL
A full-length zipper — rare on an ultralight sleeping bag — allows the SummerLite to open wide.

Extreme Measures
Leave undies at home and opt for bottoms with a sewn-in mesh liner, like the ExOfficio Amphi convertible pant (*$65; exofficio.com*), which will dry quickly after a river rinse.

Outerwear for Bad Weather

Beloved for its off-the-charts weight-to-warmth ratio, the Mont-Bell UL Thermawrap (*$145; montbell.us*) compacts to the size of a softball and keeps you warm on the coldest mountain nights — even when wet, as it's filled with synthetic insulation. No need to test that, though, if you pack the Patagonia M10 tool. Most lightweight rain shells tear like toilet paper at the first abrasion, but the M10's wind- and waterproof ripstop nylon will survive even the clumsiest scrambles over sharp rocks. [*$399; patagonia.com*]

Tool Kit

After years of kitchen-sink design, multitools are paring down — a boon for light hikers. The Gerber Octane is one of the better-thought-out entries, packing in pliers, screwdrivers, a knife, and a bottle opener. It unfolds with one hand and has a built-in clip so you can carry it on your hip belt. [*$67.50; gerbergear.com*]

DETAIL
No need to baby the 550t — the shell can survive drops, dust, and even a dunk in H_2O.

Handheld GPS

The touchscreen Garmin Oregon 550t has a 3.2-megapixel camera so you can leave the pocket cam behind; once home you can send pics of canyon vistas with coordinates to friends. But our favorite feature is Sight 'N Go: Use the 550t's compass to aim it at a waypoint, and the unit plots a route to get there. [*$600; garmin.com*]

JACKETS, GPS, MULTITOOL: MICHAEL PIRROCCO

▼ Shelter

It's not exactly putting a man on the moon, but the Big Agnes Fly Creek UL2 represents an impressive feat: the creation of a full-featured two-man tent that weighs less than many solos. Ultralight aluminum poles and lots of condensation-venting mesh keep the weight down, yet it still includes a proper three-season fly for staying dry in downpours. [*$350; bigagnes.com*]

Extreme Measures
Leave behind any spare stakes and tent poles. If need be you can whittle down a stick with your knife for the former or straighten a bent pole with pliers.

▲ Headlamp

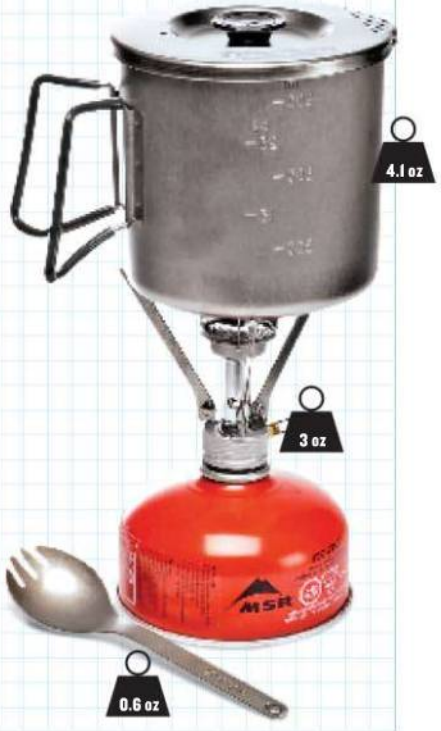
More-minimalist headlamps exist, but they're only slightly better than tying a keychain LED to your head with string. Comparatively, the Princeton Tec Remix is both comfortable and functional, with a 70-lumen LED for lighting a trail and a 30-lumen diffuse light for nearby detail work. [*$40; princetontec.com*]

DETAIL
The taped seams on the Fly Creek UL2 tent ensure that the rain can't seep inside.

DETAIL
The Water Tank's Ziploc-esque top makes it easy to both fill up and clean.

▶ Camp Kitchen

Leave the Coke-can stoves to the ultralight extremists. The butane-powered MSR PocketRocket (*$40; msrgear.com*) is still our favorite flyweight cooker because it's fast (boils water in less than four minutes) and its wire flame adjustment is big enough to grip while wearing gloves. Pair it with the Evernew Ti UL Pasta Pot (*$59; evernew america.com*) and Snow Peak Titanium spork — exhibits A and B for why titanium is an ounce-counting hiker's friend. It's as lightweight as aluminum by volume, yet far stronger. And unlike steel or aluminum, titanium won't impart a nasty metallic taste to your camp vittles, guaranteeing that you savor each bite of ramen off that spork. [*$9; snowpeak.com*]



▲ Hydration System

You should be drinking a half-liter of water for every mile you hike — which means you need more than you think. Top off the four-liter Platy Water Tank (*$30; platy.com*) whenever you reach potable water. Use that H_2O to refill the one-liter Platy SoftBottle (*$13 with optional HyperFlow nozzle*) during your hike, breaking out the SteriPen Journey each time. A 90-second swirl sterilizes bacteria and viruses without changing the flavor of a clear mountain spring, like iodine and chlorine treatments do. [*$100; steripen.com*]

HEADLAMP, COOKER, SPORK, WATER TANKS, STERIPEN: MICHAEL PIRROCCO

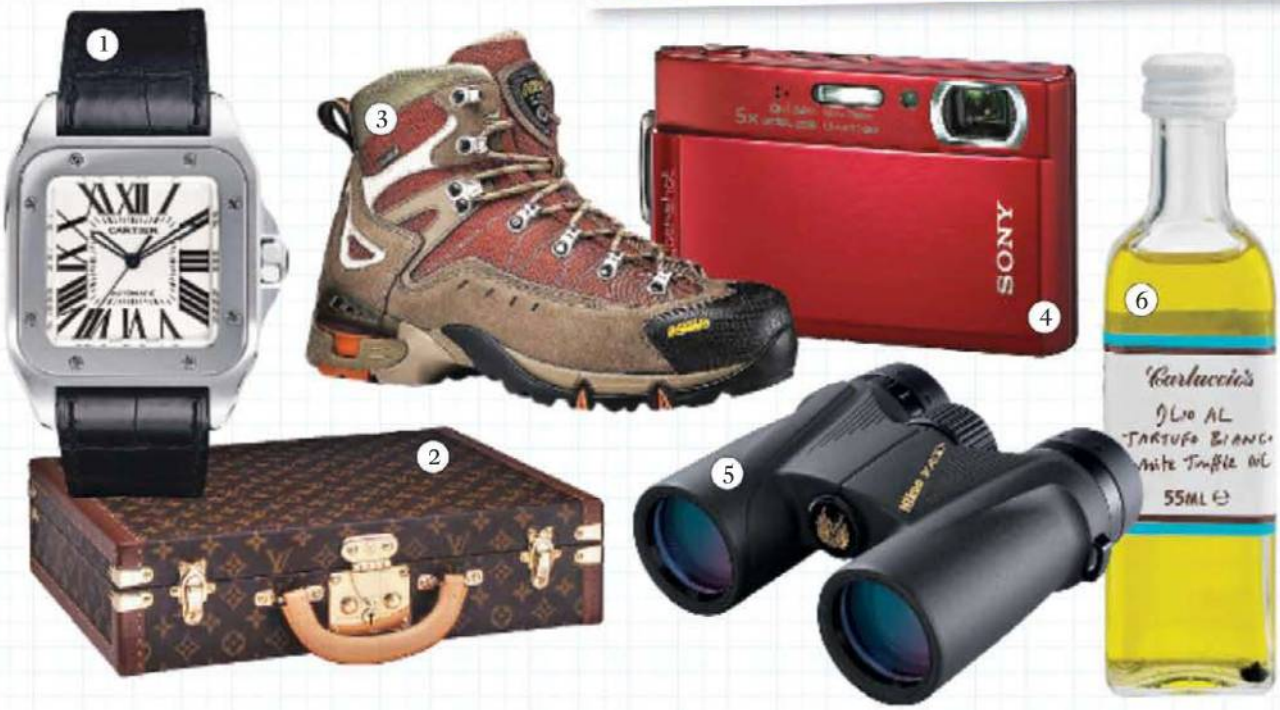
My Gear

Geoffrey Kent

Luxe Safari King

GEOFFREY KENT WAS BORN ON SAFARI IN Zambia and grew up on his family's farm in the Kenyan highlands, so it wasn't a surprise when he co-founded Abercrombie & Kent with his parents in 1962, offering safaris of East Africa with the family's lone truck. Now the outfit runs expeditions in 100 different countries, including India, New Zealand, and even Antarctica, each a Discovery Channel documentary blended with Ritz-Carlton opulence. The former British Army tank driver spent 200 days in the field last year — here's what he packed. —FREDERICK REIMERS

The Abercrombie & Kent CEO with a biplane used in one of his company's Kenyan expeditions



