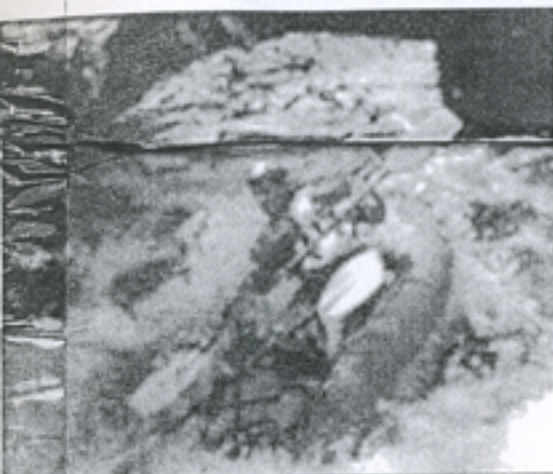




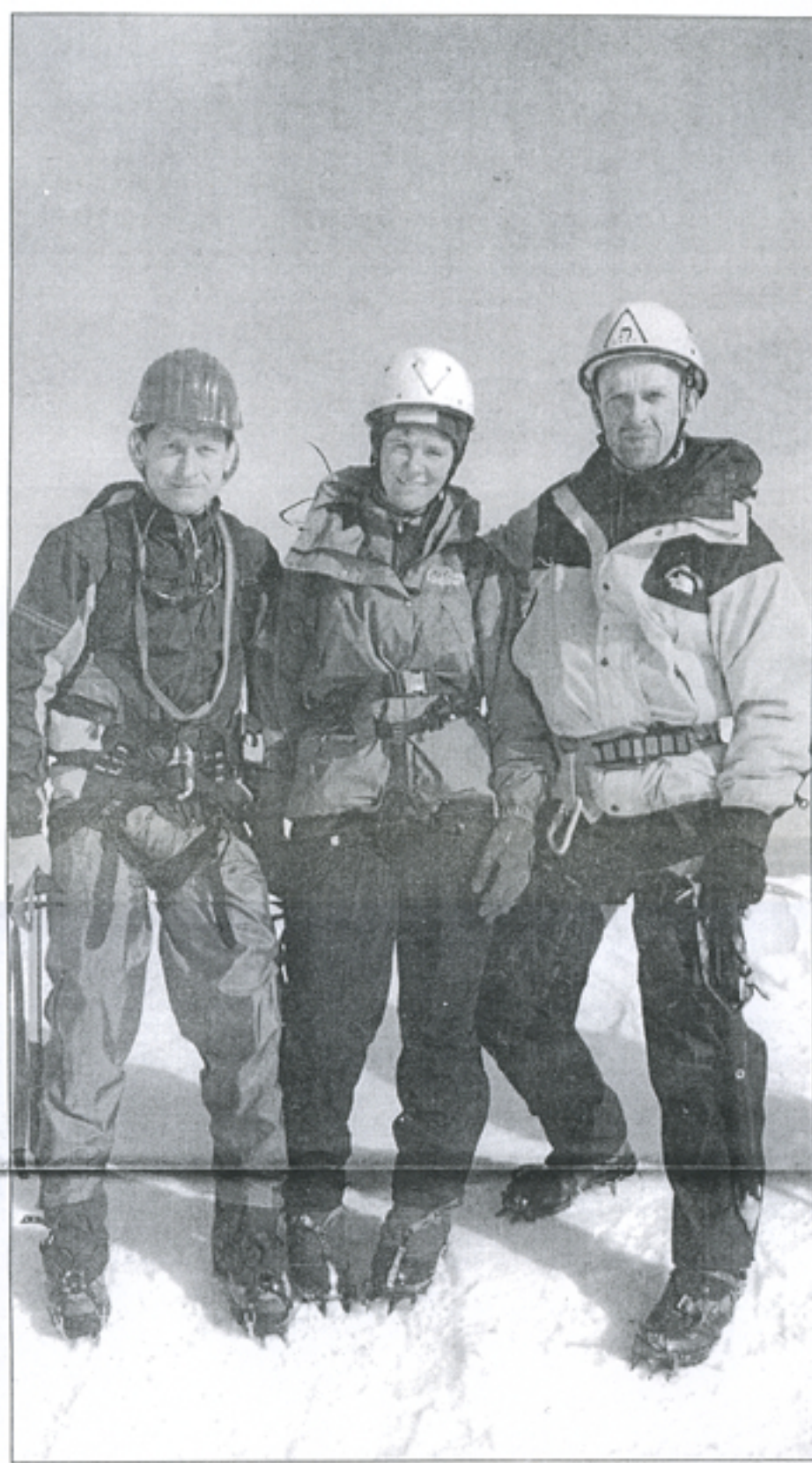
TOUGH: Mountains and glaciers will be a tough obstacle



SCENIC: Patagonia's lakes are beautiful but deadly



HIGH TIDE: Kayaking on dangerous waters



TOPS: Cross-border team, from left, Noel Hanna, Ursula McPherson and Fraser Crawford

What Noel will face in Patagonia and the skills his team will require to survive

Mountaineering

PATAGONIA'S mountains are rugged, glaciated, bushy, and steep with extreme changes in weather and wind. On this course there are elevation gains of up to 2,500m in one push with over 8,000m elevation gain total.

