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**WHAT HAVE I SIGNED UP FOR? CONFESSIONS OF A WOULD-BE GI JANE.**

**A blog post written Anne-Marie Sorrenti, talking about her thoughts and feelings as she prepared herself for an Expedition to climb the tallest mountain in Antarctica.**

Having signed up for the TPL Antarctica Expedition last April in a moment of what felt a little like divine inspiration (or perhaps sheer insanity), the question “What next?” slowly made its way to the forefront of my mind. It felt like I was about to do something very cool but slightly crazy.

*What had I committed to?*

*What had we all committed to?*

A grueling expedition to a very very cold place with a team of civilians and soldiers united on a mission to climb a mountain of snow and ice. Why? To raise funds and awareness for veterans’ issues and transition programs. But how would we prepare for such an endeavour?

I am a dedicated fitness enthusiast and a proponent of healthy, goal-driven living, but GI Jane I am not and will likely never be. And I would be joining a few real GI Janes on trip. Talk about intimidating! Enter Brendan Fox, MedCan’s Head Trainer and Team Lead. As a civilian team member I have had the opportunity to consult with Brendan on a monthly basis in a distance training program to prepare for Antarctica. He is a fantastic resource. I have dubbed him the ‘Body Imbalance Whisperer’. He found problems in my biomechanics and alignment that I never even knew existed, and with a little help from a lacrosse ball (yes folks – ONLY a lacrosse ball will do the trick – it is just the right size and firmness) and a few exercises to get me going, I was on my way. These are not just any exercises, however. They have great names like “The Elvis Pelvis,” “Shoulder Saviour,” “The Glute, the Bad and the Ugly,” and most recently, “Stairwell to Heaven” (this last involves stair interval training with a heavy pack that is only to be undertaken while listening to Led Zeppelin). Before I knew it I was doing pushups with 35 extra pounds on my back in between powering up and down the stairs from the basement to the third floor. The kids started asking questions. What’s wrong with Mom? She’s acting kind of weird with the pack and the stairs and the one-armed pushups (OK that’s a lie) and all that classic rock blaring through the house. And she doesn’t make our breakfast anymore. We have to fend for ourselves. She says it’s good for our character development.

Earlier this summer, I agreed to go on a training hike with Geordie Young, a civilian team member with an incredibly impressive resume: élite hockey player, Harvard Astrophysicist, Stanford MBA, and Bay Street star. But wait, there is more! He has also undergone an über-intense US Navy Seal training program. So I get the email with the plan: we would meet at 8pm on Saturday July 18 in a parking lot 50km outside of Toronto for a 7 hour hike. Did I read that correctly? Come again? PM not AM? On a Saturday*night*? 7 hours? Yes, he answered. We would probably wrap up around 3 or 3:30AM.  I was the only taker. It sounded like a hazing ritual to me, but off I went into the eye of a hot, humid, mosquito-infested midsummer’s nightmare. Joseph Conrad, eat your dark heart out!

While this hike did not give me a taste of the extreme cold that we would experience in Antarctica, it was an exercise in tolerating high levels of discomfort. Despite ensuing aches and pains and fatigue (not to mention 50 or so mosquito bites on my backside), the walk was surprisingly peaceful and steady and measured. It made me realize how different it is to walk uphill with a heavy pack, than to sprint up without extra weight to carry. And the night’s exertions proved Brendan correct – latent alignment problems come to the surface when you add weight, hills, and long hours to the mix. The walk with Geordie was purposeful and challenging, but just a small taste, an *amuse bouche*, compared to the endurance levels that will be required of us by January.

We have our work cut out for us. And the training camp on the Athabasca Glacier in Alberta is just around the corner.

* *Anne-Marie Sorrenti, Civilian Team Member*

http://tplexpedition.com/blog/page/12/