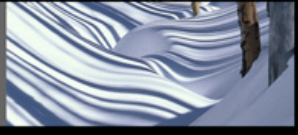


MICHAEL CLARK  
PHOTOGRAPHY



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spring 2009



## SPRING 2009 NEWSLETTER

### **3** EDITORIAL

It has been a while since the last newsletter...an editorial on some of my recent adventures.

### **4** NEWS

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### **6** EQUIPMENT REVIEW

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### **8** STORY FROM THE ROAD

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Pan-blur image of a surfer at Bonzai Pipeline on Oahu.



# It's been a while...

## MORE ADVENTURE THAN YOU CAN SHAKE A STICK AT



Over the course of the last five months or so I have been working on a new book about adventure sports photography (as detailed on page 4). Because of the added workload with my assignments and trying to finish the book, I wasn't able to get a Winter 2009 issue of the Newsletter worked up. As a result this issue of the Newsletter is a little larger than normal and includes some in-depth articles detailing my latest adventures - and some that happened last fall.

It has been a very adventurous five or six months. Shooting from planes, helicopters, jeeps, boats and hanging off ropes has made for quite a variety of new images. I have been shooting a wide variety of adventure sports (on assignment and for the book) including surfing, climbing, adventure racing, sea kayaking and mountain biking. While writing the book, I was able to connect with some of my peers, most notably one of the top surfing photographers on the planet: Brian Biemann. Since I am not a surfing photographer, and needed to get some info for the book on surfing photography, I called up Brian after talking with Andrew Eccles. We hit it off and Brian was kind enough to invite me out to Hawaii, where he lives, to shoot some surfing when the next big swell rolled in. A few weeks after our first conversation, I got a call from him and an hour later had a ticket to fly out the next morning.

I was only in Hawaii for three days - that was all the time I had but the ocean did not disappoint. I shot at Bonzai Pipeline, one of the most famous surf breaks anywhere, for a few days with six-to-eight foot waves. On the first day, which had the biggest swell, there were surfers (almost all pro surfers) coming out of the water with broken surfboards every hour or so on average. They were the biggest waves I have ever seen and I can't wait to get back out there and shoot surfing again. On this trip I shot from shore

with a massive telephoto. The next time out I'll have to give it a go in the water. While I got a few decent images, none of mine can compare with the stunning images Brian has shot over the course of his 25+ year career as a top surfing photographer. You can check out his work on his website at [www.brian-biemann.com](http://www.brian-biemann.com). Thank you Brian for being so willing to share your knowledge and time with another photographer!

Shortly after returning from Hawaii, I was off again to cover the Wenger Patagonian Expedition Race in Chilean Patagonia. This was my second year covering the race and it was even better than last year and much more difficult. This year's race turned out to be the hardest they have ever put on. It was also raining constantly, which made for tough shooting conditions, forcing us all to get creative. Nevertheless, Patagonia is still one of the most amazing places I have been too. It never disappoints. Yet again we hiked into uncharted and unmapped areas with the racers. It was a challenging few weeks with very little sleep and even less sunlight. This year's trip also had an unplanned adventure. We ended up stranded on a fishing boat in the Magellan Straits for a day and half and it was the highlight of the trip for me. You'll have to read the article starting on Page 8 to get the details. All in all the last six months have been chocked full of adventure.

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# Digital Masters: Adventure Photography

**MICHAEL HAS JUST FINISHED WRITING A BOOK ON ADVENTURE SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY**

I can finally announce to the world that I have just finished a book on adventure sports photography these last five months. The title of the book is *Digital Masters: Adventure Photography* and it is part of a series of photography books being published by Lark Books, a division of Sterling Publishing Co., Inc.

It was quite an honor to be chosen to write this book as a few of the other authors include Bob Krist, George DeWolfe and Nancy Brown, who are heads of state in their respective genres of photography.

This book is a how-to type book which basically details the ins and outs of creating top-notch adventure sports images. As far as I can tell there are no other books out there that even come close to covering as much ground as this book does. In fact there are few if any books that specifically talk about photographing adventure sports at all.