1. Cartier Santos 100

To keep in shape in the bush, Kent follows an RCAF exercise routine based on seven-minute intervals, which he times with his stainless-steel Cartier Santos 100 — a watch that's as beautiful as it is burly. "It's elegant in the city, but I can go diving with it, like I did over Christmas in the Maldives, when I was attacked by a triggerfish." [*$5,825; cartier.com*]

2. Louis Vuitton Président Classeur Briefcase

The intertwined L and V signify luxury, but as Kent has discovered, this wood-frame briefcase is built to survive beyond the boardroom. "When my Land Cruiser gets stuck in Tanzania and there's no rock on hand, I use the case as a base for my high-lift jack," he says. Despite such blatant misuse, only the brief's brass hinges have broken (three times) since he bought the case in 1972. [*$4,200; louisvuitton.com*]

3. Asolo Flame GTX Boots

"I got sick of my heavy boots," says Kent. "People who have big boots look like they're walking in the Himalayas." So he scaled back to the Asolo Flame GTX, which weigh less than three pounds a pair. They can still handle safari-level abuse thanks to a suede upper with a Gore-Tex waterproof lining, but the EVA-foam midsole keeps Kent's feet happy. "I can use them for anything, even running." [*$210; asolo.com*]

4. Sony Cyber-shot DSC-T300 Camera

Kent appreciates the Sony's 5X zoom Zeiss lens when capturing wildlife — such as when he snapped a crocodile taking down a zebra in a Kenyan reserve. The camera's a work tool, too. "I take photos of a camp that looks fantastic or an amazing food presentation," he says, reviewing them on the 3.5-inch touchscreen. [*$350; amazon.com*]

5. Nikon Monarch 8x36 ATB Binoculars

Kent kept losing his $2,000 Leica binocs, so he opted for the less pricey Nikons, and he's impressed. "They are like Land Rovers," he says of the waterproof specs. "You can bash them and crush them, and they still work." Plus, they focus fast. "Some binoculars take hours to get right. These are instantaneous." [*$259; nikonsportoptics.com*]

6. Carluccio's White Truffle Oil

Truffle oil "makes anything taste great," says Kent — even roast goat in a Ugandan village on the Congolese border. Kent buys his from London restaurateur Antonio Carluccio, who blends Umbrian olive oil with Alban truffle essence. [*$12; carluccios.com*]

PORTRAIT: COURTESY GEOFFREY KENT/ABERCROMBIE & KENT

BIRKENSTOCK
Made in Germany • Tradition since 1774
Naturally comfortable.
The Arizona sandal in antique coconut.
birkenstockusa.com

Windows.® Life without walls.™ Toshiba recommends Windows 7

Toshiba laptops let you take the world by storm— and your life beyond limits.

SET YOURSELF FREE WITH THE SATELLITE® U500 SERIES LAPTOPS.
At Toshiba, we're building a future where laptops set you free—free from technology that dictates how you work. That's why we're pioneering simple, intuitive and human-based innovations to help you achieve more. Features like the Eco Button, which instantly adjusts your laptop to eco-efficient power settings with a simple click, and USB Sleep-and-Charge, which keeps your electronic devices charging even when your laptop is asleep or turned off. See what else Toshiba, the Laptop Expert, has in mind for the future at **laptops.toshiba.com.**

TOSHIBA
Leading Innovation »»

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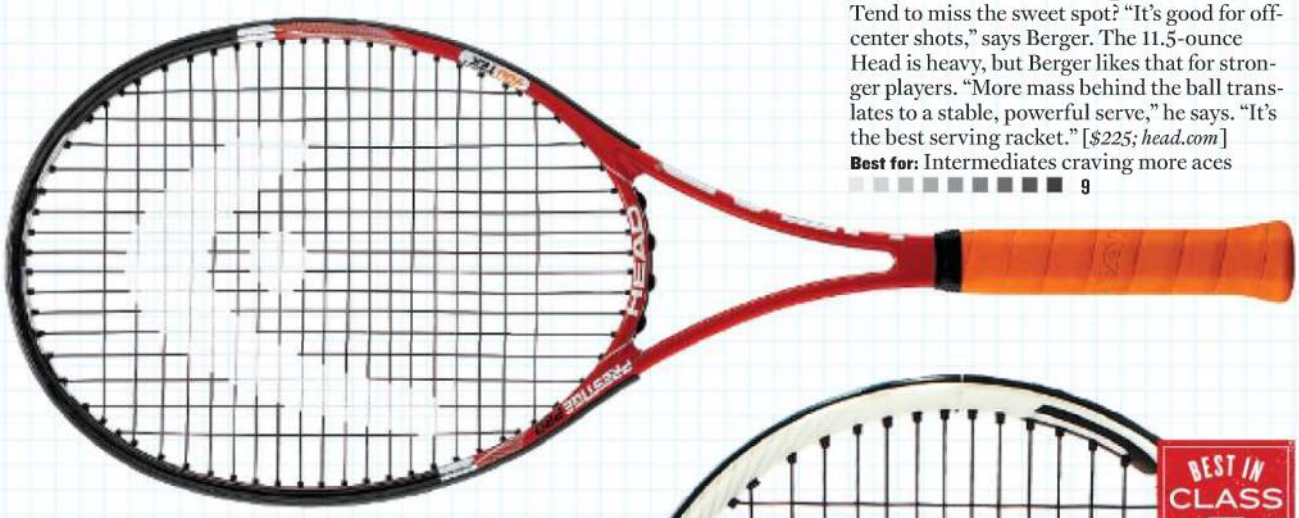
▼ Head YouTek Prestige Pro

Tend to miss the sweet spot? "It's good for off-center shots," says Berger. The 11.5-ounce Head is heavy, but Berger likes that for stronger players. "More mass behind the ball translates to a stable, powerful serve," he says. "It's the best serving racket." [*$225; head.com*]

Best for: Intermediates craving more aces

9



Swing Time

We put six new tennis rackets in the hands of former pro Jay Berger to help you choose the one best suited to your game. *by* STEVE MAZZUCCHI

BEST IN CLASS
TESTED & APPROVED

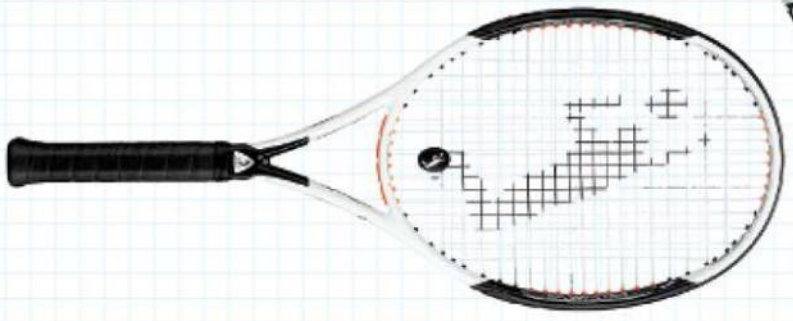
▶ Babolat Aeropro Drive

Rafael Nadal's weapon is built for crushing topspin shots. "The ball jumped off the strings when I used spin," raves Berger. He loved the Babolat's stability in returning hard hits — but warned that this racket isn't for novices. "If you can't generate spin, the ball's going to fly." [*$189; babolat.com*]

Best for: Hard-hitting former college players

10

"I ACTUALLY FELT LIKE NADAL WHILE USING IT."



▲ Boris Becker DC Sportster

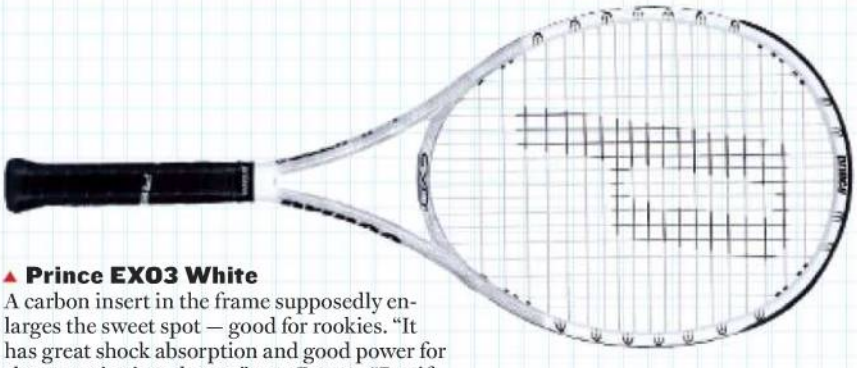
As a hybrid it can be strung with both power- and control-type strings at once, but Berger found its margin for error too small. "It's powerful when you hit the center but feels hollow when you hit off-center." It also didn't have enough mass to return hard volleys. Avoid if you lack German precision. [*$240; borisbecker.com*]

Best for: Intermediates with good hand-eye coordination who want power, not spin

6

DETAIL
Babolat weaves titanium and carbon fibers into the frame so it won't twist on impact.