The course is located in the Andes Mountains. The mountains include all the terrain and weather conditions commonly found in most alpine countries of the northerly and southerly latitudes, for example, the French, Swiss, Italian Alps, New Zealand Alps, Western Canada, North Western United States and Alaska.

Solid mountaineering skills are required to start, finish, and survive this year's course.

These skills include navigation, survival skills, avalanche safety and survival, glacier travel, crevasse rescue, fixed rope ascending, and general mountain sense.



UPHILL: Mountaineering skills are essential

Lake Kayaking and Whitewater Canoeing

BOTH the lake kayaking and whitewater canoeing sections of the race require that each competitor knows how to swim.

All competitors will take a simple swim test at registration. If they do not pass the swim test, they will not be allowed to do any of the water portions of the race course.

There are many beautiful lakes in Patagonia. The conditions on some of the lakes can resemble open ocean at times with swells of up to six feet, white caps and strong winds. Competitors must be strong paddlers.

The water temperature is 6°C (43°F). The river is primarily class III with some class IV rapids. The race will be done during the end of the Argentinean spring, so the water level will depend on the fallen snow during the winter. With a high water level, the class IV rapids are strong enough to flip a 14 foot raft.

At this time of year, the water temperature is about 6-8°C. Competitors will be using two person, self-bailing inflatable canoes.

Competitors must be able to do river swimming and signalling, self rescue, recovery from a flip and know to repair a damaged inflatable boat.



SADDLED UP: The team will encounter rough terrain

Horse Riding

COMPETITORS will ride through the vast Patagonia land, where the Andes mountains turn gradually into the meseta (plateau).

This type of terrain is ideal for riding because of the mixture of desert and mountains.

The route will travel through cattle ranches, across rocky stream beds and through flat grassland.

There are very few trees, only low bushes on the pampas. There are seabirds, wild geese, hares, rock squirrels, armadillos, guanacos (a type of llama) and Patagonian ostriches on this section of the race course.

Competitors will be riding Criollo horses, which are the standard breed of the Patagonian region. This breed of horse is good natured and relatively tame. Competitors must know how to saddle and unsaddle a horse, recognise an injury to a horse or if it has a sore back and use a hoof pick.

Patagonia chosen for its rugged landscape and extreme weather

ECO-CHALLENGE started in 1995 in Utah, USA and was quickly followed by events in Australia, Morocco and British Columbia.

Patagonia was picked for this year's challenge for its rapidly changing landscape and extreme weather conditions.

A Mountain Guide team was sent out earlier in the year for 30 days of in-depth ground testing of every kilometre.

They discovered ice-capped 3,500m peaks, 1,000 metre waterfalls and hidden crevasses.

The land changes from Alpine to Pampas in only 40 kilometres.

"It is through deprivation in truly wild places that each of us finds our own essence." - Mark Burnett, Founder of Eco-Challenge

extreme physical terrain. Patagonia is also known for its rapidly changing weather conditions where severe storms can strike with little warning.

The famous Patagonian wind can be so strong that it can make it impossible to move forward at all.

Mark Burnett, the organiser and founder of Eco-challenge, said: "An expedition race should always be hard because it is through deprivation in

truly wild places that each of us finds our own essence.

"As much as all the competitors are cursing me at least once during an Eco-Challenge, they are equally thanking me after the race for designing a course that took them to places within themselves they never knew existed.

"Ours is the only race in the world that allows both mountaineering progression 24 hours per

day."

Competitors will ride on Criollo horses across wide open pampas.

They will navigate using map and compass across the harsh and majestic windswept terrain of the Andes mountains utilising their crampons and ice axes on the glaciers and a 12,000 ft. mountain.

They will also navigate dense bamboo forests, grapple down sheer rock

faces, large waterfalls and use fixed ropes to ascend majestic granite spires, which tower over the terrain in Patagonia.

They will paddle in sea kayaks along enormous aquamarine lakes and use inflatable canoes to negotiate glacier-fed rivers with natural obstacles of small waterfalls and class IV rapids.

Said Mark: "As with all my courses there is adequate time to progress methodically, sleep enough and still make it to the finish line before the final cut off."

But he added: "I have simply words of advice. Prepare well. There are those who think they know it all. Trust me, they don't."