



News Release

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For Immediate Release

MORE WOMEN ENTERING AND EXCELLING IN ADVENTURE RACING Big Blue Sprint Races Proving Popular With Women

(KINGS BEACH, Calif.) – Maybe it’s their innate sense of direction. Maybe it’s their ability to multi-task. Or maybe it’s their ability to play well with others. Whatever the main draw, the number of women entering the world of adventure racing is on the rise, and they’re being welcomed with open arms.

Todd Jackson, president of Seventh Wave Productions and creator/producer of the prolific Big Blue Adventure Series, notes that once he introduced the shorter sprint competitions, there was a notable influx in the number of women competitors.

“Many competitions require teams to be coed, so there’s always been a female presence on the course,” Jackson said. “But with the sprint races, which have shorter distance requirements and are designed for beginners, we’re seeing more first-time female competitors racing together.”

Racers compete in pairs for Big Blue Sprint Races, but the general competitions, which are more demanding and have finishing times up to 12 hours, are open to all female, all male and coed teams of three and four. While the female divisions are usually light on entries, there is an upswing in the number of women hitting the field.

Jeanne Caruso, an attorney from the Bay Area, has been taking part in Big Blue competitions since 2005. Her all female Team Vanderkitten will take part in every Big Blue event this season, as well as other challenges throughout California. The trio is so dedicated and inspired by the sport that they recently began a training and mentoring program designed specifically for women in order to develop more all-women teams. Though Caruso's first adventure race was with a coed team, she and her two current teammates prefer to race as all women.

“We don't want to feel like or be seen as mandatory gear,” Caruso said, referring to the coed requirements many challenges have. “It also forces us to know all the skills required, so that as women we can contribute more and become well-rounded, experienced competitors in the long run.”

Jackson emphasizes that women of all ages and backgrounds are entering the world of adventure racing. “It's not just for extreme athletes in their 20s and 30s. We have competitors in their late 40s and 50s taking part in their first races. We see professionals, blue-collar workers, students, moms, dads and even grandparents.”

Women aren't just mere Title Nine tokens on the course. Even in coed teams they bring definite strengths to the field. Team Vanderkitten's Gina Christopher found herself (all 5'2 of her) towing two racers who were much larger than her and Caruso notes that

women tend to have great long-term stamina, which makes them ideal for endurance races.

“Women have incredible mental endurance,” Jonathan Senk, a professional racer and founder of Hairy Scary Evolutions, an extreme adventure training company out of Atlanta, said. “I’ve seen them nurture and pull their team together and I’ve seen them take on the alpha role. They’re tenacious, strong, focused, organized and pay amazing attention to detail.”

Senk can tell endless stories about the strength of women, pointing out that it was an all-women’s team that placed first overall at a recent 24-hour event in North Georgia and that one of the strongest participants at a Special Ops Academy was a 5’4 ballerina from Iceland.

“Her mind was so strong. She never gave up. She was always pushed herself. She was so much stronger than the guys mentally,” Senk said. “I also find that women are constantly striving to improve themselves, a trait you don’t often find in men. It’s great to see women be as strong as they are.”

While a general knowledge of outdoor recreation and fitness is essential to racing, Jackson and Caruso agree that a love for outdoors and a desire to challenge yourself are equally, if not more, important. “You really discover a lot about yourself in these challenges, both physically and mentally,” Caruso said. “And you always know you’re going to be exploring a beautiful course in the Big Blue challenges,” Caruso said.

The Big Blue Adventure Series holds more than a dozen competitions from Southern California to Oregon in amazing locales such as Lake Tahoe, Half Moon Bay and the Cascade Mountains. While racers can compete individually, Caruso emphasizes

the support of teammates, especially for first timers. The Big Blue Adventure Series has a teammate finder at www.BigBlueAdventure.com. She also notes that sprint races are the ideal platforms for first-timers, regardless of gender.

“Adventure racing may seem intimidating, but there’s a very supportive atmosphere at events and on the course, even for the serious competitors,” Caruso said. “Everyone helps each other out, gives tips and answers questions.”

The Big Blue Adventure Series holds clinics prior to each event. Team Vanderkitten hosts an ongoing series of coed trainings, clinics and events for various disciplines, including kayaking, ropes, mountain and road biking, running, navigation and orienteering.

Upcoming Big Blue events include the Xterra Tahoe City June 28; Burton Creek Ten and 20 Mile Trail Runs June 29; Big Blue Adventure Sprint at Joseph Grant County Park in San Jose July 12; Ocean Blue Adventure Race July 26; Oakridge 24-Hour Adventure Race August 9; Folsom Lake Sprint Adventure Race August 16; Kit Carson 24-Hour Adventure Race September 13; Tahoe Big Blue Adventure Race September 20; and Emerald Bay Trail Run September 21. For more information, or to register, go to www.bigblueadventure.com or call 530-546-1019.

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