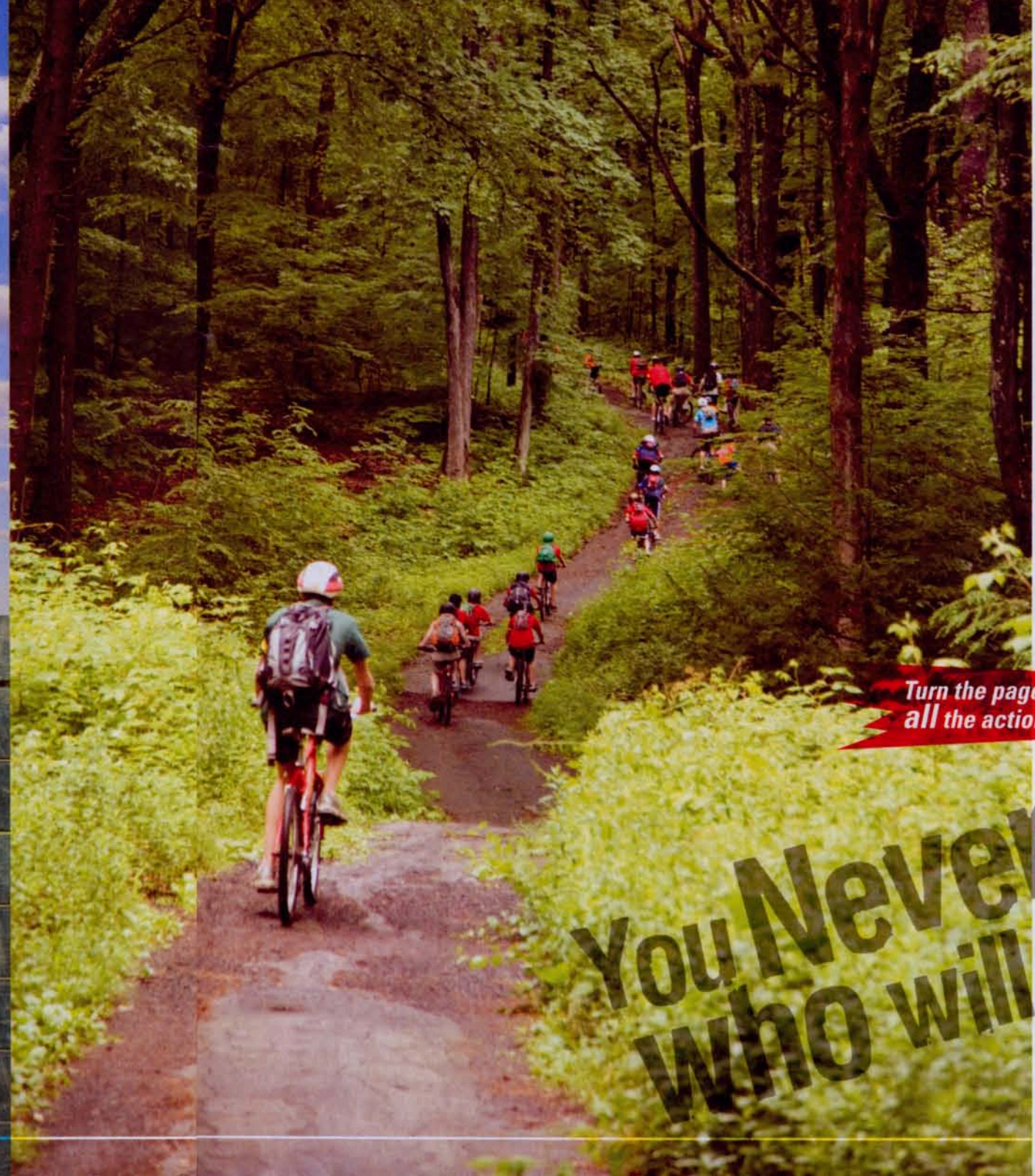
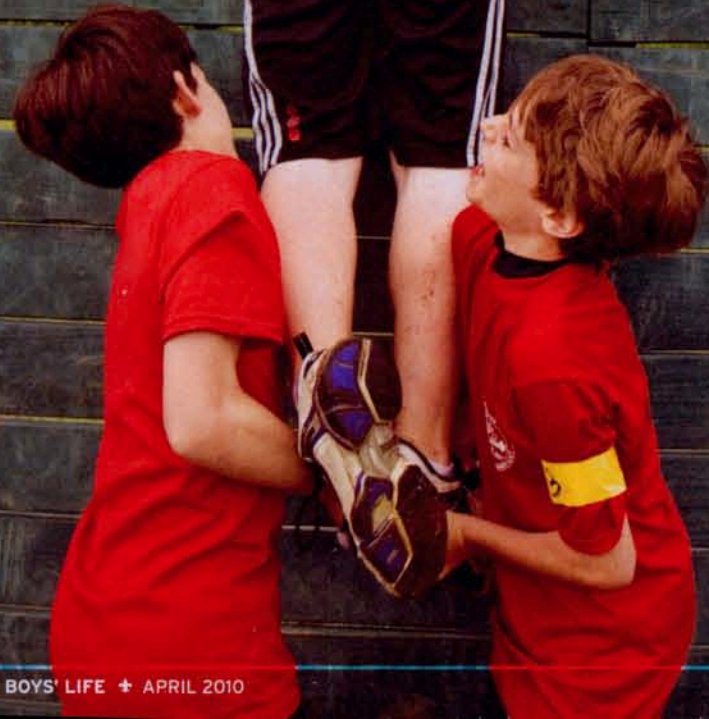
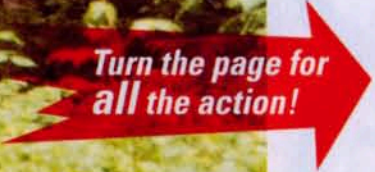