BABOLAT: MICHAEL PIRROCCO



▲ Prince EXO3 White

A carbon insert in the frame supposedly enlarges the sweet spot — good for rookies. "It has great shock absorption and good power for slower-swinging players," says Berger. "But if you hit hard, it's flimsy." [*$200; princetennis.com*]

Best for: Less-experienced flat-ball hitters in search of a lightweight power boost

7

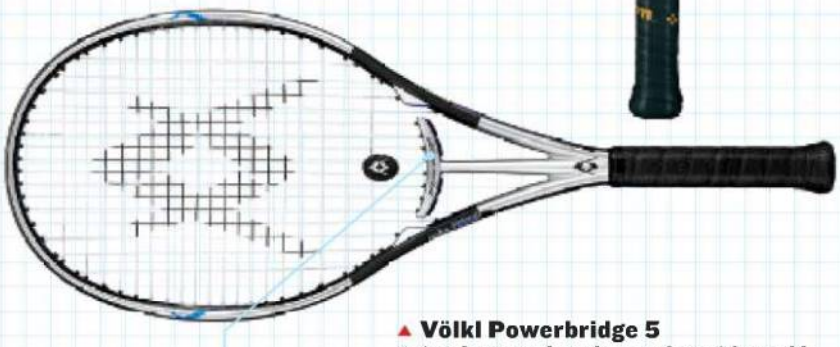
"I COULD REALLY JUICE THE BALL BUT STILL KEEP IT IN THE COURT."

▶ Wilson Pro Open BLX

Despite its lean 11.1-ounce weight, the Wilson surprised Berger with its power. "It's light but still a real player's racket," says Berger. "I could flatten out my shot or hit with both spin and control." One caveat: Berger says the racket's lack of mass will make it hard to place your shot when you're pulled wide. [*$210; wilson.com*]

Best for: Baseline hitters wanting more control

8



DETAIL

Völkl says that this "Power Arm" creates a catapult effect, but Berger didn't notice it.

▲ Völkl Powerbridge 5

"It's a darn good modern racket with an old-school feel," he says. "What power you put into it, you get out of it." An ultralight 10.6 ounces strung, the Völkl also offers great maneuverability at the net, but the lack of mass makes it tough to induce spin. [*$240; voelkl-tennis.com*]

Best for: McEnroe-esque serve-and-volleyers

9

COURTESY USTA

◀ ABOUT OUR EXPERT

Playing on the ATP tour from '85 to '91, Jay Berger climbed as high as number seven and beat Sampras, Connors, and Becker. Now helping develop elite players as the USTA's head of men's tennis, he stresses the importance of not only a quality frame, but also what's in it: "About 95 of the top 100 pros use the same string." That'd be Belgian brand Luxilon, which lets you crush the ball with control.

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Bottle Poppers

A master sommelier tries out wine openers to find the best one for your prized Bordeaux.

by MAT CARTWRIGHT

1. OXO Steel Winged Corkscrew
For those too clumsy or tipsy to handle a waiter's corkscrew, the winged version is the obvious alternative. OXO's stainless-steel version does its job well — "The worm is nice and goes into the cork easily," says master sommelier Laura Maniec — but the eight-inch-tall opener is too porky for her taste. "It's big and hokey-looking. I'm not a fan of it." [*$18; oxo.com*]
5

DETAIL
The LM400's sexy yet subdued architectural design is done up in a satin-finish steel.

DETAIL
The handle of the Laguiole opener is made of stag horn that has been naturally shed.

2. Laguiole Stag Horn Waiter Style
French craftsmen have made these corkscrews for centuries. "I like the elegance," says Maniec. "People recognize the name as a luxury wine opener for pros." Just be careful, she warns. "It's hefty, and if you're opening cheaper bottles, you can chip the neck." [*$150; wineenthusiast.com*]
9

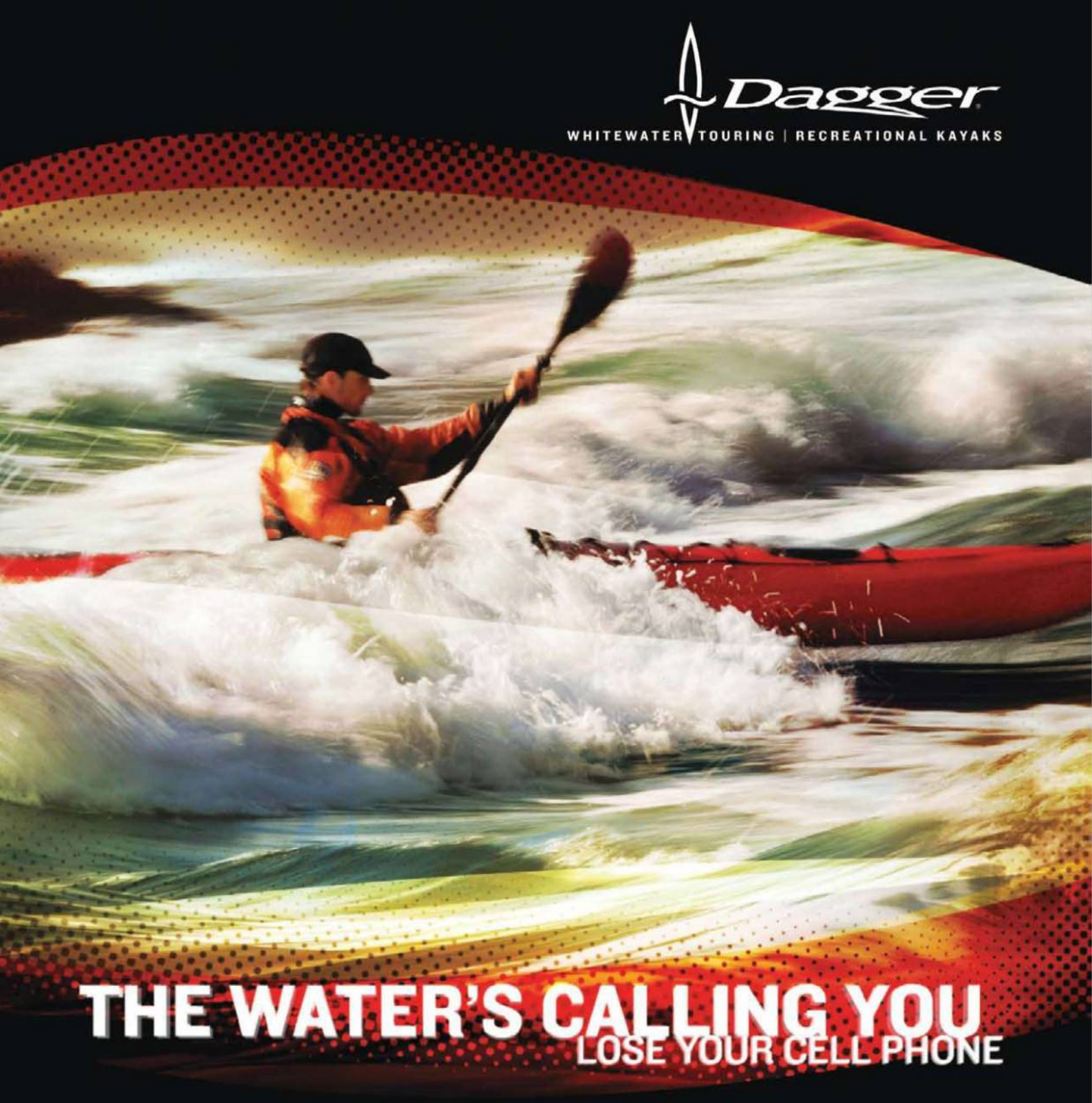
3. Peugeot Mathus
The ah-so design — two thin prongs that slip between a cork and a bottle's neck — is purpose-driven, explains Maniec. "It has a specific application: removing a difficult or broken cork." That makes the Peugeot a backup plan, not an everyday decorker. "But it's good to have around," says Maniec. [*$26; winestuff.com*]
7

4. Le Creuset Screwpull LM400
Like the Rabbit, the LM400 tries to automate bottle opening, removing the cork and then dropping it into your hand with a simple up-and-down of the handle. "I prefer this to the Rabbit," says Maniec. "It's larger and top-heavy, but it has a smoother action." [*$150; lecreuset.co.uk*]
8

5. Metrokane Original Rabbit
Its ability to pull out a cork in one swoop with minimal exertion makes it the lazy man's opener of choice. Yet Maniec isn't impressed by the ubiquitous housewarming gift: "It's big and cumbersome. But if you're having a large dinner party, it's going to save you time." [*$50; metrokane.com*]
7

ABOUT OUR EXPERT
As wine and spirits director of B.R. Guest, Laura Maniec oversees the wine service at more than a dozen restaurants in New York, Las Vegas, and Florida, including Manhattan's famed Blue Water Grill. She was recognized as one of *Wine & Spirits*'s Best New Sommeliers in 2003, and last year, at the age of 29, she became the world's youngest master sommelier.

