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## THE GREAT KATE FORM THE LAND DOWN UNDER: KATE LEEMING

Australia is a rich, bold, and beautiful country that is the stuff of any adventure enthusiast's dreams. The Aussies themselves have a truly adventurous and independent spirit, and it is among them that I found the fascinating and accomplished Kate Leeming. Kate makes her home in Melbourne as an Australian Open tennis player, an athlete, a speaker, a cyclist, an adventurer, and an educator.



Kate incorporates charity, conservation, and education into all of her adventures and dedicates her time and energy far beyond the expedition itself. Her first cycle was in 1993 (The Trans -Siberian Cycle). It took five months to complete and raised money for the children and victims of the Chernobyl disaster. In 2003, she conceived and organized the Great Australian Cycle Expedition (GRACE), an arduous 25,000 km journey through her home country. In 2010, Kate created “Breaking the Cycle” a world-first cycle expedition across Africa. She completed an exhausting ride across twenty African countries in an astounding 299 days. Her next cycle adventure begins in April 2016 and will test her endurance, focus, stamina and resistance to extreme Arctic cold as she cycles across Greenland.

### Phil Coates

In speaking with Kate I was struck by her low-key attitude about all she has accomplished. I asked her to best describe what drives her to make these long haul cycle journeys across the world.



Kate said: “Growing up, I enjoyed cycling for fitness and dreamed of traveling, but never imagined what I could achieve on a bike until after university. [She has a Bachelor of Phys. Ed, Geography, and a Teaching Certification]. When I travelled to the UK, initially playing field hockey for my university, I stayed in Europe and it was then that I first tried a short cycle excursion in Ireland. Over the next two years I cycled a total of 15, 000km through Europe as my personal exploration, from Spain to Turkey, through to the Nord Kapp, Norway, the most northerly point of mainland Europe. This is where I discovered my passion for traveling by bike.



Traveling by bicycle suited me because I was able to combine my natural interest in geography with various attributes that have enabled me to also be a successful sporting professional — physical and mental strength, ability to focus, self-discipline, persistence, ability to work under pressure and competitiveness. Traveling by bike, I found, gives a close and personal connection with the people and the land and an incredible sense of place; a unique perspective of how the world fits together. I love bringing a line on a map to life.

It was after my Norwegian trip, just as I was starting to plan my first major expedition across Russia, I met polar explorer Robert Swan, OBE, first person in history to have walked to both the North and South poles. It was Robert who inspired me to take it to another level. I learned from him that there was a lot more value to what I was doing than simply riding a bike and ever since then I have always tried to create some sort of benefit for the people I meet and places that I explore.

I believe that it is a privilege to have the opportunity to create and perform these expeditions and I aim to learn from each experience and develop my skills and abilities to reach my full potential.”

In reading about the many adventures Kate has taken over the course of her career I imagine she has even more in mind. I’m curious to know what her dream expedition would be. Kate said that she does have “an expedition bucket list, but as each journey becomes a part of who I am, shaping the next vision involves successfully achieving





the goals of the previous expedition and circumstances beyond my control can change. My bucket list is constantly being tweaked. For example, since my Trans-Siberian Cycle Expedition from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok in 1993, I have always dreamed of cycling the Arctic Circle, including the Bering Strait. And after my next planned expedition, Breaking the Cycle South Pole, this might just be possible. But there are other expeditions on my radar that are less physically demanding and have more cultural and philanthropic orientations.”

When I ask her whom or what inspires her, Kate said that she is “inspired by those who have the courage and commitment to stand up for what they believe in,



particularly with regard to human rights and the environment. I admire champions who display great longevity, make great sacrifices, constantly strive for perfection and adapt and grow to remain on top of their game.”

She said that “making the expedition happen in the first place is the most difficult aspect of my undertakings. As my expeditions become more complex and require



larger budgets, the journey to reach the start point becomes more arduous. Taking it from the vision and pulling it all together is like conducting a finely-tuned orchestra in a complex musical score. Firstly there is an enormous amount of research to ensure I have a workable and marketable plan. I have to find appropriate team members, search for partners to develop the education and awareness/fundraising programs, develop a schedule that is timed to fit with the various seasons and my work schedule (as a court tennis professional), logistics, budget, a risk mitigation plan, find expedition partners and sponsors, develop and be the face of the public relations campaign, create a filmmaking strategy and try to keep reasonably fit and healthy.”



Steve Ferrier

Kate feels that “women tend to be under-represented in the world of adventure and exploration, just as they are in politics, boardrooms, and professional sport. When women identify with other women as role models it sends a strong message that they, too, can aim high to achieve their potential, that they have the capability to make more of a difference, lead, and raise expectations in their communities. One of the most personally satisfying outcomes of my projects is when other women, particularly young women, are inspired to explore the world, push their own limits and take action about issues that they are passionate about.”

Kate Leeming has great spirit, strength, and fortitude. She is a woman who loves what she does, takes the good with the bad, and meets challenges head on. She has the understanding as an athlete, adventurer, and explorer that some days are better than others and no matter how hard you train and prepare, things may not go your way.

Her next big adventure (after Greenland) is Breaking the Cycle South Pole (cycling across Antarctica has been a dream of hers). This will be the first bicycle crossing of the Antarctic continent via the South Pole. Kate’s motivation to take on Breaking the Cycle South Pole is to “satisfy my passions for exploration and education and as a humanitarian. The purpose of the expedition is to raise money and awareness for





HIV/AIDS in Africa (via Charity Miles, (RED) and the Global Fund) and to run a global education program about leadership. If I can find enough funding to make this expedition go it is due to start in November 2016.”

Bravo Kate! I applaud you and I encourage all who read this to follow her journey through her website, and stay tuned for more great stories from Australia’s own Ms. Leeming.