I have basically downloaded everything I have learned about shooting adventure sports over the last 14 years as a full-time pro into this book. For those of you that are wondering, the book does not get into any of my digital processing techniques. Because my [Lightroom workflow e-book](#) has become so popular and is much more detailed we decided to concentrate on the photography

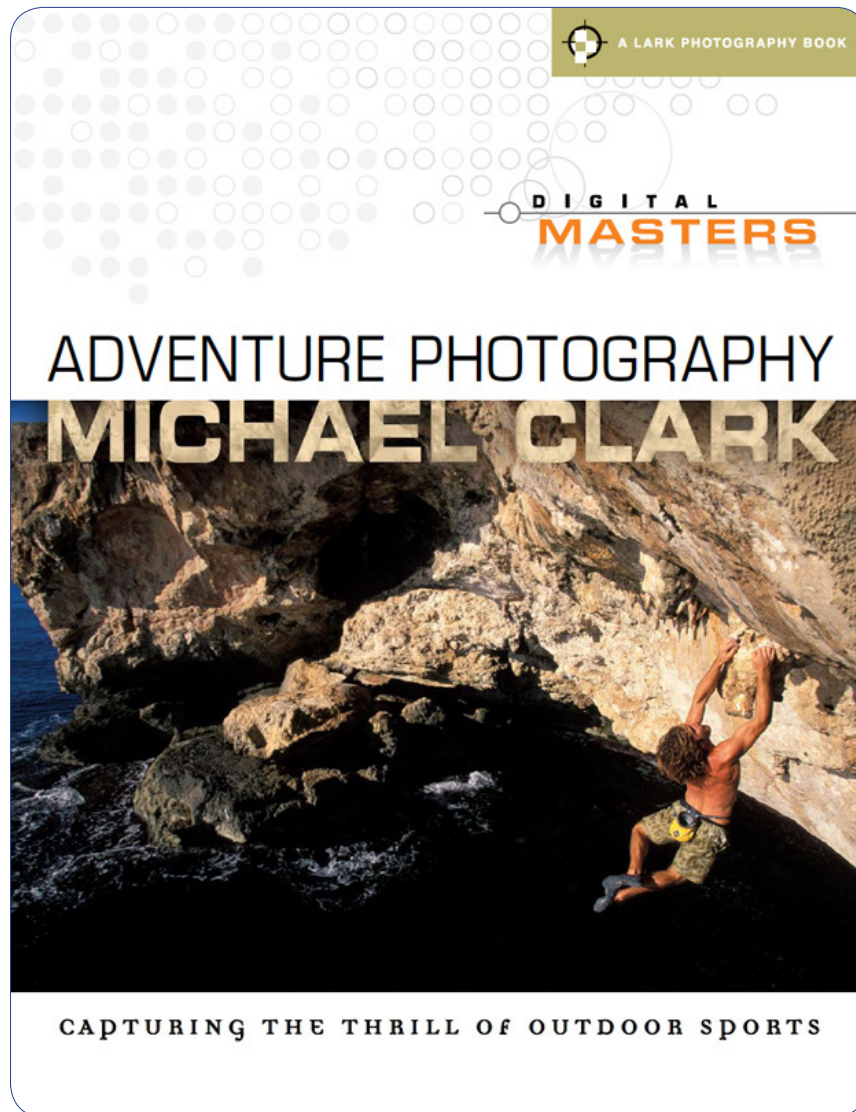
and not get caught up in the digital processing. Some of the topics covered in the book include: equipment, outdoor gear, adventure photography fundamentals (light, autofocus, histograms, exposure, composition, remote camera work), artificial lighting, how I approach and

shoot each of the main adventure sports, portraiture and lifestyle photography as well as what it takes to be a pro. The book also includes interviews with photographer Corey Rich and *National Geographic Adventure* photo editor Sabine Meyer - and a whole lot more.

I have already finished writing the book and we are currently finalizing the layout. It still has a long ways to go before it hits the bookshelves but it should be out this fall. A mock up of the cover (at right) is still a work in progress. The subtitle will be changing and possibly even the cover im-

age. If you just can't wait and want to be one of the first to get the book this fall it is already on Amazon.com and is available for [pre-order](#).

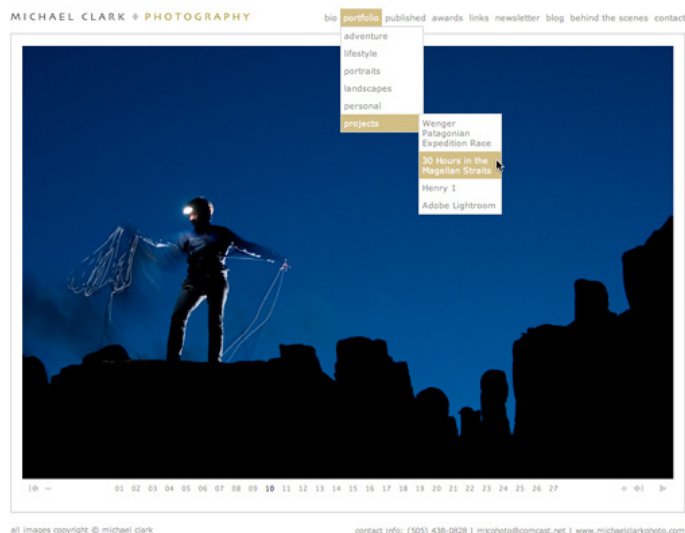
**RECENT CLIENTS:** Nikon, Adobe, Patagonia, Men's Fitness, Popular Photography, Backpacker, Outside, Redaktionell (Germany), Daniel Fine Art and Sterling Publishing Co., Inc.



