

■ **ENDURANCE RACE:** Husband and wife from Yarker head to Yellowknife to compete in Rock and Ice Ultra competition

# Frigid run/camp race fun for couple

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For their honeymoon in 2005, Derrick Spafford and Sara Montgomery decided it would be romantic and relaxing to do a running and camping trip down the Rideau Trail.

Perhaps, then, it's not surprising that the couple's latest idea of fun involves a trip to noted hot spot Yellowknife, NWT.

The Yarker residents begin competing today in the Rock and Ice Ultra, a running-camping event that would be a nightmare for most people.

In frigid temperatures over six days, Spafford, 42, will run 225 kilometres while carrying all his food and equipment needed to survive on a sled.

Montgomery, 38, is entered in a slightly less gruelling three-day event, in which her gear is shuttled between camps.

"(Most people) think it's kind of crazy," Spafford said. "But I've been doing this kind of stuff for a long time."

The high for today in Yellowknife is a -14 C, but seeing as

it dipped to -42 C during the first event in 2007, the forecast is comparatively balmy.

Spafford, a long-distance runner for more than 25 years, competed in the three-day event last year and finished second. This year, he decided to increase his challenge and his wife was anxious to come along to take the test.

"It's a really neat atmosphere," said Spafford, who runs Spafford Health and Adventure, which offers training, coaching, employee fitness programs and several other services.

"Everybody sort of encourages everybody along and the first-place prize for one of the races this year is a \$6,000 diamond."

Several sponsors are helping foot the bill for Spafford and Montgomery, who will compete against racers from Japan, Spain, England, Ireland, South Africa and Australia.

"It's hilarious, all these countries are coming, but there are no Americans," Spafford said.

Seeing as you can't duplicate Yellowknife conditions in this area, Spafford and Montgomery adopted a training technique

that included 15 to 20 hours of winter running each week in Frontenac Park.

The couple has been writing a blog detailing preparations. Spafford recalled the survival training prior to last year's race when the last words were, "Be smart. Don't get dead."

The list of mandatory gear items and equipment is lengthy. It includes a sleeping bag, a thermal groundsheet, a head lamp, a GPS, food for six days, a cook stove and snowshoes.

"It's a fine line between having too much gear and dragging the extra weight unnecessarily across the frozen tundra or going ultra light, but risking not having enough," Spafford wrote.

"With the weather in Yellowknife currently in the -30 C range, I know what way I will be leaning."

Daily updates of the race will be available at [www.sleepmonsters.com](http://www.sleepmonsters.com).

By the way, if Spafford makes it through his latest adventure, he plans to run in an 100-mile ultramarathon in Haliburton later this year.



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Derrick Spafford and Sara Montgomery run across a frozen pond behind their Yarker home in some of the gear they will be using for their endurance race in Yellowknife.