COURTESY LAURA MANIEC



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WINGMAN *continued from page 110*

into a lonely, brooding figure, hanging around the drop zone dressed in head-to-toe black. His friend Hollekim puts it bluntly: "When he started BASE jumping, he didn't want to live anymore."

A couple of months in, he was ready to jump from an antenna — a dicey prospect that carries the risk of flying into the guy wires. He found one that he liked, a low-ish tower just off Highway 101 near Camarillo. It was 300 feet tall, close to the lowest jumpable height and something only an expert would attempt. But Corliss had made only six jumps at the time. His instructor told him he was nowhere near ready to handle such a low and technical jump. When he told his mom, she cried and begged him not to go; she told him not to come back if he did.

He went anyway — alone, because no one would go with him. He drove out to Camarillo in the dark, parked by the freeway, gathered his gear. As he walked through the low scrub, he says, "I'm going, This is stupid. You're going to hurt yourself. And there's nobody to help you." He knew his mother was lying awake in his bed, keeping a vigil as she often did when Corliss went off on jumps.

"But I keep going, continue to walk," he goes on, getting into the rhythm of the story now. "I get to the razor-wire fence, throw my stuff over, and climb over. And start to climb the antenna. And with every rung I go up, my brain's like, I'm not doing this, I'm not gonna do this. So I start trying to trick myself: Okay, what I'm gonna do is I'm gonna climb up to the top, take a look down, and I'm not gonna jump. And I get to the top — I'm sitting, like, inside the antenna — and all of a sudden I'm like, I'm not doing this.

"And as I'm saying that, I'm getting my pilot chute ready, and I climb out of the antenna, so I'm, like, hanging out over the edge, and I say, I'm not doing this, as I step off the antenna."

As he fell, accelerating madly, he watched the long support wires flash past. He had thrown his pilot chute, but it still hadn't opened when he passed the red light marking the center point of the antenna — with only 150 feet left to fall. The razor-wire fence was coming fast. I'm going in, he thought to himself, and instinctively threw his arms out in front of his face. Just at that moment, his parachute opened with a sound like a shotgun blast.

Seconds later, he slammed into the road and lay there, prone but unhurt. "My entire body is, like, shaking, vibrating," he says. "All the hair on my body is standing on end. I can actually hear little insects crawling on the grass. I could see everything. I could taste the air."

SOME MIGHT HAVE COUNTED THEIR BLESSings and backed off after such a close call, but not Corliss, who pursued BASE jumping with even greater fervor until, in 1999, he managed to persuade the producers of a show called *Real TV* to hire him to travel to South Africa and film himself BASE jumping there. A month in, as he jumped 300 feet off Howick Falls near Durban, he miscalculated a steering maneuver, forcing his chute into the falls. Corliss plunged down onto the rocks, fracturing several vertebrae. "I spent an hour lying in the water getting eaten by animals," he says. "It was really gnarly."

Corliss was on his back in a hospital bed for a month, unable even to go to the bathroom without assistance. And yet it turned out to be one of the best things that had ever happened to him. *Real TV* loved the footage, and on the strength of that one video, Corliss invented a new business model for BASE jumpers, as he's sold it and resold it to documentary producers and extreme-sports shows worldwide. "They can show the waterfall and say, 'He continued on; he didn't stop,'" Corliss says. "That one piece of footage has basically paid for most of my life for the last 10 years."

Before the Empire State bust, Corliss was the host of the Discovery Channel show *Stunt Junkies*, but that gig ended with his arrest — an outcome he doesn't seem to regret. Even without the show, though, he doesn't seem to be hurting: He travels the world seemingly at will, jumping last year alone at Lauterbrunnen, Switzerland, and in the Dolomites, as well as diving with sharks in Fiji with Mancino. Despite the appearance of wealth, Corliss denies the BASE-world rumors of a vast trust fund. "I'm in debt, man — big time," he says, citing legal bills from the Empire State case, which is ongoing. "I don't own a car; I don't own a house. I own nothing."

CORLISS IS FULL OF STORIES ABOUT almost dying. Like the first time he went scuba diving in Mexico, as a teenager, and the boat flipped and sent him to the bottom with a weight belt around his waist, nearly drowning him. Or when he broke through thin ice on a pond. "Dude, I was done," he says. "I was dead for, like, two hours." Or when his babysitter thought it would be funny to get him drunk — he was eight at the time — and he ended up with severe alcohol poisoning (the reason he cites for shunning booze).

But while he has been remarkably lucky, his closest friends have not fared so well. Case in point: Hollekim, who had never BASE jumped before she met Corliss. He got her hooked. "It's kind of the same feeling as falling in love," she says now. "It's kind of scary; you don't know if you're going to get hurt or what's going to happen. But you always want more."

Then, in August 2006, she was wingsuit skydiving when her parachute failed to open properly. She hit the ground hard, breaking one leg badly and completely shattering the other, driving her femur through her hip. She spent the next three years in and out of surgery.

"He told me, when I was in hospital, 'You know, Karina, this accident saved your life,'" she says. "I said, 'How's that possible?' He said, 'In the direction that you were going, you probably wouldn't have survived if it wasn't for this accident.'"

Iiro Seppanen was similarly saved, when — after a series of ever-nastier BASE-jumping accidents — he finally gave up the sport in 2006.

Then there was his friend Dwain Weston, a popular, carefree Aussie with John Denver hair. Known for his daring low-altitude acrobatics, Weston was a kind of mentor to Corliss. In October 2003 they were supposed to do a combo jump from a plane flying above Colorado's Royal Gorge Bridge, with Jeb wingsuiting and Dwain parachuting. At the last minute, Corliss says, Dwain decided to fly a wingsuit instead. Jeb would fly under the bridge, which was lined with hundreds of spectators, while Dwain would go over it. "All he had to do is miss it by a foot," one of Dwain's friends told me, "and he would have been a hero."

Instead Dwain smacked into the bridge railing, which tore his body in half. His parachute deployed, carrying what was left of his torso, while his severed leg plunged to the bottom of the gorge. "I thought people were throwing things off the bridge," Jeb says, retelling the story in the ballroom at the KL Tower. All around us, jumpers are quietly repacking their chutes and trying not to listen. "Instead, I was flying through his parts. And when I landed, I was covered in his blood."

"Almost all my friends are dead," he says, and for once, he goes quiet.

AFTER THREE DAYS OF JUMPING FROM the KL Tower, a select group is invited across town to jump from the striking, shark fin–like Telekom Malaysia tower. It's another steamy morning, and the vast helipad atop the 55-story building is already reflecting the morning sun like a big metal skillet.

Over dinner the night before, Corliss dismissed the idea that he has some sort of death wish. "Everyone makes a big deal: 'Oh, he was suicidal...' I haven't had a suicidal thought since I was 19. I'm a pretty normal guy who gets to do some extraordinary things. If I were to die tomorrow, I would have no regrets."

His ultimate goal of skydiving without a parachute, he insists, will be the most extraordinary of all these "extraordinary things." A born showman, he plans on pulling off a stunning public spectacle.

Corliss himself is tight-lipped about the details of his plan (at least five other countries are also working on it), but he hints at a carefully calibrated landing structure, built of high-tensile fabric and shaped like a ski-jump landing, so he could come in at an angle and decelerate slowly along the ramp — all of which is even harder than it sounds (see "The No-Chute Landing," page 109).

"You have to arrive at an exact position in space — x, y, and z — and you have to be very close to the right angle," says Roy Haggard, an aerospace engineer who has consulted with Corliss. "You can't have any error. If your approach angle is too shallow or too steep, you're either gonna overshoot or undershoot."

Corliss wants the first landing to happen in Vegas; wherever it's staged, though, plans are moving forward. "It looks like the first steps forward will happen this year," says Seppanen, who's partnering with Corliss on the project.

The wingsuit landing project has had the BASE world buzzing for years. Resting between jumps in Kuala Lumpur, a friendly jumper named Nick quizzes him about it. "I guarantee," Nick jokes, "I will not beat you to it."

"I guarantee you," Jeb shoots back, "that once it's done, you will be doing it. Trust me, it will be no more dangerous than landing a high-performance [rig]. Everything is going to be completely controlled. The variables have been eliminated. Eliminated!"

"Except for pilot error," Nick points out.

"No, that's pretty much been eliminated," Jeb insists. "You'd have to be a real retard."

Atop the Telekom Malaysia tower, Corliss makes his final adjustments and holds out a handheld video camera.

"It's looking pretty good," he says, talking into the lens.

A moment later he steps to the edge, and everyone stops talking. His arms go up, as if nailed to an invisible cross. "Have fun, dude," he says to no one in particular. "See ya!"

