

ADVENTURE RACING

BY JENNY HADFIELD

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH "THE TOUGHEST MAN ON THE PLANET"



Ian Adamson is the Michael Jordan of adventure racing. His racing bio goes on for pages and includes winning two Eco-Challenge Expedition Races (Borneo and New Zealand) Raid Gauloises, Southern Traverse, Raid the North Extreme and the X-Games. If that isn't enough to make you tired, he holds the world record for 24 hours of continuous kayaking (217 miles).

He is lean, genetically gifted and brilliant. In a nutshell, Ian is a perfect blend of strength and smarts – two things you definitely want in your pack on race day.

I've heard Ian speak on number of occasions, and I've learned and laughed every time. His sense of humor and knowledge of the sport keeps his audience hanging on his every word. Interviewing Ian was an honor and was geared to bring you up close and personal with the greatest adventure racer of all time.

JENNY HADFIELD: What motivated you to begin adventure racing and what was your first race? Who were your teammates?

IAN ADAMSON: Friends convinced me to race in the 1984 Winter Classic in Australia, mostly against my better judgement. I thought they were crazy for going two days in tough conditions. I raced with a close friend from the Sydney University Canoe Club (we came in fourth).

JENNY: Have you always been as successful in the sport as you are today, or was there a learning curve in your performance?

IAN: I was never very competitive until I got older. I always just raced for the fun of it until the '90s when I started getting competitive in canoe and kayak.

JENNY: What do you consider your greatest accomplishment to date?

IAN: Fourth place at Eco-Challenge Argentina in 1999. I raced with three female athletes and we were the top U.S. team, ahead of the 1998 winners.

JENNY: What have you learned about yourself from the sport?

IAN: Pretty much every life skill is challenged in every race. You learn how to communicate better, avoid conflict, work as a team. I find I visit new territory every time, either physically,

mentally, emotionally, culturally or spiritually.

JENNY: What do you eat during a race? Favorite food?

IAN: Lots of junk, but savory foods and real foods by preference. Powerbars are great, but you need things like sandwiches and meals for the long races. I really like hot pockets, which I stick in my pocket to warm up!

JENNY: How do you train? What is your typical training week?

IAN: I don't have a typical training week since I have an insane travel schedule. Ideally, I try to cover each basic discipline: running, biking, paddling and climbing each week. In each of these, I like to cover endurance, strength, speed and skills, often combined.

JENNY: What do you consider your strength and weaknesses?

IAN: Strengths - being a generalist and having lots of backcountry experience. Weaknesses: I am not as fast or as strong as my teammates!

JENNY: What would your teammates say about you in your absence?

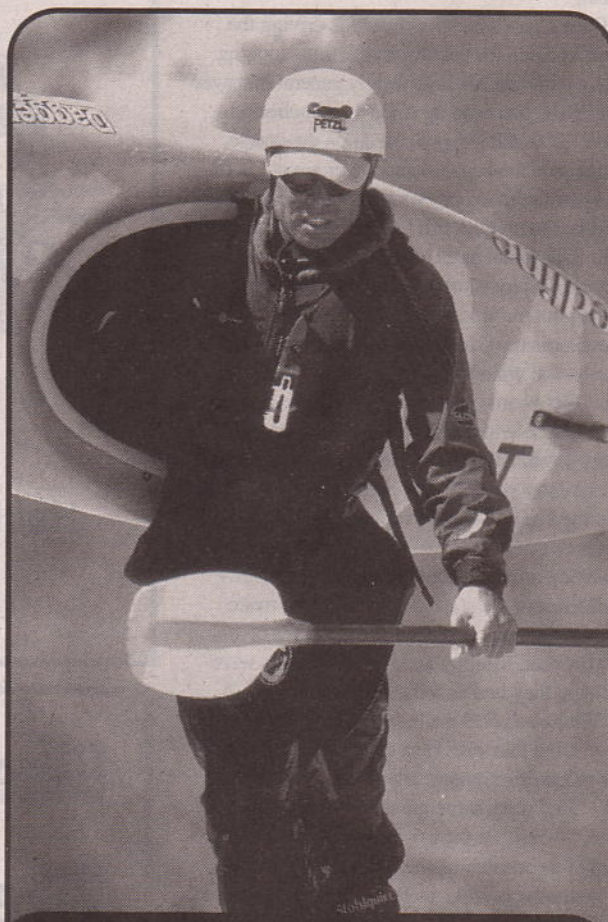
IAN: Lots of experience, thinning on top, likes to know where we are.

JENNY: What is the craziest thing you've done in a race?

IAN: Summitting Cotopaxi in the 1998 Raid Gauloises. We had to climb to 19,730 feet after three days with little sleep. It completely destroyed us physically and emotionally, although we did eventually win in nine and a half days.

JENNY: What is your scariest moment while racing? In life?

IAN: Dropping Robert Nagle into a canyon in



IAN ADAMSON USED TO RACE FOR FUN. THAT CHANGED IN THE '90'S WHEN HE GOT SERIOUS ABOUT CANOE AND KAYAK COMPETITION.

the 1995 Southern Traverse. We were climbing out and I offered my hand to him but our grip slipped and he fell 20 feet into rocks. I thought he was dead (he wasn't!) In life - a rollover accident driving to a race in 1998. My best friend died.

JENNY: What advice do you have for new adventure racers?

IAN: Solid background in all sports and an understanding that it is all quite achievable, no matter what you think at the time. People starting out should start small (HiTec type races) and gradually build up to longer ones.

JENNY: What does it take to win?

IAN: Great teammates, experience and no one weak in any discipline, including navigation!

JENNY: Goals for 2002-2003? Long-term?

IAN: Defend our Eco title, race really hard in Primal Quest, re-build our corporate business (Corporate Adventure Training - we lost half our partners and half our business this year) and simplify my life!

JENNY: How do you and your teammates perform so well on little or no sleep?

IAN: We sleep often and early in races. Sleep management is crucial to success, sleep deprivation loses races!

JENNY: Do you hallucinate when you race due to sleep deprivation? What are some of your classic visions?

IAN: I have hallucinated. Disney characters in the trees, small animals in the rocks ...

JENNY: Where do you see the sport in five years?

IAN: Many more shorter races, up to 24 hours and—hopefully—national and international governing bodies.

JENNY: What are your team's strengths?

IAN: Communication, teamwork, athletic ability (all single sport world champions), deep skills backgrounds, love for the outdoors, strong drive for success!

JENNY: If you had the power to change anything in the world today, what would it be and why?

IAN: Provide a high standard of living—clean water, food, health, education—to all people.

JENNY: You have raced with the best athletes in the world. How do you choose your teammates?

IAN: We have always operated as a squad from which we discuss our team makeup for each race. We have kept the same team and built on it since 1994, and with one recent exception, have kept the group together. Decisions are made by the group as a whole, and often we end up with more than one team in any given race.

JENNY: You have raced all over the world. What is your favorite race environment and why?

IAN: High Alpine. The air seems cleaner, the water sweeter, the views bigger ...

JENNY: How did you become such a good navigator?

IAN: It is really experience. My farther was an exceptional navigator and he took us out in the wilderness as soon as we could walk.

JENNY: Who do you look up to and respect for their lifetime accomplishments and contributions?

IAN: Einstein - humanitarian, brilliant mind, eccentric. Shackleton - exceptional leader and explorer.

Ian Adamson will be speaking at Moosejaw Mountaineering (Moosjaw.com) in September and racing the Wild Onion in Chicago on Sept 13. (www.urbanadventureracing.com). For more information, call 773-529-1111, or write Jeffrey@Moosejaw.com.



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