## Updated Website

### NEW EXTENDED PROJECT GALLERIES

Because I have had several assignments in the last few months that were very exciting, I thought they might make for interesting extended web galleries under the Portfolio section of my website. If you go to my website and look for the “Projects” heading under the Portfolio section you’ll see a whole host of new web galleries that I have just updated on my website. In addition I have updated several of my other galleries, most notably the personal work and black and white portrait portfolios with some new images as well.



The new web galleries highlight assignments for [Men's Fitness](#), [Nikon World](#), and [Adobe](#). In particular, I shot the Henry 1 search and rescue team based in Santa Rosa, California for *Men's Fitness* magazine and the 2009 Wenger Patagonian Expedition Race for Nikon. Since the Henry 1 SAR team is a bit off the beaten track for me subject-wise, it seemed appropriate to give it a gallery all its own. There are also extended articles in this issue of the newsletter that talk about shooting those assignments. I decided to put these web galleries up so that potential clients, either editorial or commercial, could see how I have shot other assignments. As I continue to shoot assignments, I'll hand pick those that seem interesting and worthy of an individual portfolio in the projects section. To check out the new web galleries click on the links above.

## ADOBE LIGHTROOM WORKFLOW

A COMPLETE WORKFLOW FROM CAPTURE TO OUTPUT BY MICHAEL CLARK



NEED A CUTTING EDGE DIGITAL WORKFLOW? CURIOUS ABOUT ADOBE PHOTOSHOP LIGHTROOM AND HOW IT CAN SPEED UP YOUR DIGITAL WORKFLOW?

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To order *Adobe Photoshop Lightroom: A Professional Photographer's Workflow* click on the website link below. Payments can be made with any major credit card or via your PayPal account. For more information on the workflow and exactly what is covered go to Michael's website.

[WWW.MICHAELCLARKPHOTO.COM](http://WWW.MICHAELCLARKPHOTO.COM)



# Nikon D700 and MB-D10 Battery Grip

## IS IT THE PERFECT CAMERA FOR THE ADVENTURE PHOTOGRAPHER? AN ANECDOTAL REVIEW

Nikon has pretty much hit a home run with their latest batch of pro caliber cameras including the D3x, D3, and D700. In my D300 review, at the end of that article, I mentioned that the perfect camera for adventure photography would be a more robust D300 with the D3 full-frame sensor. Nikon must have been listening because just a few months later they announced the D700. I got one within a month after it became available. The D700 is by far the best Nikon I have owned just as the D3 is one of the best Nikons ever made. In fact, [DxO Labs](#) just released their findings on the top digital SLRs on the market today and they rate the Nikon D3x, D3 and D700 as the top three cameras over and above all other cameras – even those with higher resolution sensors! If that isn't an endorsement of Nikon's commitment to excellence I don't know what is. I realize I might sound like a sponsored photographer gushing over products gotten for free, but I don't get any free gear from Nikon. I have to buy everything at full price just like the rest of us.

In this review I am not going to cover the specs of this camera - there are plenty of places that have much

more detailed and technical reviews than I care to do. Check out [dpreview.com](#) for an extended technical review of the D700. I will instead concentrate here on what I have found to be the strengths of this camera for outdoor and adventure photographers.

The D700 is about as good as it gets for adventure photographers or any photographer wanting a rugged and versatile camera. With a 12.1 MP full-frame CMOS sensor, incredible low noise performance, a smaller lightweight body (lighter than the D3 at least) and a fast framing rate of 8 fps with the additional MB-D10 battery grip, this camera offers a lot of options. Over the course of my career, I have preferred Nikon's larger "pro" model cameras like the F5, D2x, D3, etc. The D700 was my first pro model Nikon that I intended to use as my main camera body which didn't have a built in vertical grip. Because of its superior image quality when compared to my D2x it was a no brainer to go for this camera. The D3 is still a phenomenal camera but I needed a camera I could go light and fast with when I needed to and the D700 is that camera. The good news is when you have the MB-D10 battery grip attached to



the D700 it fits the camera perfectly and even enhances the ergonomics. And while 8 fps isn't as fast as the 9 fps on the D3, I can live with one fps less for most of what I shoot. I also like the fact that this camera has a sensor cleaning unit built in like the D300 so every-time I turn the camera on or off, the sensor vibrates a few dust particles off. With a full-frame sensor that is a big deal since they attract a lot more dust than Nikon's smaller DX sensors.