He leaps forward, into empty space, and hangs there for an instant, suspended above the highway in the sun. Then his head tips back and downward, passing within just a few feet of the edge. His legs follow, still locked together in perfect diver position, and he plunges down, picking up speed before his body levels out; at three seconds, the floors of the building are flashing past at more than 60 mph. At four seconds, he's plummeting toward the ground at close to 80 mph when he reaches for his right hip to throw his chute.

Up on top, the other jumpers lean over the edge and watch him drop. His chute pops open, but the lines are twisted together; unable to steer, he spirals around once and then flies straight at the side of the building. His body bounces off the building's skeleton and his chute accelerates toward the ground.

He pulls up his legs, bracing for impact, and slams hard into a concrete retaining wall. From the landing zone, Mancino screams and runs over to him. The radios crackle: "Medical! Medical!"

He ends up in a clean, spacious hospital room with a picture window affording a terrific view of the Telekom Malaysia tower. "Dude!" he says by way of greeting. "Worst-case scenario! One-eighty with line twists!"

A nurse comes in to check his blood pressure. She asks if he wants any painkillers, but he waves her away; Corliss doesn't do medication. Earlier, he'd told me that he'd refused morphine when he broke his back in Africa: "If something's painful, I want to feel the pain," he'd insisted. I figured he was being dramatic, exaggerating for effect.

Now I believe him. And this has got to hurt: He's broken his left foot and cracked his left hip. His right ankle is swollen and severely sprained, too, which means he'll be in a wheelchair for weeks. Of course, it could have been a lot worse. He got lucky yet again.

"Dude, I hit so hard," he says, almost gleefully. "Luckily I saw it coming, and I bent my knees, put my arms in. If I had hit that with my back? Paralyzed for life, no question."

NEPAL *continued from page 117*

but Karma's father didn't want him to do it. "We believe it's bad karma to pick yarsagumba. It's like killing a living thing," Karma said. I pointed out that by the time it's picked, it's a mushroom, which possesses much less life force than the yaks we had just eaten. He shrugged and gave me a reply I couldn't match: "It doesn't matter if your belief is wrong — how can we know what is right? What's wrong is to go against your belief."

AFTER ANOTHER EXHILARATING AND exhausting 16-mile trek, I arrived in Chame, the town where the men of Nar were being held. The next morning I met with the lead detective in the arrests, Inspector Bharat Bahadur Biswakarma. He was handsome in the clean-cut way of a soldier, with a jutting jaw and an intense gaze. Bharat wove a detailed account of the murders, showing me gruesome photographs of the two corpses found in the crevasse and letting me read the confessions he had extracted from the accused. He had some sympathy for them. "The Nar men only wanted to teach them a lesson, but as they beat them, it got to be more and more brutal," he said. The maximum punishment for murder in Nepal, premeditated or not, is 20 years in jail and the confiscation of property. When I asked him if he was shocked by the savagery of the murders, he quietly replied, "It was the worst crime that anyone here can remember."

Then I met the killers themselves. The former district education office is a two-story stone house that has been enclosed by a series of concentric barbed-wire fences wrapped around sharpened birch poles, giving the place the grim air of a gulag, but living conditions inside seemed to be comfortable. The men of Nar were sitting cross-legged in a lake of sunlight, playing board games and weaving harness straps for ponies they might never see again. They took turns playing badminton. Guards in camo fatigues stood in bored clumps, their .303-caliber bolt-action rifles, antiques dumped by the British after World War II, leaning next to them.

The portly jailer pulled a few chairs into the sunshine, and I sat opposite two of the accused murderers. The first was Karma Tashi, 26, whose full confession I had read in Bharat's office. He met me with a sullen, defiant face and denied everything: He wasn't there; he didn't know what happened. "I didn't do what it said in that statement. I don't know where the police came up with that."

The other prisoner who agreed to talk to me presented a more interesting case. Karma Wangdi Lama was only 17 and looked even younger, with a fresh, unformed face. "I was one of the men who climbed to the top," he said softly. In a quavering voice, staring nervously at the ground, he confessed his guilt. "I knew I was wrong, so I didn't run away. I waited for the police to come. I wish I had never done this thing. Before, I wanted to be a teacher. Now I think everything is over for me forever."

On my last day in Chame, word came by fax that 17 of the prisoners were to be released without bail on parole, to return for trial a month later. Among those released was a 21-year-old college student named Krishna Lama. He joined me for breakfast the morning after his release, but he wasn't celebrating.

"Yarsagumba brings a curse," he said. "Our entire village has had to suffer. Even my father had to face that fate." Krishna's father was murdered three years ago when he tried to drive away interloping yarsagumba pickers from Gurkha and southern Nepal. He, too, was beaten to death with sticks. Until last June, Krishna was attending college in Kathmandu, studying computer science with the money his father had saved from selling yarsagumba. He had just come home on a holiday to see his widowed mother when fate knocked at his door.

"I had to go," Krishna said. "A man from every house had to be a part of the group, and my father was gone." Krishna's story, that he was one of the last to arrive on the scene of the crime and didn't even witness the killings, is corroborated by the police, who obviously have sympathy for him. Yet under Nepalese law, as in most countries, his role in the conspiracy makes him culpable. He shrugged with a grim smile and said, "I am cursed. It happens to me time and again. I have no hope."

WHEN I GOT HOME FROM NEPAL, MY friends all had one question: Did you try it?

Of course I tried it, though it was little more than a taste. A wholesaler I met in Kathmandu gave me a handful of broken pieces, which I washed down with tea. The crunchy little caterpillar fragments had a faintly fishy smell and went down with the musty flavor of most dried fungi. Forewarned, I didn't expect to feel a jolt of virility. In fact, I didn't feel much of anything at all, at first. It was only at the end of the day that I realized how much clear-headed energy I had after taking it. I had a glimpse of why people might come to believe in its power.

When Krishna Lama talked about the curse of yarsagumba, he didn't mean it as a metaphor. He was describing the fungus's inner power, which is more real to the people of the Himalayas than any scientific report. On the Annapurna trail, I met an old man who ran a little shop on the side of the road selling yak skulls and farm tools; he explained why devout Buddhists believe it's an evil power. "A famous lama chose to be reborn as yarsagumba as a boon to mankind," he told me. "If you trade in yarsagumba, you will be reincarnated very low. You won't be reborn as a man."

Like every gold rush in history, the yarsagumba boom in the Himalayas has blighted many more lives than it has enriched. As I write, the accused killers of Nar await sentencing, but it's almost certain that the terrible predictions of Karma Wangdi Lama and Krishna Lama are correct: Their lives are ruined. The legend of yarsagumba radiates an imperishable glamour, holding out the tantalizing promise of preserving the gifts of youth throughout life, but it's tainted by the blood of poor farmers and young men's dashed hopes. I'm not superstitious, but I know a curse when I see it.

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RACE *continued from page 105*

and go until I hurt. And the one sport I regularly did with other guys — sculling — wasn't an event in the Coast to Coast, as Mary kept reminding me.

Into the summer the challenge wasn't the workouts themselves, but making time for them. We negotiated who got which mornings kid-free, fought when one person seemed to get more time to exercise than the other. For a while at least, the novelty of skirmishes over who got the "privilege" of getting up at 5 instead of 7 kept us amused. But the irony was that because we took turns watching the boys while the other worked out, we saw even less of each other than before. Locked in a post-workout "supersuit of pain," Mary would be in bed before I arrived home most nights, close to, if not already, asleep. As I came into our bedroom, she'd act like we were long-lost lovers at a party, trying to place our last encounter: "Hey, I know you.... San Francisco, right?"

We muddled through, but the real test, I knew, would come when I spent entire Saturdays (usually Mary's day "off") on a river up in the Berkshires or Delaware Water Gap. I finally lined up some lessons in October and promptly wished I'd taken Mary's advice and gotten started much earlier. In fact, on my very first kayak lesson, on about my sixth dunking, I lost my wedding band. I felt it go and wanted to reach for it, but I'd flipped at the mouth of a rapid funneling through some sizable rocks and wanted to surface before I got thrashed.

"Not the best symbolism," Mary grimaced, when I told her about it, minutes in the door. She was disappointed but didn't rage. And something had changed: She took over the role of championing the cause of the Coast to Coast. "You have to get back on the river as soon as you can," she said.

And so I did. Though Alex Nicks, 37, an expat Brit and former world champion, was a superb instructor, I proved a stubborn, lousy pupil. "Do you know what you did wrong that time?" Nicks asked, as neutral as possible, after I flipped yet again on Connecticut's Farmington River. I nodded yes but really had no clue. "When you got into trouble, you took your paddle out of the water." He demonstrated my position, both arms up, paddle overhead. "Complete Gumby," he smiled. "You have to keep contact with the water, or the river will do what it wants with you."