AMAZING RACE

By Caitlin Kelly
Photographs by Michael Eudenbach



Scouts compete in a **HIGH-ADVENTURE COMPETITION** that tests not only their **PHYSICAL SKILLS** but their **MENTAL MAKEUP**, too.



You Never know who will win.

A competition pitting Eagle Scouts against 11-year-olds — and the 11-year-olds actually have a chance?

That's the **Troop 175 Boy Scout Adventure Race**, held each June in Simsbury, Conn.

"What's surprising about this race is that the younger Scouts can do just as well as the older ones," says 13-year-old Star Scout Eric Barch. "For the past two years, teams with 11-year-olds on them have placed in the top three, so it really is about more than age or size."

"You never know who will win."

Troop 175's race pits Scout vs. Scout, in teams of three, over a fun and challenging 16-mile course that tests competitors not just physically but also mentally. Winners are selected both for straight time and corrected time, which adjusts the results based on the age of the competitors.

Sure, there's a **mountain-biking** event that requires leg muscles of steel, but there's also an **orienteeing** event that demands extensive knowledge of compass and map.

And while there is a **five-mile run**, there's also a **fire-building contest** that can mean the difference between first place and everybody else.



The race is more than **PHYSICAL CHALLENGES**. There's a lot of **PLANNING** and **THINKING**, too.

Kyle Harvey stays focused as he leads his team down the bike trail.

RACING FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Michael Bubnash, an Eagle Scout from Simsbury, faced the toughest challenge of all.

Home from his freshman year of college two years ago, he was in a car accident and suffered a serious brain injury. After a year's rehabilitation, his family needed more money to pay for his care.

Scouts from local troops 175, 174 and 76 raised more than \$30,000 for Michael and his family during the 2008 adventure race.

Last year, in addition to raising \$4,000 more for the Bubnashes, the Scouts brought in \$11,000 for the American Cancer Society and a local charity called Simsbury Families in Need.

Nicholas Carabillo (left) and John Cahill help teammate Justin Farrel over the wall.



Turn the page for **MORE** action!

START WITH A BANG

Each racer brings his own **lifejacket**, **mountain bike** and **helmet**, along with an **energy bar** and a **liter of water**. Team members must stay within 50 yards of one another at all times, so they truly are only as strong as their weakest member.

The first challenge: mountain biking. The four-mile trail across the Talcott Mountain ridgeline challenged Scouts to stay on their seats as they navigated rough terrain and a steep downhill.

"It was really exhilarating flying down the mountain, jumping off of roots and rocks," Eric says. "I hit a rock and my feet bounced off the pedals and I lost my balance for a second; just as I was regaining it, I grazed a tree. It jolted me off my seat and onto the ground."

"It was pretty funny."

No harm, no foul. Eric's teammates were close by, and he was back into the race in no time.

THE RIGHT IDEAS

After a compass course and short rappel, the teams had to cross an eight-foot climbing wall. Sure, it took strength to get over it, but the Scouts learned that the right strategy could shave precious seconds off their time.

"We thought the wall would be a place many other teams would struggle, so we decided to practice that many times (in advance)," says 17-year-old Eagle Scout Mike Vallen. "At first it took us about a minute and 30 seconds to get over the wall, but after some practice we were able to do it in nine seconds."

After a mandatory 15-minute rest, each team had to run five miles. It was



BRAINS VS. BRAWN

Some adventure races test competitors with events such as trail running, mountain biking, paddling and climbing. Others focus more on brain-power. Here are a few of the more popular ones:

BRAWN

Several of the more popular events around the United States:

PRIMAL QUEST. Five to 10 days. Location varies. In 2009 it took place in South Dakota's Black Hills and Badlands. Trekking, orienteering, mountain biking, paddling, caving, rock climbing, open-water swims. Minimum age: 18.

