

**Media information**  
**28 April 2005**

### **Kent Pink Lady® PoleCat's Arctic quest**

**For the next two weeks, 27-year old Pink Lady® PoleCat Felicity Aston from Hildenborough in Kent is competing in one of the hardest races on earth, the Scott Dunn Polar Challenge. The team is progressing well, having position 11 in a group of 16.**

Felicity Aston has long held an interest in cold climates. After studying physics, astronomy and climate change at University, she went on to join the British Antarctic Survey as a meteorologist, becoming only the ninth woman ever to spend a winter at the Rother Research Station. Recent years have seen her on expedition in Greenland, Canada and South America, but as a Pink Lady PoleCat, on account of their sponsor, Pink Lady apples, her current exploits are set to eclipse all of these previous accomplishments.

The Scott Dunn Polar Challenge has been ranked alongside some of the greatest tests of human endurance and sees competitors race across the Arctic, hauling 60-kg sledges, enduring -40°C temperatures and skiing across constantly shifting sea ice, as they head towards the North Magnetic Pole\*. The route is 360 miles long and can take up to three weeks to complete.

As part of Team Pink Lady, Felicity and her two team mates, Sam Eve and Tori James, are competing against 16 other teams from across the globe. More information about the race can be found on their website, [www.pinkladypolecats.com](http://www.pinkladypolecats.com). No all-female team has ever before completed the race but Team Pink Lady aim to succeed where other all-women teams have failed.

There are few individuals who would be willing to commit to months of pre-departure training and then weeks of constant hardship during the race itself. For Felicity, however, this was an opportunity that was not to be missed. On the eve of the start, she admits, "It is not often that you are given a reason to go to the North Pole. There is something special about the polar regions that I think is irresistible anyway, but the idea of a race adds an extra dimension."

#### **The Arctic versus Antarctica**

Of all three team members, Felicity has the most cold weather experience, on account of her time with the British Antarctic Survey. This latest ordeal, however, will be a far cry from anything she has ever done before. She explains, "What I did in Antarctica was very different from what I'm going to be doing in the Arctic. In Antarctica we'd usually have a warm building to go back to and we took spares of everything, because we were the only people out there and we could not risk anything going wrong. In the race it's a very different mindset. It's very lightweight. You take a minimum of everything and throw out anything that isn't absolutely essential." This is why the team's main sponsor, Pink Lady apples had to supply the girls with freeze dried apples to maintain their high level of fruits intake, in order to avoid the weight of fresh fruits.

The Scott Dunn Polar Challenge follows a demanding route across the Arctic. Competitors risk frostbite, hypothermia, dehydration, snowblindness, exhaustion and polar bear attacks, yet despite these dangers, Felicity remains undeterred. She draws strength from the achievements of others and seems determined to make the most of her life. She confides, "Reading about other people who have done so much with their lives inspires me to do more with my own. I'd never forgive myself if I felt I had wasted it. I have heard amazing stories of courage and survival. Some people go through terrible things and manage to keep smiling. They inspire me to make the most of what I have."

As one might expect, physical fitness training has played a major part in the run-up to departure. Felicity's training schedule for the last six months has included two to three hour gym sessions, three or four times a week. Aerobic fitness alone, however, is not enough for a polar traveller. In order to stand a realistic chance of reaching the finish line, all three team members must be able to endure around 11 hours of strenuous walking each day, dragging their equipment and supplies in sledges behind them. Team Pink Lady need high levels of stamina and endurance if they are to maintain this routine for three weeks solid. And so gym sessions have been complemented by outdoor training every weekend, with the girls dragging car tyres cross-country in an attempt to simulate the action of hauling a heavy sledge over the ice.

The girls also had to change their eating habits, adopting a low GI diet in order to achieve their true physical potential. This involved eating plenty of brown rice, nuts and fruits such as Pink Lady apples.

### **The benefits of training**

Although time consuming, the results of such training are self-evident to Felicity. She observes, "Physically, I have been so surprised by the difference that the training has made. Having a structured programme has had such an effect. I've just been amazed at the stuff that I can do now. And it's made me think, if I can improve this much in five months, what could my body do if I carried on?"

For the Scott Dunn Polar Challenge, however, physical fitness and mental robustness may not be enough. Competition in the race is stiff and Team Pink Lady lack the natural upper body strength of their male rivals. This will become particularly apparent when Felicity and the team try manoeuvring their sledges over the frozen pressure ridges and ice debris that will inevitably block their route. Strategy will therefore play an important part in the girls' overall performance. Felicity admits, "I think it's going to be a really strategic race, probably moreso for us than for some of the other teams. It's really important to have a clear set of targets and goals and a firm idea of our strategy. You have to have a definite idea of how many miles you want to do in a day, roughly how many hours you want it to take you and what sort of pace you want to set. The sitting down and talking about tactics and strategy is really important."

Team spirit will also play a major role in the race. Felicity, Tori and Sam will spend much of the race feeling cold, tired, hungry, aching and demoralised and the only thing that will keep them driving forward towards the Pole will be the support of each other. But in Felicity's own words, "When we get together there is a real buzz of excitement, a strong feeling of camaraderie. We all have a singular goal, to finish the race, and it's great to share that. The sense of

achievement when we all cross the finishing line together will just be enormous.”

### **The support of others**

The girls also have an army of supporters and well-wishers urging them on, not to mention their sponsors. The team are backed by Pink Lady apples, which is ideal for the girls, since the concept of healthy eating is very much in keeping with their own diet. Prior to departure the team have been consuming apples as part of a low glycaemic index diet. Pink Lady apples are also being used to supplement the girls’ rations during the race itself. Felicity states, “Having a supportive sponsor who understands and believes in what we are doing will make all the difference during those hard days out on the ice. I feel lucky to be working with such a fun and appealing brand as Pink Lady apples.”

The team also have the needs of their designated charities to spur them on their way. They will be raising funds and awareness for two separate charities – Breakthrough Breast Cancer and BSES Expeditions. Felicity admits, “There’s an awful lot of money for charity riding on the fact that we will get to the Pole and it will just be a huge relief to know that the money is in the charity’s bank. The money’s up for grabs and if we don’t grab it, then it will be a real shame.”

[www.pinkladypolecats.com](http://www.pinkladypolecats.com)

[www.polar-challenge.com](http://www.polar-challenge.com)

[www.bses.org.uk](http://www.bses.org.uk)

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**High resolution photographs of Team Pink Lady® are available on request or can be downloaded from**

<http://www.yesconsultancy.co.uk/ClientPages/poleCats/polecats1.html>.

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Editor’s notes:

The other members of Team Pink Lady are:

**Tori James**, 23, from Pembrokeshire, Wales, who is the Office Manager at BSES Expeditions in London.

**Sam Eve**, 26, from Felixstowe, Suffolk, who is the Marketing Manager for BSES Expeditions in London.

\* The 1996 North Magnetic Pole position

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