I couldn't afford for that to happen in New Zealand. Not on the Waimakariri River. The Waimak isn't about intimidating hydraulics, but it's tricky, with scores of dead-end braids, banked curves, shallow rock gardens that pinball you around a bit, and narrow, steep-walled gorges where a water exit is the only option. Nicks gamely coaxed me along as I swam and swore and tried not to ruin it for the others in his clinic. To get the hang of kayaking, I had to override my instincts; I wanted to counterlean when I needed to lean in.

Eventually I grew less hesitant, more confident, and managed, now and then, to enjoy myself. Then, on the Saturday before Halloween, I had my worst day ever, as if I'd forgotten everything I'd learned. I truly scared myself once when I spent too long underwater, still held snug in the boat by my spray skirt. Almost as punishment I spent that evening at a neighbor's otherwise-fine costume party, trying hard not to sulk. By that point most of our neighbors and prekindergarten-parent friends had heard about our New Zealand plans and wanted to hear about our progress. All I could think was that it was the worst idea I'd ever had.

Telling myself there must be a larger lesson in my futility (humility, for one), I was out the door early the next morning for another try. At a river near New Paltz, New York, Nicks moved me into a Bliss-Stick, a creek boat with more volume in the stern. As such, it's a bit more forgiving, and the Bliss-Stick, along with the focus only a wicked hangover can bring, led me to a breakthrough of sorts — and proof that I could run a series of Class II rapids without a single "out-of-boat experience."

I run aground at least five times, and I have to knuckle my kayak forward like some legless chimpanzee.

FEBRUARY 12: THE RACE'S SECOND LEG

For the first four hours or so of Mary's mountain run, I manage to relax, hydrate, and eat too many bananas. Sometime after hour five, however, I get anxious. It's not that I doubt she can do it, but I'm still worried for her safety, and, if I'm honest, worried that if she breaks an ankle and is stuck out there alone for hours, she'll end up resenting me more for dragging her into this mess than being housebound with the boys. When, after six hours and 23 minutes, she arrives, smiling, I'm more like a proud parent than a husband: That's my wife! Though we've slipped in the standings, I could not care less, because she thanks me for "making her" do this.

We're still buzzing over how well the first day has gone when Judkins, the race founder, calls a mandatory meeting. A storm is set to hit between midnight and 6 AM, he tells us, bringing with it flash-flood rains and gale-force winds. For safety's sake, the course we've been preparing for for months must change. The kayak leg on the Waimakariri has been canceled. Instead a different 12-mile paddle will be added toward the end of the race on a shallow canal of barely moving water called the Avon,

which winds through Christchurch.

This blows. First, instead of getting to rest in the morning while I paddle for six hours, Mary will have to go first, starting out on her bike in the rain. Second, I'm going to be stuck in the wrong boat. When push came to shove, I had acquiesced to a local outfitter's recommendation of a sea kayak with a rudder — deciding that, sight unseen, I preferred stability to speed in the Waimakariri Gorge. On the flat Avon, I'll be like a cyclist on big, fat knobby tires racing on a velodrome track.

It takes me a few minutes to shake off the disappointment. Sure, there's a touch of relief: The rapids had been the X factor, the dragon I still hadn't faced, and now I was effectively off the hook. And yet, that's what I'd come for. To finish the race now, I'll have to propel myself 12 miles without any real float or moving current to speak of. That isn't scary, just grueling. Everything for a reason, I guess, as this unexpected slog makes me glad for my introduction to CrossFit.

DECEMBER 2009: MAKING FRIENDS WITH PAIN

I'd known this feeling before, but that was 20 years ago, in college, and I wasn't sure I needed it in my life now: the visceral dread that today's workout might finally be the one that breaks me.

After Thanksgiving, two things changed: Mary and I gave up wine (it was the only way to sustain our training), and I concluded I'd taken my preparation as far as I could on my own. It was too easy to cut a workout short if I wasn't feeling it, or go too long on the next one to make up lost time and end up immobilized the following day. I needed structure.

On the recommendations of friends who swear by CrossFit, the core and strength conditioning program best known for its brutal efficiency (workouts last less than 45 minutes) and for popularizing kettlebells (and tractor tires) as exercise equipment, I connected with Brian MacKenzie. A triathlete and endurance coach in Orange County, California, MacKenzie, as the head of Crossfitendurance.com, has made it his goal to integrate CrossFit into programs for marathoners, triathletes, rowers, and even skiers.

Not having worked with a virtual trainer before, I began a new, strange phase under MacKenzie's supervision. By design, I never knew one day to the next what my workout would be, and some days I'd find myself having arguments in my head with a guy whom I'd never met face-to-face.

Each morning I'd find an e-mail from BMacK with the day's regime, and although I found him more sympathetic when we spoke by phone, his e-mail persona was more drill sergeant. He addressed me by my last name, threw in some verbal abuse for good sport, and sent me words to live by that, out of context, might make him seem like a sadist.

"The only true wisdom lives far from mankind out in the great loneliness and can be reached only through suffering," begins his favorite quote from a Caribou shaman. "Suffering and privation alone open the mind to all that is hidden to others."

For the CrossFit workouts themselves, MacKenzie sent me to see Keith Wittenstein, the founder of the Brooklyn Barbell Club. Opened in July 2009 in a former machine shop, the BBC has colorful murals on its walls and a powerful sound system that pumped AC/DC, the Beastie Boys, and Soundgarden back into my life. Whiteboards on the walls chart the PRs (personal records) of gym members under headings like Diane, Helen, Fran — benchmark workouts in CrossFit, like hurricanes, are each named after women. Less quaint, however, was that the BBC turned out not to have a shower yet. Instead, there was a can of Right Guard in the changing room with the instruction SHARE, BITCHES written on the cap with a Sharpie.

Ideally, CrossFit programs are three consecutive days on, one off. Because I couldn't handle the double commute to work and the gym six days per week, I focused on lunch hours three days per week (returning to the office in a dried sweat). Wittenstein, a stickler for clean form, had me attempting any number of new exercises without injury, save for one time when I tweaked my own wrist and hand with a 16-kilo kettlebell.

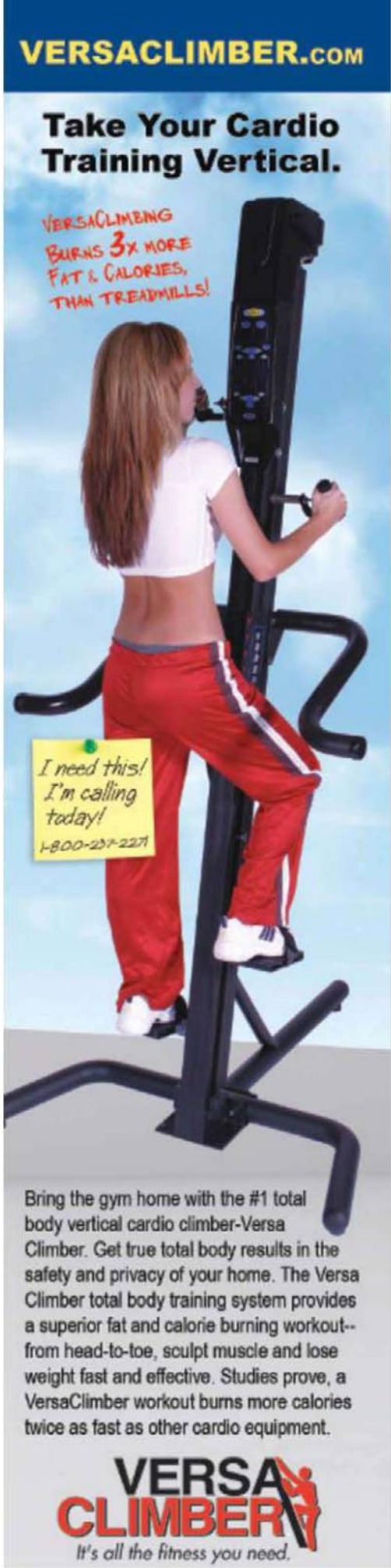
MacKenzie and Wittenstein put me on the Paleo Diet. Popularized by a Colorado exercise physiologist, Loren Cordain, the Paleo Diet contends that athletes perform best (and people are healthier overall) when we eat like our Stone Age ancestors. The underlying theory is that humans consumed the right balance of protein, fat, and carbohydrates as hunter-gatherers, and our diet as a species went to hell with the advent of agriculture. (True devotees of Paleo start to sound like conspiracy theorists, fingering grains as the root cause of the so-called "diseases of civilization" — diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, cancer.)

In practice the Paleo diet is not complicated. Yes to lean meats, tons of fruits and veggies, nuts, and seeds. No to bread, potatoes, dairy, and beans. At first I felt depleted on the diet, but before long I was less sluggish and recovered from workouts faster. Still, though: no Mexican breakfast? No Italian *primos*? No cheese? What kind of life is that?