ODYSSEY ONE DAY ADVENTURE RACE. 24 hours. Roanoke, Va. Mountain biking, hiking, paddling. Minimum age is 16 and parental consent required if under 18.

THE YOUGH (PRONOUNCED YOCK) XTREME. 10 to 12 hours. Ohiopyle State Park, Pa. Mountain biking, trekking/orienteering, kayaking and rappelling. Minimum age: 16 for team; 13 for team with parent.

BRAINS

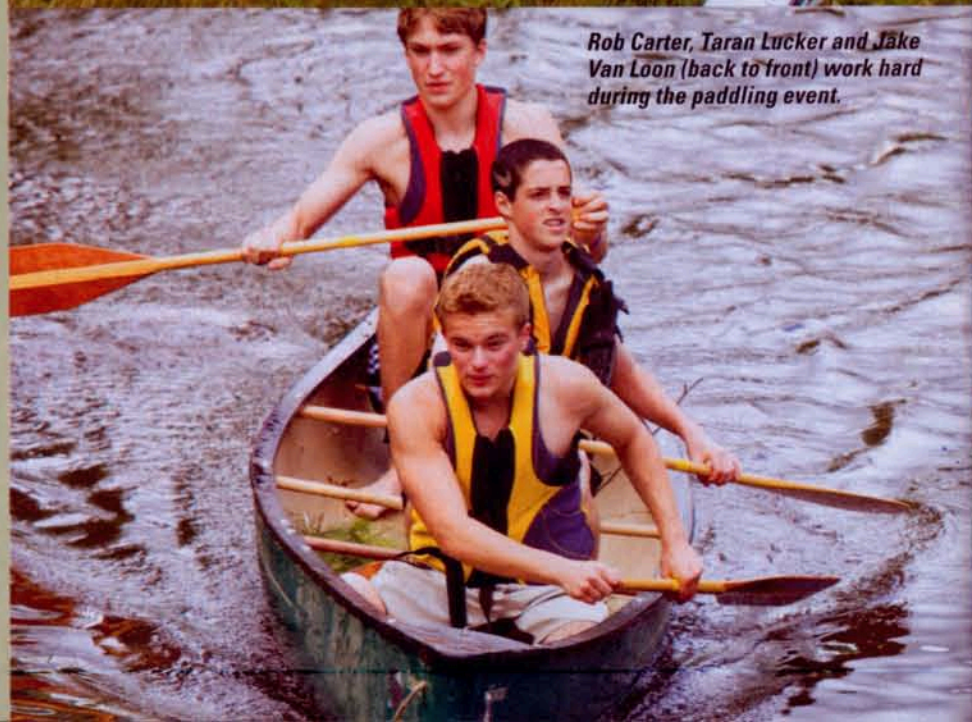
GREAT URBAN RACE. 22 cities; championship in November. Two-person teams. Family Division allows two-, three- or four-person teams. Solve 12 clues and complete tasks (e.g., find a \$2 bill, canoe to a buoy and back). Roughly six miles on your feet. Parental consent required if under 18.

HIGH TREK ADVENTURE. 21 cities; championship in November. Two-person teams solve clues (e.g., pop culture, math, anagrams) and complete challenges (e.g., bowling a strike, putting together a puzzle). Walking/running and public transportation allowed. Minimum age: 13 when accompanied by an adult.