While the 12.1 MP sensor in the D700 might seem a little lacking in the resolution department these days, it is perfect for my work. I don't really feel the need for

to worry about low light, being able to crank up the ISO to 800 or 1,600 so I can be sure to get razor sharp images is a huge benefit. At 800 ISO the noise level is so low it is almost indistinguishable from ISO 200.

Over the last eight months I have been using this camera it has been put to the test in some very harsh climates. In fact, I am already on my second D700 as I fell into the ocean while covering the Wenger Patagonian Expedition Race back in February. The camera is very well sealed and does fine in the rain, even without a rain cover, but swimming with it in the ocean is asking a bit much of any camera. I have shot surfing,

rock climbing, sea kayaking, mountain biking and trekking with this camera and having the ability to customize the camera to the sport, by attaching or removing the MB-D10 battery grip, is a huge bonus. For those times when I have to go light and don't need a high framing rate I just take the battery grip off. And while having a pop-up flash on the camera might seem less than ideal, it is great not having to take any extra gear to trigger my SB-900 speedlights - all I have to do is pop up the flash and I have instant wireless flash control.

Last but not least, image quality wise the D700 is heads and shoulders above any other Nikon I have owned to date. It isn't the D3x, which has bet-

a 24 MP sensor. The higher resolution D3x would not work for my needs because it is not fast enough with a 5 fps firing rate in 12-bit mode (and way slower in 14-bit mode). Plus the 12.1 MP sensor in the D700 allows for incredibly noise free images all the way up to 2,500 ISO and beyond. With the D700 I don't hesitate to shoot at 800 or 1,600 ISO. Even at 3,200 ISO the images have very little noise if you expose correctly. At 6,400 ISO, the images have less noise than any other camera and look like 200 ISO film did back in the day which is pretty amazing. Since a lot of my photography happens in low light this feature has opened up incredible imaging opportunities. And even when I don't have

ter resolution and slightly better color fidelity, but the overall image quality is solid in every respect. It shows much less chromatic aberration than my D2x or D300. Add in the low noise factor and it is a very flexible machine with respectable resolution. At low ISO the resolution isn't much different than the D300. But overall the look of the images shot with the D700 have better color fidelity and a larger dynamic range, likely due to those massive pixels. Crank up the ISO and nothing, save for the D3, can touch it in terms of image quality. It is just about perfect for my work, but no doubt Nikon will come out with a camera that has similar low noise, a fast framing rate and 20+ MP in 2010.







## Stories from the Road: **WENGER**

2009 PATAGONIAN  
EXPEDITION RACE

Article and Images by Michael Clark





## wenger patagonian expedition race

This February, I was lucky enough to be invited back again to cover the 2009 [Wenger Patagonian Expedition Race](#). The race is the world's toughest adventure race – and one of the toughest races on the planet bar none. There are only a few races I would even classify in the same league. The Tour de France, the Race des Sables, the Iditarod and maybe a handful of others come to mind as contenders for the hardest endurance contest on the planet. The Patagonian Expedition Race is so titled because there are many sections of the race where as a team, once you enter that section, rescue is extremely difficult and you are basically on your own in some of the most remote wilderness areas anywhere. In that sense, it is an expedition and safety is always a lingering concern. In adventure racing, each team is composed of four people with at least one female member and the teams must navigate their way through the rugged terrain using all of their outdoor skills. This year's race started near Torres del Paine National Park and went south to the Southern Cross at the bottom of the continent, covering a distance of just over 600 km (380 miles) in ten days. The race consisted of seven stages where the racers would alternate between sea kayaking, mountain biking and trekking as well as a short rope climbing section.

Just like last year, we were in unmapped and previously unexplored regions of Patagonia making for exciting navigation and slow going. There was carnage everywhere. Six people ended up in the hospital. Some were in danger of losing limbs or even their life, but in the end everyone pulled through without any lasting injuries. One team was lost for over four days and hence, with good reason, the race organizers were quite concerned. As it turned out, they were found on the last day of the race not more than

a mile or two from the finish, only because they pushed the “help” button on their GPS locator device. They were unable to continue due to serious exposure, hypothermia, not having eaten in three days and because they were surrounded by massive cliffs that prevented forward progress. The team was pretty beat up to say the least. Suffice it to say that this year's race was the most difficult edition in the history of the race series. Making it even worse, the weather was wet and rainy for the entire 10 days of the race. We did see brief, 5-minute spells of sunshine, a couple of times but they were only cruel teasers and then it was back to sideways rain.

All in all, the first four sections of the race were pretty “casual” compared to the final sea kayaking and trekking sections. The race started with a long sea kayaking stretch, then a mountain biking stage that led to the ropes, where teams ascended 60 meters (200 feet) of fixed static lines with mechanical ascenders while wearing full backpacks. The top of the fixed ropes was start of the first trekking section, which took the fastest racers a day and a half to complete and the slowest almost three full days. From there, a long mountain bike section led to the big finale: a sea kayaking marathon and the final five-day trekking section. At this point the racers had come almost 400 km (250 mi) in three or four days. And that was the easy part!

