

Media information

22 April 2005

Whiteout hinders Team Pink Lady®

- Scott Dunn Polar Challenge race to start Saturday April 23 -

Sam Eve, 26, from Felixstowe, Suffolk, Tori James, 23 from Pembrokeshire, Wales and Felicity Aston, 27 from Hildenborough, Kent – the Pink Lady® PoleCats – have completed a four day 65 mile trek to the Polaris Mine start point of the Scott Dunn Polar Challenge race that was due to start today. Facing both mental and physical challenges, this has been far from easy as severe whiteout storms have delayed the start of the race by one day.

The storm gave the team experience of navigation in severe blizzard conditions, made worse by the evidence of polar bears in the locality.

Felicity said, “In a whiteout the wind blows so much snow into the air that it is like a very thick fog. In these conditions it is dangerous to continue in case we lose each other. Instead we had to put up the tent and sit out the storm. It’s a mixed blessing. We are all grateful for a day in the tent to catch up on little jobs that need to be done but it is also frustrating to lose a day. We are just glad that all the other teams are caught in the same storm so that no one gains an advantage.”

The frequent sightings of many different polar bear tracks had added fear to the women’s complex mix of emotions. Although Team Pink Lady have not come across any polar bears yet, the Scott Dunn Polar Challenge support team, who are currently setting up camp at the startline saw a mother and cub in the distance yesterday. Felicity added “Polar bears are one of the most frightening things about the Arctic. We are no longer at the top of the food chain and we are in their territory. Luckily bears are more curious than hungry and we have been taught a lot about their behaviour”.

When facing harsh Arctic conditions, Team Pink Lady have shown determination and humour. On the second day of the trek, looking at the map, tracing the route of the race, Sam had a revelation, “It’s a bloody long way! Working in nautical miles disguises the distances. It is only when you translate them into kilometres that you realise just how far we have to go!”

However, all this does not get the team’s spirits down. Tori added “When you are walking over the sea ice all day, it’s so thick and solid that you would never realise there was an ocean underneath. The sea ice isn’t flat and icy like an ice rink. It’s covered in snow that has been blown by the wind into miniature dunes called sastrugi. Occasionally lumps of ice stick through - some of it is a unreal blue. It’s very beautiful but rough going with a sledge in tow. I hope we don’t come across too much of that”.

The Pink Lady Polecats are the only women’s team taking part in this year’s internationally-renowned competition – considered the toughest adventure race on earth. The competition involves 16 international teams trekking in temperatures as low as -40°C with skis and hauling their own heavy sledges over shifting frozen sea ice for up to three weeks. The young women, who are sponsored by Pink Lady apples, are set to be the only female team ever to complete the arduous 360-mile polar race from Canada to the North Magnetic Pole*. The race starts tomorrow, Saturday 23 April and runs from Polaris Mine to Issachen Mine through three checkpoints.

For daily updates, please visit:

www.pinkladypolecats.org.uk

www.polar-challenge.com

- Ends -

* North Magnetic Pole position in 1996

High resolution photographs of the Pink Lady® Polecats available on request.

Please contact Elodie Massol (020 7569 3043 / elodie@yesconsultancy.com) or Tina Fotherby (202 7569 3042 / tina@yesconsultancy.com) at The YES Consultancy for further information or interview requests.

Editor's notes:

Tori James, 23, from Pembrokeshire, Wales, is office manager at BSES Expeditions, whose head office is in London.

Sam Eve, 26, from Felixstowe, Suffolk is marketing manager for BSES Expeditions, whose head office is in London.

Felicity Aston, 27, from Hildenborough, Kent is a travel writer who has extensive polar experience having worked for British Antarctic Survey.