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BULLETIN

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A BEYOND THE ORDINARY MAGAZINE

MARCH 2014

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SEBASTIAN COPELAND

The Iceman

The British explorer and filmmaker has crossed Antarctica with broken ribs, explored Greenland by kite and is friends with Leonardo DiCaprio. Here he tells us his survival tips

Interview: Andreas Rottenschlager

THE RED BULLETIN: When you crossed Greenland in 2010, you and your expedition partner Eric McNair-Landry had to sit out a blizzard for seven days in your tent. How did you stop yourselves going mad?

SEBASTIAN COPELAND: Adrenalin keeps you alert, to start with. I was worried the storm would damage the tent. Then, getting to sleep became a problem. The wind shook the sides of the tent at speeds of up to 130kph. It felt like camping in a jet turbine. What did you both talk about?

The thing is, you don't go on a polar expedition with the aim of making friends for life. You seek out a professional like Eric who in all likelihood is going to see the mission through. We didn't have any profound discussions about our childhoods. We spent most of the day in thought; we played the odd game of chess.

What's the most important mental quality an explorer is required to have for a polar expedition?

Your head is more important than your body – that's beyond question. The physical preparation is the easy part. You go to the gym and you get in shape. Dealing with pain is more difficult. One part of my training involves me putting on a 50kg vest and trekking through the mountains for two hours. Obviously, you're completely exhausted after five minutes, but you've got to get through it, even if it hurts. If you flag on an exercise like that, what business have you got going to Antarctica?

When you were in Greenland, you travelled on skis and were pulled along by a kite and set a new record for travelling that way: 595km in 24 hours. When did you eat?

We cooked meals in snowmelt in the morning and evening. You can buy almost all foods in dehydrated form: beef bourguignon, fettuccine Alfredo. You need a lot of fat and carbs. I ate Brazil nuts between stages. They have the best weight-calorie ratio. You need to be scientifically rigorous when choosing your provisions. Every calorie is counted. **In your photography and film**



"You don't sleep well when 130kph winds shake the tent. Like camping in a jet turbine"

projects, you seek to address the risks of climate change. What's the most difficult thing about raising environmental awareness?

We're increasingly isolated from the consequences of our actions. Your electricity bill, your rubbish disposal, it's all dealt with easily just by you writing a cheque. But when you're living in a tent in the snow for weeks

at a time, you become aware of every single tin can. You think to yourself, "What idiot chose to camp here?"

How did you get Leonardo DiCaprio to write the introduction to your photo book, *Antarctica: The Global Warning*?

I work for an environmental organisation in the US called Green Cross International and helped prepare an initiative for the Earth Summit in Johannesburg with Leo in 2002. After that he started coming to my presentations. I consider Leo to be one of the most committed environmentalists from the world of showbusiness. You can believe what this man says.

You broke two ribs right at the beginning of your 2011 Antarctic expedition. How did you persevere for the remaining 75 days?

I fell on a zastruga, an ice formation shaped by the wind, during a kiting manoeuvre. Ironically, I'd met an adventurer friend for dinner in Cape Town a couple of days before. He told me about how he'd broken a rib once during an expedition. I asked, "What did you do?" He answered, "Took painkillers and soldiered on." And I took that as advice after my own accident because I knew that he'd managed with a broken rib. **What lessons do you take from your expeditions into everyday life?**

Firstly, that problems don't solve themselves by you moaning about them. Secondly, learn some humility. Expeditions require you to have a strong ego, but there's no more efficient way of learning humility than being exposed to the elements in a desert of ice. You get out of the plane, set foot on the ice and you know that you have 4,000km ahead of you.

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Sebastian Copeland
on his way to the
North Pole in 2009:
"problems aren't
solved by moaning"

Born

April 3, 1964

Copeland On Film

Into the Cold: A Journey Of The Soul (2010) is a documentary about his 600km trek to the North Pole. *Hell on Ice* (2013) is about him kiting his way 2,300km across Greenland.

Minus Ten Degrees to Six Degrees

Copeland is a cousin of actor Orlando Bloom, and was married to the model and actress Brigitte Nielsen from 1990-92.