There were 10 teams that started the race but only five teams made it to the final two stages. The last two stages were vastly more difficult than any of the previous five stages. Imagine pushing off for an 11-hour sea kayak session across an open ocean with two meter or larger waves. Once you get to the other side, you have to exit your boat and then drag it and all of your other gear across a 30-km



## wenger patagonian expedition race

(19 mile) stretch of water soaked and densely forested wilderness untouched by any humans in at least a century. After that ordeal, there is another 20 km (12.5 mi) of paddling to the start of the final 120-km (75 mi) trekking section, and all of this after five days and 480 km of racing. Doesn't that sound like fun?

the waves were so powerful they swept off her food and water, which was strapped to the top of the kayak making a difficult day even worse. Once the first teams made it to the shoreline on the other side several journalists, myself included, followed the lead team as they started their trek. The British team, Team Helly Hansen –PrunESCO, amaz-



For the sea kayaking section, we shot from a larger boat and also from smaller zodiacs. The waves were so big on the open ocean that the captain wouldn't let us go out in the zodiacs until we got into the more protected fjord – that gives you a pretty good idea of what the racers were in for. One of the kayakers, Jari Kirkland, a pro adventure racer from Colorado, said that day of sea kayaking was the scariest thing she had ever done in her entire life. In fact

ingly seemed to be in good spirits and we followed them for about 5 km (3 mi) until they hit a really dense forest. I helped drag one of their boats for a few hundred yards in the forest just to get a sense of how hard they were working. Moving the boats themselves took serious effort, even on flat ground. Moving them over downed trees and bending the boats through dense forests and across waist-deep streams flowing with ice-cold water made for ludicrous



## wenger patagonian expedition race

conditions. Oh, and I forgot it was raining the whole time too.

The trekking section was a real killer. A team of three journalists including Mark Watson, a photographer from Australia, Lydia McDonald, a writer from the US, and myself followed the Canadian team into the 120-km trekking

forest at the start of the trekking and instead climbed straight up the side of a mountain to a ridgeline. The 1,000-foot ascent was covered by thick vegetation and in spots we climbed 65-degree slopes pulling on whatever bushes seemed sturdy enough to hold our weight. Falling was not an option. Even though this route seemed a bit strange, in



section. Our plan was to follow the Canadian team to the top of a pass, wait for the American team behind them and then follow the Americans for as long as we were able. The trekking itself in that first section wasn't too bad. There were the usual suspects: turba, which is a water-filled, sponge-like ground covering, dense forests, high mountain passes and oh yeah, you guessed it, lots of rain and even some snow. The Canadian team decided to avoid the dense

the end it saved us at least 3 hours of serious bushwhacking in the valley below. By the time we attained the top of the ridge we had to stop and rest while the Canadian team continued on.

We were geared up and prepared to do the entire trekking section, but not mentally in the same fashion as the teams. The teams spent very little time sleeping. In fact, the British team Helly Hansen - Prunesco, which won the race,

## wenger patagonian expedition race

slept only 30-minutes in three days! The second place team slept only two hours over a four-day period. It was a race

a place where nature rules and no human, other than the racers in front of us and the organizers (who checked out



the route months before), had ever been. It was an inhospitable place. And surprisingly we saw no animals of any kind. Apparently it was a bit too inhospitable even for them. By nightfall of the first day we found ourselves camping in a valley with seven 2,000-foot waterfalls. The falls surrounded us and we could only see the lower sec-

after all and I'll be the first too admit that was a bit more torture than I was ready for. We hiked fifteen hours a day for two days straight hoping the Americans would catch us, but they never showed up. We later found out they got lost, several times in fact, and were barely ever on the recommended course because they tried numerous shortcuts hoping to gain some ground on the teams ahead of them.

We were carrying 20-lb (9 kg) backpacks plus camera gear for what we were told would be a five-day trek. In other words we were going wicked light. Because of this, the camera gear was stripped down to a bare minimum. I had only a Nikon D700, a 28-70mm AF-S zoom lens and a handful of memory cards packed into a Lowepro Toploader Pro 75 AW chest pouch sent to me by Lowepro to test out. Needless to say the Toploader Pro was put through its paces in some very harsh (i.e. wet) conditions – and it did a great job of keeping my camera dry and providing quick access. The wilderness we were walking through was pristine. Imagine

tions of the waterfalls because of the dense clouds. It was like a side canyon of Yosemite Valley – albeit, a very wet Yosemite.

