

Media information
28 April 2005

Suffolk Pink Lady® PoleCat's Arctic quest

For the next two weeks, 26-year old Pink Lady PoleCat Sam Eve from Suffolk 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.

Sam Eve is a 26-year old Marketing Manager, originally from Felixstowe. She has an interesting job at BSES Expeditions and has a penchant for outdoor activities, but even so, you might be forgiven for thinking that she is an ordinary young woman. Until that is you learn that she will be spending this April and May competing in one of the hardest races on earth. The Scott Dunn Polar Challenge is a gruelling 360-mile race across the Arctic, starting in the Canadian Northwest Territories and ending at the North Magnetic Pole*. Recognised as one of the greatest tests of human endurance, the race sees competitors brave -40°C temperatures and drag 60-kg sledges across constantly shifting sea ice, in an attempt to beat the other 16 international teams.

As a member of Team Pink Lady, Sam and her two team mates Felicity Aston and Tori James, lined up at the starting post on 22nd April and is hoping to reach the Pole in two weeks. More information about the race can be found on their website, www.pinkladypolecats.com.

When not planning or participating in expeditions, which in recent years have taken her as far afield as Iceland and Lesotho, Sam likes to spend her time skiing, snowboarding and surfing. She is also an accomplished rock climber and kickboxer. Such hobbies provide the perfect basis for pre-departure fitness training, but on top of this, Sam and the team also train for two to three hours at a time, three or four times a week. Over the last six months cardiovascular workouts have increased in both frequency and intensity, developing the strength and efficiency of the girls' hearts and lungs. At the same time, resistance weight training has improved their muscle efficiency, giving them the upper body strength to manoeuvre their sledges over the countless pressure ridges and ice debris that will inevitably bar their route.

As well as the endless gym sessions, Sam has also taken part in regular team training events every weekend. In order to increase their levels of stamina and endurance, the girls have been dragging car tyres around the countryside for up to 10 hours at a time. These arduous sessions simulate the action of hauling a heavy sledge across the ice and although such activities often draw the attention of curious passers-by, they are an excellent way of strengthening the shoulder and back muscles. Most polar explorers use this method in the run-up to a major expedition.

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 need for efficiency

Sam and the team have also taken part in a number of training expeditions overseas, most notably in Norway and Austria. As well as allowing the girls to spend quality time together and learn each other's strengths and weaknesses, these sessions have also served as a good way of practising the daily routine. After all, cooking, erecting tents and packing sledges will all have to be done as quickly and efficiently as possible if the team are to maximise their chances of winning the race.

A very real danger during the race itself is the risk of attack by polar bear. Bears have a phenomenal sense of smell, detecting potential prey up to 20 miles away. They have been known to cross paths with polar travellers on numerous occasions in the past and this is certainly something playing on Sam's mind. She confides, "I get scared just crossing a field of cows. This is an irrational fear of mine that I am looking forward to combating when we get out there. Most polar bears are inquisitive creatures, but we'll be suitably equipped with rifles and flares, so we'll be well prepared should we see one."

Few people have the strength of mind and gritty determination required to plan and train for a full year. Fewer still would then be willing to spend a further month in sub-zero temperatures, risking frostbite, hypothermia and snow blindness just to compete in a race. For Sam, however, it is the arduous nature of the Scott Dunn Polar Challenge that makes it so appealing. She admits, "I love adventurous activities, particularly hill walking and skiing. And I have always had a competitive streak, so the Arctic race seemed like the ultimate test. I think what I am looking forward to in the race is the physical side of things, the day-to-day testing of my body, putting it through its paces and seeing what it's capable of."

Aiming for first place

In last year's Scott Dunn Polar Challenge, less than half of the teams that started the race completed it. Team Pink Lady are the only all-female team to enter this year and no all-women team has ever before reached the finish line. Team Pink Lady aim to change all of that, but just completing the race is not enough for them. In a demanding competition that is dominated by male contenders, the girls are going out there to win. Sam confides, "I would be delighted to be the first all-women team to complete the race. Looking at last year's facts, just finishing is an achievement in itself. But there's obviously a competitive streak in us all. I think a lot of the attraction of the Polar Challenge is that it is a race, and not just an expedition. So I really want us to do well. We're definitely going to be competitive and we're going out there to try and win."

Success will come at a price, however, and their route across the Arctic will be punctuated at all times by extreme discomfort, constant cold, non-stop physical exertion and prolonged sleep deprivation. This is when the months of physical training and mental conditioning will pay dividends. Sam explains, "I've never been good at getting up when everyone else is asleep, but this is all part of the mental training for the race. It's about making things less comfortable in the lead up to the event, to help us get out of our comfort zones."

In partnership with Pink Lady apples

Team Pink Lady are being backed by Pink Lady apples, much to Sam's delight. Commenting on the title sponsorship on the eve of the start, she declared, "We've been doing our own fundraising for the past year and are delighted to have such an appropriate healthy eating focused title sponsor in the shape of

Pink Lady apples. As part of our intensive training plan, we've been following a strict low glycaemic index diet that requires eating healthy foods such as apples. The fact that Pink Lady apples taste great too is the extra bonus!"

Despite the phenomenal challenge facing the team, Sam can not help but think about life after the race. She observes, "Of course, I'm looking forward to starting the race; it feels fantastic. But in many ways it will be quite sad to finish because our lives have been on hold for the last year in planning and preparing for this. There'll be a big hole to fill after we get back, I'm sure." To fill that hole Sam is already forming ideas for her next trip. Whether she heads to the bottom of the world for an Antarctic expedition, however, or instead opts for the heat of Morocco's Marathon de Sable is a decision she is happy to leave for now. For the time being she is more than focused on the task at hand. Polar Challenge competitors take heed; Team Pink Lady mean business.

www.pinkladypolecats.com

www.polar-challenge.com

www.bses.org.uk

- Ends -

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>.

Please contact Elodie Massol (0207 569 3043 / elodie@yesconsultancy.com) or Tina Fotherby (0207 569 3042 / tina@yesconsultancy.com) at The YES Consultancy for further information or interview requests.

Editor's notes:

The other members of Team Pink Lady are:

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

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

* The 1996 North Magnetic Pole position

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