Hard to argue with the results, however. In January I posted my best time for the mile in 20 years, and by the time we boarded the plane to New Zealand, I'd shed a total of 16 pounds and dropped from a 36 waist to a 34. And there's a final way CrossFit served me, too: During the most agonizing CrossFit circuits, you discover that your muscles have more to give after your mind wants to shut down — the very "place" of savage unpleasantness that I would reach about an hour or so into my three-hour paddle down the Avon in Christchurch.

FEBRUARY 13: THE STORM HITS

"This sucks!" Mary says. We're standing in a downpour, getting her bike from the pickup, finding her spot in the lineup. As predicted, the



storm hit at 4 AM, and the rain is heavy. Because of near-drought conditions for the past few weeks, the rainwater is standing in huge pools everywhere. And it's not a summer rain. If we're lucky it's 45 degrees Fahrenheit.

I hate to leave Mary in the deluge, but the race officials need all the motor vehicles out of the way, so I wish her the best and make my way to Waddington, where Mary will tag me for the final push to Christchurch — a 33-mile cycle, 12-mile paddle, and 500-yard dash to the finish line. Or so I think. That's going to change, too.

At Waddington a hundred mini-dramas play out as, one by one, other competitors show up to pass the figurative baton to their teammates. For a while this keeps me distracted as I wait for Mary to finish her ride. Unlike yesterday, however, when I only wanted her to finish in one piece, I'm impatient. Every minute that passes, we slip another place in the standings, and, even though we always agreed it wasn't about winning, only finishing, I don't want to end up last.

Though Judkins announced that it was 55 kilometers, or 33 miles, in his public address last night, Mary's ride actually ends up being 52 miles. Also, the new route requires a strenuous climb. It takes her five and a half hours, and when she finally pulls in, it's clear we've dropped to the bottom 25 percent. I stuff my competitive rage, but she can tell I'm aggravated and apologizes. I pedal off hungry to make up lost ground.

It's breezy but sunny, and my cycle is over quickly — too quickly, it turns out, as my kayak is not ready. Finally one of our helpers, Leah, flags me down. I give her my bike, and, as fast as I can, I climb down a bank into the kayak and paddle off.

Sort of. Most of the Avon is barely deep enough for me to take a full paddle stroke without scraping bottom. In the first 15 minutes, I run aground at least five times, and have to knuckle it forward like some legless chimpanzee to get myself moving again.

Soon I'm dodging punting boats packed with tourists. They all seem delighted by the Avon, with its weeping willows and arch bridges. But I've already seen enough after an hour. Then, adding insult to injury, the single-day, elite athletes begin blasting by like I'm standing still — only meeting up with another guy in a sea kayak helps.

"I just decided to stop fighting it, and it takes as long as it takes," he says. I smile, but I'm deeply jealous of his equanimity.

My back is screaming, so I have to stop paddling and extend my legs inside the boat every 100 or so strokes. Then, after just 10 strokes, I'm desperate to arch my back and stretch my legs again. I need a tactic to get myself through. For a while it's humming and singing to myself. I try to think of something appropriate and end up with the coda Bono sings at the end of "One Tree Hill": *Oh, great ocean/Oh, great sea/Run to the ocean/Run to the sea.* Soon that's not doing it for me, and I'm reduced to counting strokes — up to 12, then starting over. I concentrate on what Alex Nicks always advised — fewer, better strokes — and negotiate with myself to stretch my legs and back only after I've completed another 144 better strokes.

The couple at the finish, getting their feet wet in the Pacific

This goes on for a long time. We turn many a corner without seeing our salvation. Then, finally, I see a yacht club, flags, and a crowd — the take-out. Climbing out of the kayak, I ask Mary, "Where to?" I'm expecting a 500-yard dash to the finish line, but no, a small craft advisory forced us ashore prematurely.

"You've got to get back on your bike and cycle another 10-K!" Mary says.

I do, then sprint the last few yards on Sumner Beach in my cycling cleats, and suddenly I'm across and Judkins is handing me a can of Speight's beer, and I don't tackle him, but I do throw an arm around his shoulder and shake his hand. Sadly Mary and the others couldn't load the kayak and the rest of the kit fast enough to beat me to the finish, so I have to wait a few minutes for her to arrive before we can celebrate together.

Our finish time isn't something to brag on: 17:10:20, good for 96th place out of 114, ahead of the oldest duo, but behind the best two high school girls. Still, more than 40 others didn't finish, and in the battle of Mary and Brad vs. the course, we prevailed. Whenever Mary had felt like the training was too much, she'd stop short and ask, "How cool would it be to say we did this?" Now we can.

FEBRUARY 15: THE STORM PASSES

Two days after the race, we're driving down to Queenstown to relax and catch our flight home when we miss a turnoff. At the wheel, I figure we'll correct the error by taking a dirt road connector, but we soon come to a pebble-spitting stop on the edge of a ravine with a stream at the bottom.

Even before we missed our turn, Mary is a bundle of nerves in the passenger seat (because of all the driving on the opposite side of the road). The stream looks to be a couple of feet deep. She can tell what I'm thinking. "Please don't," she says. And then, when I drop it into gear, "Brad, *no*!"

Halfway through the stream, the water up to the floorboards, the tires spin into the sand below the river rocks, and we're stuck. Cursing, I climb out the cab window. Initial attempts to free us (me lifting, her slowly applying the gas) only make it worse. I stomp off to try to find something to wedge beneath the wheels.

Mary has every right to be furious with me, but when I come back a few minutes later with a plank of concrete I find near a shed, she's laughing and wants a snapshot to commemorate our predicament. She's also figured out what will turn out to be our salvation — that we weren't in four-wheel drive. In no time we're out of the stream and on our way without any recriminations — something that would have been hard to imagine a year before.

"I can't believe what a fucking idiot I am," I say, reflecting on the episode.

"You are," Mary agrees, and it is as affectionate as anything she's ever said to me.

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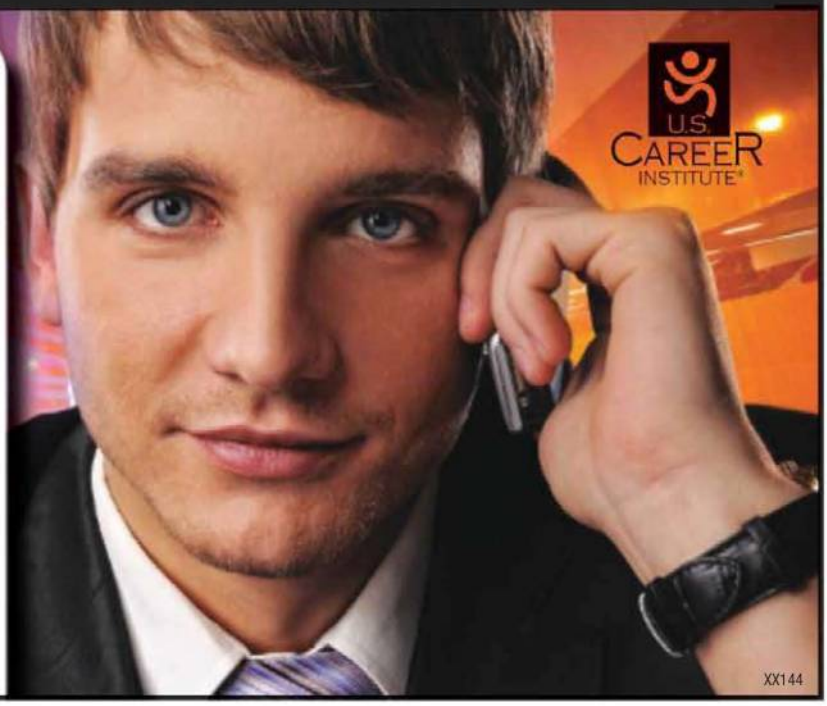