After two days in the wilderness completely on our own, Marcelo Noria Uribe, a guide working for the race organizers, found us in a valley just before we were about to enter a very dense forest. That in itself was a miracle. He was told to find us and pull us out into the bay just south of our position, where we would be ferried to the end of the race because the American team was nowhere to be found and the other teams behind us had decided to pull out of the race. The next day, just getting to that bay, was quite an adventure. It took us five hours to go two kilometers (approx. 1.25 miles). In that short distance we crossed the same river at least five times. Each time we had to backtrack in the dense forest to find a fallen tree where we could scoot across the river. A few times we were forced to wade through the deep, cold river and found ourselves climbing



## wenger patagonian expedition race

up and down steep vertical terrain by pulling on bushes and trees. We were in the middle of a dense forest filled with thorns and pitfalls that could cause a serious injury with the slightest misstep. Our progress was slowed because we were basically crawling over and under downed trees, which were covered in thick, wet moss.

working. We were completely soaked from crossing rivers and the constant rain. Marcello tried to reach a passing boat with his walkie-talkie to no avail. As it happened, there was a small wooden fishing boat nearby trying to avoid the rough seas out in the open ocean and they were kind enough to pick us up. While we weren't hypothermic



When we finally did get to the bay, there was no boat to pick us up. Marcelo suggested that we hike out to the Magellan Straits, which lay just beyond the bay, hoping we could get a radio signal or find a boat waiting for us there. Hiking up the stony beach next to the Magellan Straits, the wind was fearsome and the off and on again rain made for perfect hypothermia conditions. Yet again, there was no boat to take us to the finish. Our satellite phone wasn't

(yet!), we were in a tough spot and if we didn't find shelter soon we would have all been in a bad way. When we got onboard the small fishing boat, by wading out into the ocean and climbing up the side of the boat, the fishermen had fresh baked bread, coffee and tea waiting for us in the galley. Compared to the windswept conditions outside we had just landed in nirvana.

As soon as we got on board, Mark and myself realized we



## wenger patagonian expedition race

had landed in a photographic gold mine. The two fishermen, Angel and Steve Espana, had been fishing all of their lives. They were a father and son team who worked fifteen-hour days harvesting “Luga”, a form of red algae that grows on the sea floor. To collect the algae, Angel spent all day in the ocean diving in a thick wetsuit and breathing through a

The next day the ocean was still rough, so our gracious hosts told us they were going to take the day off from work and remain anchored in the bay. Marc and myself, through Marcelo, indicated that we would be really excited to photograph them working. In kind, Angel offered to dive for sea urchins and king crab, which would serve as our lunch.



hose connected to an air compressor. His son stored the algae and kept the compressor in working order while his father was in the water. We politely asked Angel and Steve if it was ok to take photos and they didn't mind at all. In fact, I think they thought we were a pretty interesting bunch. Later that day, we managed to talk with a boat that could pick us up the following day so our plan was to hang out in the dry and warm engine room until they arrived.

Not wanting to pass up what promised to be some amazing images and an incredible seafood buffet straight out of the ocean, we quickly agreed. I worked as fast as I could on the unstable boat shooting from a variety of angles as Angel suited up. He had a wetsuit that was at least two centimeters thick and a homemade weight belt system that consisted of lead weights tied together with what looked like bicycle inner tubes. His flippers had obviously been re-



## wenger patagonian expedition race

paired at least three times. His gear had been worked over the coals. Before he put on his wet suit he lathered up with a white powder that helped him slide into the thick neoprene.

Once in the water it only took him five minutes or so to come back up with a bag full of Luga and sea urchins.

in some fancy restaurant. At some point the compressor stopped while Angel was diving. Not to worry his son Steve remarked, he'll figure it out when the air stops. Within a few seconds Steve had the compressor working again and Angel didn't appear until he had made his catch. When Angel came up he threw the bag onto the boat and hung on the



He wasn't able to find a crab at first so he moved the boat out to another location, closer to open ocean where he figured he could get one. While he was diving for king crab, we cracked open the sea urchins, doused them with lemon juice and went to town right there on the bow of the boat. We had at least thirty of them from the first dive. The sea urchin was a bit bitter without the lemon juice. With it, they were a delicacy that I am sure would cost a fortune

side of the boat waiting for us to see what treasures lay inside. Steve opened the bag and to our delight, out crawled a sizeable King Crab. A few minutes later, we enjoyed a lunch of sea urchin sandwiches and fresh boiled king crab. At this point the race seemed like a distant thought. Race? What race? We were living high on the hog – or uh, rather the crab!

When we finally made it to the finish of the race later

## wenger patagonian expedition race

that same evening, I promptly fell off the back of the 30-foot zodiac that had picked us up and had to swim to shore with my camera in the Lowepro chest pouch. The zodiac had a fiberglass cap on it that left little room for feet on

four days. Being wet was just the normal state of being in Patagonia.

