

Ride and Tie

A DIFFERENT BREED OF MULTI-SPORT

KIM MORSE, a 29-year-old senior sales consultant from Irvine, California, has competed in the last two Eco-Challenges, but she says she might have found something equally as fun as adventure racing: the sport of ride and tie. Invented by journalist Bud Johns in the early 1970s, it's a sport that combines endurance horseback riding and trail running. Two human teammates switch between running and riding over 25 to 40 miles of wilderness terrain until all three teammates cross the finish line.

About 50 to 60 teams are expected to compete in the 33rd Annual World Ride and Tie Championships on September 6-7 near Truckee, California. If her training races during the upcoming months go well, Morse will be there, too.

"I love to ride and can run fairly well," she says. "I thought it would be a blast to put the two disciplines together. I came home from my first practice event with bugs in my teeth because I couldn't top smiling the whole time."

Curt Riffle, president of the Ride and Tie Association and long-time competitor says the sport saw a 30 percent increase in participants in 2002, while the Ride and Tie Association membership grew by 60 percent. Teamwork, endurance and technique are all important for a successful ride and tie, Riffle says, which is why the sport has attracted ultra-runners and adventure racers in recent years.

Competitors must determine where to tie the horse (for their teammate to pick up), how far to ride between ties, and how fast to run or ride, he says. They must work together to ensure that both human and equine teammates are contributing and staying healthy. Competitors could find themselves running down muddy, boulder-strewn trails next to 1,000-pound horses wearing iron shoes, Riffle explains. Or riding at speeds up to 30 miles an hour through trees less than an inch away from a knee cap.



Leiza Morales, an adventure racer, event promoter and full-time mom from Haskell, Texas, competed in her first ride and tie in May with her husband, Jim McTasney.

"Having grown up in a rural area, horses have always been a major source of companionship and entertainment for me," says Morales, 33, who organizes the Rattlesnake Racing series of adventure races and off-road triathlons in Texas. "Finally, I've found a sport that allows me to do the two activities in competition that I truly love."

— RENNE GARDNER

CHECK OUT WWW.RIDEANDTIE.ORG FOR SCHEDULES, RULES, RESULTS, PARTNER MATCHING AND OTHER RESOURCES.

Dial 9-1-1 for adventure

What do you get when you cross *Survivor* with *E.R.*? The third-annual Medical Wilderness Adventure Race series, otherwise known as MedWAR, a three-race series open only to medical personnel from the U.S. and Canada. In each of the one-day races, teams of four, which include physicians, EMTs, nurses, first responders and medical students, must treat a wide range of staged medical emergencies before moving on to the next section of the race.

At the first race of the season on April 26 near Augusta, Georgia, the emergencies ranged from a helicopter crash and a near-drowning swimmer to poisonous snake bites and a bear attack. As for the race, it was no walk in the woods. It included hiking, trail running, mountain biking, navigation, climbing, swimming and canoeing and took most teams between six and eight hours to complete.

So, as they say, break a leg! If you're going to get injured during a race, you'll be in good hands in the MedWAR series. Other MedWAR events are planned for Oneida, Tennessee on July 26 and Michigan later this summer. Visit www.medwar.org for more details.

transition area

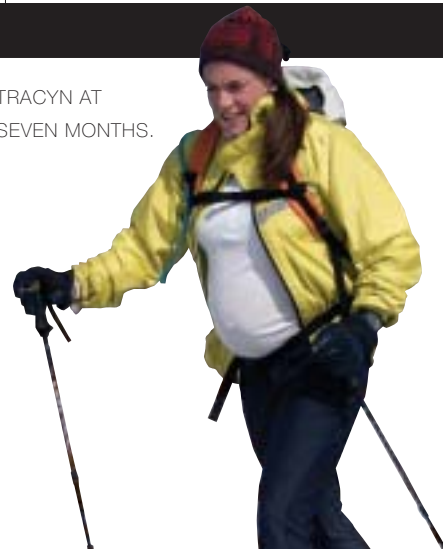
Tracyn Thayer has been involved in adventure racing since 1996, but she's just now embarking on the biggest adventure of her life. The 34-year-old athlete and race director and her husband, Norm Greenberg, welcomed their first child into the world on June 1, a 9-pound, 1-ounce baby boy named Dylan. The couple actually got a lucky break, because Tracyn's due date was May 20 — which would have been during the Appalachian Extreme adventure race they produce. (See "Slick Schick," Page 26.)

Preparing for mid-race labor, the couple put a special clause into the race rules, allowing them to change the course at any time — you know, just in case they had to find a hospital. The race's medical staff was headed by two emergency room doctors and their 21-foot RV that served as race headquarters was equipped for a backcountry birth. Although late, Dylan arrived in time for Norm to direct the June 6-7 Mountain Sports Festival Adventure Race in North Carolina.

Now that her nine-month challenge is complete, Tracyn plans to ease back into the sport she loves.

"I do see myself racing again, and at a similar intensity level, just probably not with the same frequency," she said. "But, I'm OK with that. I look forward to the challenge of conquering a race again, with good friends, a good course and a finish I can look back on and say 'not bad for a mom.' I also hope I can inspire other moms who may not have yet tried the sport because of their other responsibilities." — **BARRY SIFF**

TRACYN AT SEVEN MONTHS.



NORM GREENBERG; MELANIE WALKER