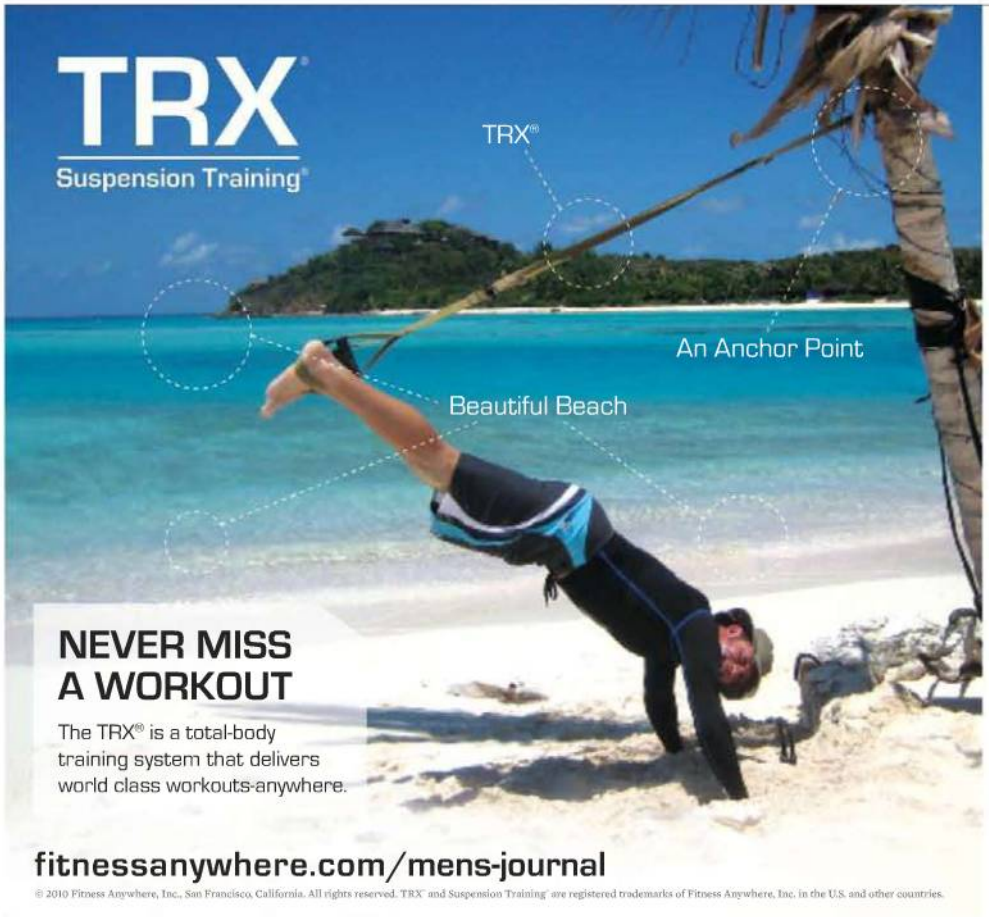

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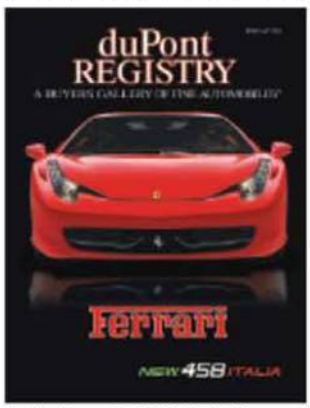

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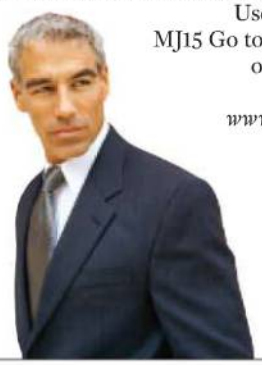

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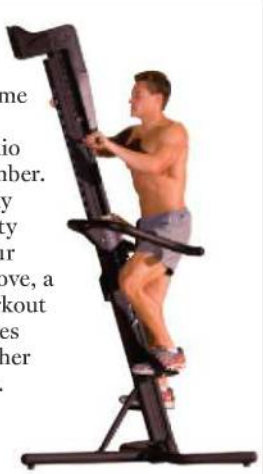

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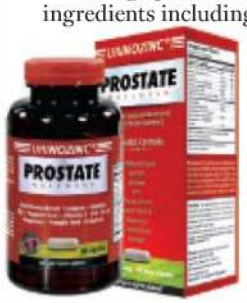

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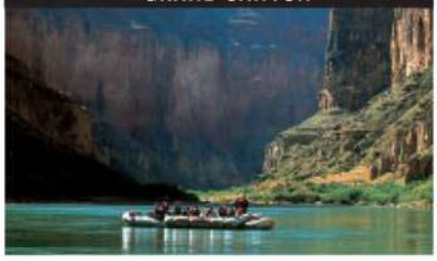

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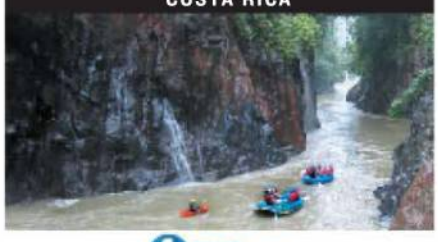

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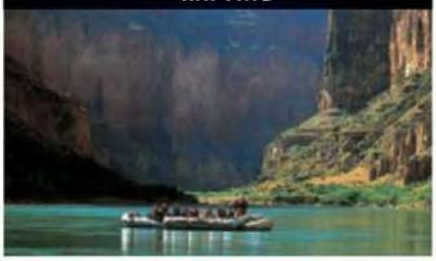

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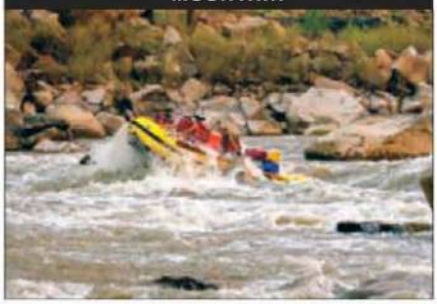

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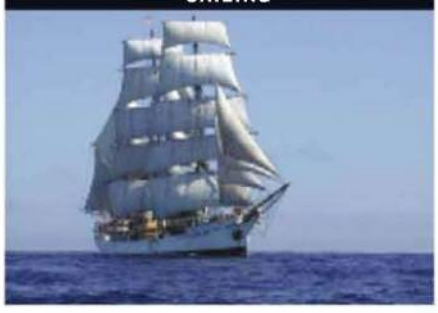

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Survival Skills
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The Oscar winner, 65, stars in Solitary Man *and reprises Gordon Gekko in fall's* Wall Street 2.

What adventure most changed your life?
In college I was bodysurfing near Point Conception, California, and got caught in a riptide. I fought it but kept getting pulled out and down until I was exhausted. When I went under, it was all crystalline, angels singing, the whole cliché — and I relaxed. Of course, that's what I needed to do, because then the tide swept me even farther out and I was able to get back to the surface. As I caught my breath, a seal popped up next to me. Up close, they don't look so cute — more like big rats. For all I knew they were carnivorous. I drifted about a half-mile and finally was able to swim back in. That experience taught me a bit about mortality and that sometimes you have to pace yourself.

What should every man know about money?
There's a great line from *Wall Street 2*: "Money is a bitch who never sleeps, and if you don't keep an eye on her, then you wake up in the morning and she's gone."

What should every man know about women?
They don't play fair. That's a learned survival skill, though, because it's not as if women have had a whole lot of choices through the generations. I'm watching this in my six-year-old. She used to have no problem with clothes; now she changes outfits three times a day. And she's become selective with her cuddling; maybe she knows how much Daddy wants a big hug. They have a lot of power, those girls.

What's the best way to impress a woman?
By ignoring her.

What's the best advice you've ever received?
My father has always loved giving advice. He told me to make the best effort I can and then — fuck it.

What article of clothing should every man own?
Gucci. A lightweight rainproof parka.

What hidden skills do you have?
Well, I can still disassemble and rebuild a flathead engine. I was a member of the Downshifters Hot Rod Club in Connecticut in the '50s and early '60s and protected my youth from getting into more serious trouble by building hot rods and racing a Class C dragster. I drove a '44 Ford convertible and then a '46 Mercury with a Model A spring in the back that we called the Ruptured Duck. I think our top speed was 134 miles per hour. We also operated a little Midnight Auto Supply, meaning that was the time of day we found parts we needed.

What skill should every man possess?
To see the absurdity of any situation, which ultimately allows you to solve it.

Do you have a scar that tells a story?
I had a serious ski accident. Did the triple — severed the meniscus, the patella, and the anterior cruciate in my left knee. I skied with a big old brace for years. Then I started to limp, so I went in last spring and had my knee replaced. It's made a big difference. Been great for my golf game.

When is it okay for a man to lie?
Just about anytime, if it makes life more interesting and you're not hurting anyone.

Who's the toughest guy you know?
My father is right up there. He's 93, has had a stroke, and has a pacemaker. This is a guy who was in a helicopter crash that killed two people when he was 74. I think that made him question why he lived and brought him back to his Jewish roots. He started studying with a rabbi, and he's more of a complete man than he was before.

How should a man handle getting older?
With a giggle, hopefully. You've got to find a passion, even if it shocks you and breaks your normal patterns of watching football all weekend. Have you ever thought you wanted to sail? Or learn Spanish?

—INTERVIEWED BY STEVEN RUSSELL

What's the best survival skill you know?

I II III

I survived a Colorado whiteout once by making a pine-bough lean-to that keeps in the heat and won't buckle from the snow. (I) Find a rock ledge or a long, low tree branch — something solid. (II) Collect a *lot* of pine boughs. Put some of them on the ground as a bed. (III) Starting on the side exposed to the wind, pile on boughs at a slant for your roof, elevated by the rock ledge or branch. Interweaving is secondary. When you're done, crawl in.

PORTRAIT: ART STREIBER/AUGUST; ILLUSTRATIONS: JOE MCKENDRY

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