Once I was dried off and back in camp, we found out there had been some close calls, especially in the final trek-

king section. One photographer broke his ankle while hiking around camp at the finish line. All of the teams that had finished were being treated for a variety of injuries, mostly minor. But one racer in particular, Bruno Rey, who had nearly died in the previous years race was in a bad way. He had pushed himself so hard that the doctors kept him in the medical tent for two days before he



the slippery rubber and as I found out - being the first one to try to get off the boat (we were told to go around the outside of the boat by the pilot) - there was also nothing to hold onto for a ten-foot section. I fell off trying to bridge the gap. The other dozen or so people saw me fall in and retreated to wait for a safer method. Since there was no getting back on the boat, I just swam to shore. I had been smart enough to seal my dry bags inside my backpack so my camping gear was nice and dry but I failed to put my camera, a Nikon D700 and 28-70mm f/2.8 lens, into the lightweight dry bag that I used to protect it during river crossings. The chest pouch was under water as I swam to shore and I was pretty sure the camera was going to be a casualty. Sure enough when I got to shore, it was floating in the camera bag. Strangely enough, everyone was freaking out that I was wet. It was 11:30 PM and dark but I wasn't too concerned about being wet - we had been wet for the last

could be evacuated in a full survival suit. They thought he had a form of thrombosis (a form of blood clotting) brought on by extreme exhaustion and a possible infection, which threatened his life and limbs. Luckily he recovered after a few days in the hospital in Punta Arenas, but it was rough going there for a while.

The American team, as I alluded to earlier, had endured a full on fight for survival as it turned out. They got lost straight out of the gate during the final trekking section. After backtracking they tried to make up time by taking shortcuts, which forced them to the coast. The ended up "Coasteering" (meaning navigating around the coastline by swimming in the ocean) and because of the extremely cold water they became hypothermic at least once. They also ran out of food and because they were on the coast could not find fresh water. Hence, by the time they were found they hadn't eaten or had any water for three days.



They tried calling on their satellite phone but couldn't get it working and accidentally left it on all night, which ran down the battery. Next, they tried setting off three emergency flares but no one saw them. Finally, two members used their last bit of strength to climb a steep, craggy ridge and pushed the "911" button on their GPS locator beacon which every team was required to carry. This sent a signal to the company that issues the beacons, who then contacted the race organizers with their location. The organizers were overjoyed since they had gotten no tracking signal in four days from the American team. Within twenty minutes they had a helicopter on the scene to pick up the American team who was hypothermic and nearly dead from exposure. They were all

in tears when they saw the helicopter, which took them directly to the hospital in Punta Arenas.

The American team showed up at the final night diner at midnight. They were wearing medical booties and had dressings on their hands and feet. They could barely walk and were in noticeable pain. I had one of the team members show me his feet and I immediately asked if I could come by in the morning to shoot their feet and hands with my makeshift studio. They were happy to oblige since I had built a relationship with them over the course of the race. The photos of Valentin Chapas' feet pretty much summed up the entire race in one image.

This year's race was even better than last year I have to say. The race organizers did a fantastic job setting up the

course and ferrying us around so we could get into position to cover the race. My thanks to them and [Wenger](#), the race sponsor for putting on what has to be one of the most beautiful races anywhere on the planet. If you'd like to see larger collection of images from the race, check out my extended web galleries under the Projects section of my website [here](#) and [here](#).



**Captions:** *Page 10* - Team Helly Hansen - Prunesco portaging their sea kayaks across a river in a dense forest during the 6th stage. *Page 11* - Team Spirit Canada navigating their way through the 120 km trekking section on the very southern edge of the Brunswick Peninsula during the final stage of the race. *Page 12* - Sara Percy and Mark Lattanzi, of Team Calleva, casting off to sea kayak on the open ocean, the Seno Otway, during the 6th stage. *Page 13* - Chemari Bustillo and Juan Jose Alonso, of Team Buff, mountain biking during the 2nd stage. *Page 14* - Team Helly Hansen - Prunesco mountain biking during the 5th stage of the race. *Page 15* - Sara Percy and Mark Lattanzi, of Team Calleva, sea kayaking on the open ocean during the second to last stage. *Page 16* - Fisherman Angel Espana, age 54, holding a few sea urchins that he collected while diving with homemade weight belts, near Fortisque Bay at the very southern tip of continental Chile. *Page 17* - Portrait of the remarkably torn up feet of Valentin Chapa of Team Calleva, shot the morning after the end of the race.



Last fall, I got the call from Men's Fitness magazine to shoot the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department helicopter search and rescue squad known as Henry 1. I have been holding these photos under my hat for months. Now that the article is out (March 2009) I have put up an [extended gallery of images](#) from this assignment in the Projects section of my website.