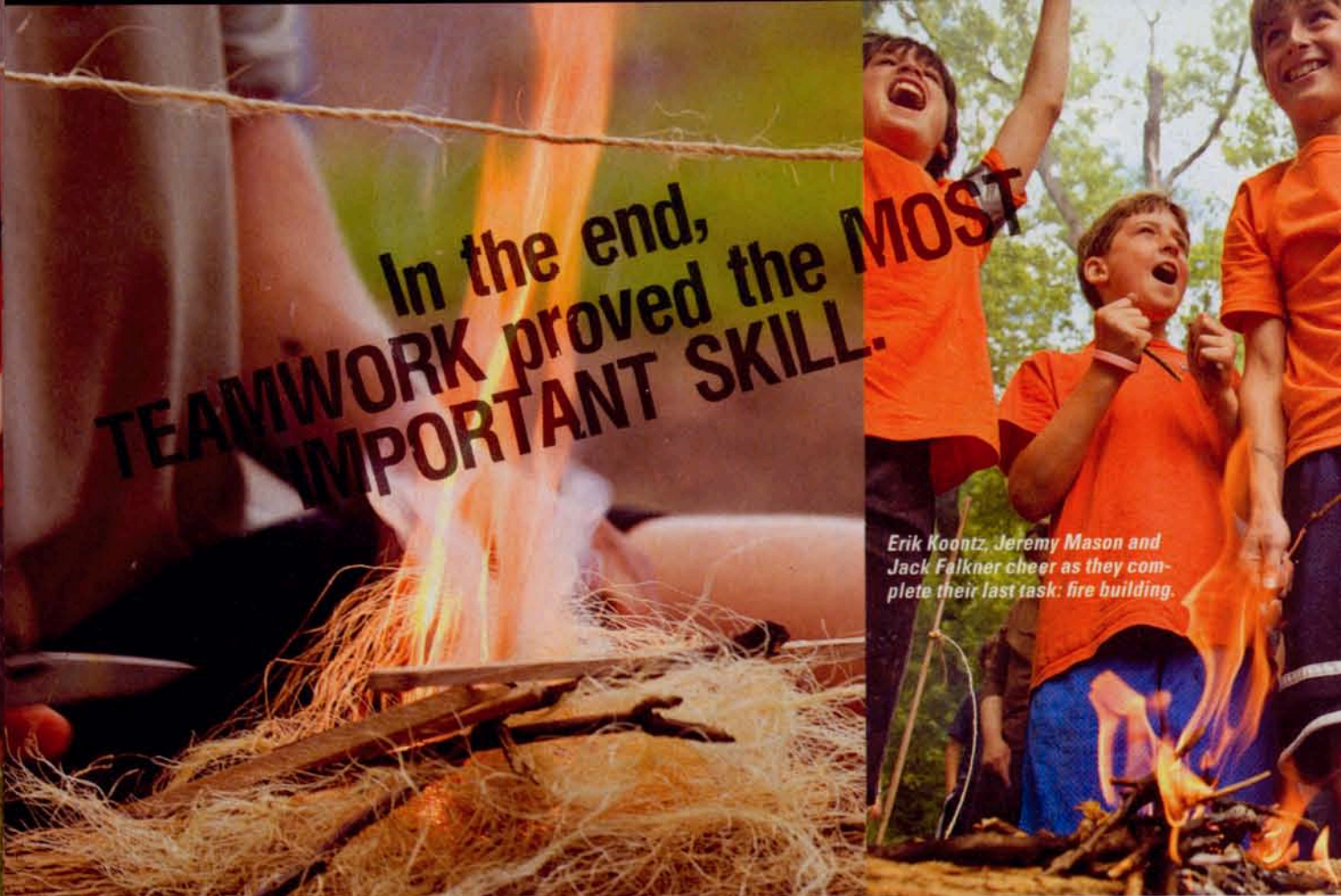
OYSTER RACING SERIES. 6 cities; no championship. Mandatory: running, biking. Possible activities: creeking/rafting, trekking, climbing, scootering/skating, navigation. Three-person teams or relays with three to six solve clues and complete tasks (e.g., find a specific flower in a rose garden, dive into an aquarium exhibit and retrieve an object). Roughly four to six hours. Minimum age: 12.

—Melanie Radzicki McManus

Keegan Rice, Lee Adamowicz and Mike Vallen (left to right) keep their team in first place during the running portion of the competition.



Rob Carter, Taran Luckner and Jake Van Loon (back to front) work hard during the paddling event.



Erik Koontz, Jeremy Mason and Jack Falkner cheer as they complete their last task: fire building.



Ross Harmon, Mark Gschwind and Will Oliver create a spark to get their fire going at the end of the race.

a physical test, for sure, but the Scouts found that support from their teammates is crucial when they need speed.

"I was running with two amazing athletes," says 14-year-old Star Scout Keegan Rice. "They were both a lot older, stronger and really good Scouts.

"They let me set the pace, and I did not want to let them down. I ran the fastest I ever had for those five miles."

FIRE STARTERS

After another required 15-minute rest period, the Scouts tackled the canoeing challenge, navigating their way down the narrow, winding Farmington River. Anybody who's been canoeing knows that technique is just as important as upper-body strength.

"Canoeing was the easiest, because we got to take breaks," Eric says. "We decided that one person would paddle in front and one in back while the middle person rested. When someone got tired, we could switch positions."

The final test, Trial by Fire, required the Scouts to build a fire that could burn completely through a piece of string,

using only supplies found along the river, usually without matches. It was fitting that this adventure race should end with such a mental challenge.

"We learned how to use flint and steel very efficiently so we could light our tinder in one to three strikes," says Eric, whose team took second place. "A few teams who were in front of us couldn't get their fires started, and if we hadn't gotten ours going and burned through the rope so fast, they definitely would have beaten us. The fire-building can really make or break the race."

In the end, teamwork proved the most important skill. The teams that worked in advance on skills such as orienteering, climbing and fire-starting were the teams that were able to make up for any time they lost during the footrace and mountain-biking challenges.

"We all had to rely on each other to do our jobs, especially in parts that required different tasks from each teammate," says Eric. "The race is more than physical challenges. There's a lot of planning and thinking, too." ♦