I have to say that this assignment was one of the most exciting assignments I have had in the last year. How often do you get to go fly around with an elite helicopter rescue unit for two full days and have them tell you "whatever you want to do, you just let us know." I probably won't have an opportunity like this ever again.

Though the assignment was only two days it felt like a week's worth of helicopter time. We were flying all over the place answering calls and shooting training exercises on cliff bands, in the ocean and everywhere in between. I am sure some of the stunts the pilots were executing were quite a bit more dangerous than I realized. At one point Paul Bradley, the pilot with us on the first day of my assignment, slotted the chopper into a hillside with trees above the whirling blades and on either side only a few feet away. The next day I was hanging a hundred feet below the chopper to shoot a mock rescue. As you might imagine, this assignment wasn't much different than every kids fantasy. One of the





most amazing aspects of this assignment was just to see how they work, which is self-evident in the images. Everyone that works on the Henry 1 squad is a rockstar. They know they have one of the coolest jobs on the planet. When they take off on a call there is no “scenic cruise” mentality. You get about a foot or two off the



Captions: Page 18 - A portrait of the Henry 1 Flight crew: Eric Thomson, Wade Borges and Emanuele Tsikoudakis. Page 19 - Top: Sean Cotton floating in space rescuing Wade Borges during a training exercise. Bottom: The opening spread of the Men's Fitness article (March 2009) with Eric Thomson and Jeff Lemelin hanging from the “long line” during an ocean cliff training exercise. Page 20: Emanuele Tsikoudakis and Eric Thomson getting their night vision equipment set up before taking off on a call in Santa Rosa, California. Page 20: Miscellaneous other images from the assignment.



[PORTFOLIO] ON ASSIGNMENT FOR MEN'S FITNESS



ground and you are out of there. They turn on a dime and lay the chopper, which is a Bell 407, sideways when needed. Their job is fast paced, high pressure and often quite risky. The assignment called for portraits, action and lifestyle images as well as shots of the guys working out since I was shooting for Men's Fitness.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't say a huge thank you to the entire Henry 1 crew for being so accommodating and friendly - I had a spectacular time ripping around northern California with these guys! You can check out the Henry 1 website at [www.henry1.com](http://www.henry1.com). And you can download the article on the [Henry 1 site](#).



ON ASSIGNMENT FOR MEN'S FITNESS [PORTFOLIO]



# The Proposal

by Michael Clark

One day last fall, in September I got an email asking me if I was interested in writing a book on adventure sports photography. It was a rather long email that included lots of details about the type of book the publisher was thinking about. The email also indicated that they were looking for top photographers in each field to write about their own work experiences so the book would be authentic. Having never written a book and feeling that my writing skills were barely good enough for this newsletter I was a little leery at first. It didn't take me long though to realize this could be a really good career move. In fact just after I spoke with the editor, I gave my good friend [Nevada Wier](#) a call. She is an extraordinary adventure travel photographer who has shot several National Geographic articles and

**“SHE TOLD ME, ‘EVEN IF YOU HAVE TO PAY THEM - YOU WRITE THE BOOK.’**

**HER FIRST BOOK HELPED HER CAREER SKYROCKET TO THE NEXT LEVEL”**

has also published a few books in her time - one of which I read at the beginning of my career and is still in my mind the best book ever written on adventure travel photography. She had some sage words of advice relating to her own experiences writing that first book. She told me, “Even if you have to pay them - you write the book.” She then went on to tell me how that book, her first, helped her career skyrocket to the next level. I'm hoping I have the same experience when this book hits the shelves this fall.

From that first email, I could also tell that they [the publisher] had done a fair bit of research. I later found out they had looked at my website and many other adventure photographer's websites. In fact, this newsletter was a big factor in them approaching me because they could get a sense of my writing style. They had indeed read a few issues of this newsletter. In the end there were several factors that led them to me: my website was optimized for the search terms “adventure sports photographer”, my newsletters, the fact that I had shot a variety of adventure sports, not just one or two and of course the quality of my images. Looking back I found it interesting how they found me and why they chose me to write the book.

Now that the book is finished, I am happy to say that the publisher and my editor in particular, Matt Paden, was a joy to work with. Since Matt is also a climber we had plenty to talk about and he really invested a lot of time into this book working with me closely to make sure it is a top-notch offering. Even though, as I am sure you can surmise, it was a ton of work - it was also a good process that has helped expand my horizons to new and exciting sports (like surfing) and has really helped me think more critically about my own work. Having written the book, I have a much clearer idea of where I want to take my work in the future and those subjects that I really want to focus on as well. All in all, it has already worked out quite well and the book isn't even on the shelves yet.





A surfer catching a wave in the failing light at Bonzai Pipeline, on the north shore of Oahu.  
Nikon D700, ISO 200, Nikkor AF-S 200-400mm f/4 VR, Sandisk Extreme IV 8 GB CF Card