



Athlete Team Profile: Team Illinois



(Pictured l to r: Joel Burrows, Nancy Fudacz-Burrow, Dave Kuhnau)

The Power of Team

The Power of Team is the title of a new book detailing the adventures of Team Illinois, the first team to complete and take first place in three out of four *Racing the Planet* desert races (Gobi, Chile, Sahara, and Antarctica).

However, it also perfectly captures the exceptional accomplishments and outlook of three amazing athletes—Joel Burrows,

Team Results – Racing the Planet

Gobi Desert March, China, 1st

Atacama Crossing, Chile, 4th

Sahara Race, Egypt, 1st

The Last Desert, Antarctica, 1st

Nancy Fudacz-Burrows, and Dave Kuhnau from Chicago, Illinois—who spent 2.5 years and traveled more than 600 miles in their quest to become champions.

In their new book, *The Power of TEAM*, Joel, Nancy, and Dave share their triumphs, struggles, experiences and hard-learned lessons during the most physically grueling and emotionally gut wrenching moments of the race series. Currently, Joel, Nancy, and Dave are conducting seminars throughout the U.S. based on their experiences. Later this summer, they will host “Train to Race,” a weekend-long training event that will offer advice and training recommendations for athletes wishing to compete in 4Deserts 2008.

During their training of and participation in the 4Desert races, Joel and Nancy Burrows and Dave were also big consumers of Elete Electrolyte Add-In™.



Recently, Joel Burrows shared with us his team's experience during the 2005 4Desert Series and their experience using Elete Pure Electrolyte Add-In™

Please give us a brief background about the Racing the Planet series and Team Illinois?

"Racing the Planet is a series of 150-mile races. There are four races and they are done in Chile, China, Egypt, and Antarctica. Each race involves seven days of racing with the long stage taking up to 48 hours. The shortest day of racing is approximately 10 miles; the longest day could be 50 to 60 miles. The deserts selected for the racing series are selected for the unique physical challenges they pose to challengers. The desert considered the highest and driest is the Atacama in Chile, the windiest is the Gobi in China, the hottest is the Sahara in Egypt, and the coldest is Antarctica.

Team Illinois is the only team to complete all four races, and we won as the overall team champs in three of the four races.

Team Illinois began in Chicago. We all participated in the same running club. Nancy and I have been married seven years. We met at work (we both work at the East Bank Club in Chicago) when Nancy was looking for someone to run a marathon with her. Since then, we have run every kind of race from 5ks to regular triathlons, Ironmans, and progressed to ultra-distance runs over the years. We met our other teammate, Dave Kuhnau, when he signed up for an Ironman race in Lake Placid. The three of us spent a bunch of time together prior to the race and became friends. We competed in another Ironman event and became great, close friends.

Around this time, Nancy had been on the hunt for a new and different event. She came across a *Runner's World* article on the Gobi Desert. She told me, "This is what I'd like to do." We saw that there was a team division in the event; however, we needed to find a third person. We kept thinking about who we could include, someone who could invest the time and effort into training plus who could also financially afford to cover the costs involved in the event, and we came up with Dave. Nancy approached Dave at the East Bank Club, he gave his commitment, and within a week Team Illinois was formed. We began training and raced a couple of marathons together as a "team."

In the beginning we didn't really know what we were getting into. With the Racing the Planet series, you have to carry all of your gear—your sleeping bag, clothing, food, water, etc. Before, we'd only trained with packs weighing from 20 lbs. to 30 lbs. We had to get used to training, racing, and running with the provisions and gear we would require throughout each race."

What drives you to participate in ultra-endurance racing events?

"We talk about this in the book, but we all come from different backgrounds, we have differing athletic goals, aspirations, experiences, etc. As a team, you're able to harness those things. Each event, you always run as a team.

During these ultra-endurance events, I guarantee—it always happens—you find your own personal hell in the middle of the event. You have a moment when you're completely beaten down and you draw on the strength of your team and mates and you're able to go on to the next level.



One of the things we talk about in the book is that during the Race the Planet series, we watched a lot of teams self-destruct. It became more about the individuals on the team and they put that in front of everything else. For us, we don't operate that way. The team aspect is more important than the individual aspect.

Our big message to others is that when you commit to being on a team, no matter what happens—good or bad—the team is the most important thing. During the races, we'd come across other competitors who'd been abandoned by their teammates, we'd stop and take care of them, make sure they were okay. But it was surprising and shocking to see how common it was for other teams to sacrifice a teammate's well-being to reach for personal accolades. “

What is your typical training regimen for such a grueling event?

“We all utilize different methods, and we admit that we made mistakes. When we first started training for the series, we were running over 100 miles—on the road. Then we realized it's not about how fast you run, but how consistent you are. So, there were learning curves like that that we had to go through.

For me, I run, but I also do a lot of strength training during the week. I recommend runners do a lot of strength training. Nancy runs the Aerobics and Performance departments at East Bank, so she teaches a lot of classes and cross trains a lot. Dave is the biggest member of the team. At one point, he weighed 270 pounds. So for him, running became a better lifestyle and a better life. Dave has an amazing story. Nancy is the heart of the team, Dave is the soul, and I am more of the strength of the

team. But, the roles all interchange as the race goes on.”

What is the biggest factor in terms of winning an endurance race?

“A few things. First, we're all Ironman triathletes. We're used to running into several obstacles. That said, first, there's the total body breakdown. You go into the race feeling strong, feeling good, peaked, ready to complete and compete the event. But nothing, and I mean, nothing prepares for 140-degree heat, carrying a 30 lb.-backpack on your back when your feet are completely blistered and your shoulders are chafed.

You know you're going to fall apart during an event. It just happens. You reach that point, but it's all about how you put yourself back together. Team Illinois' motto is the Three Musketeers' motto, “One for all and all for one.” Nancy always had problems with dehydration and vomiting. She always fought through it. We called it the “puke and rally” point. In Egypt, Dave and I got really sick and had to sit under a rock overhang. At that point, Nancy was the one who had to urge us on.

We were usually the only co-ed team competing in the 4 Deserts Series. In the Sahara race, there were only male teams, and one of them had just come off of a major win in China. During the first day of the Sahara race, we pushed the pace as hard as possible. But, interestingly, all of the teams in that race self-destructed. It was more about the individuals than the team for them. By the end of the third day, we were the only team. We finished and won that race and went on to win Antarctica.”



How did you find ELETE Add-In™?

“As triathletes, we used other electrolyte products and salt pills. But no matter what we used, Nancy was very prone to vomiting and dehydration. So, we were always on the lookout for a new product. I was looking through a magazine when I saw an ad for Elete Electrolyte Add-In™. None of the running stores in Chicago carried the product; I logged on to the Elete web site, and contacted the company who sent us some product to try.

What we really like about Elete Electrolytes™ is that we can put it right into our Camelbaks™, it didn't leave a funky flavor, and we continued to stay hydrated.

In these endurance running events, you don't worry about hyponatremia because you are always in a state of dehydration. Every 10k or so, you hit a checkpoint and can refill with up to 1.5 liters of water. You get a limited amount of water rationed to you for the event so you don't want to waste any of it unnecessarily. We would use Elete Add-In™ in our Camelbaks™ and water bottles.”

Tell us a little about your experience using ELETE in training and competition.

“One of the specific things that didn't happen with Elete Add-In™ that does commonly happen with salt tablets is that salt tabs give you those white streaks. I didn't notice that with Elete. Plus, the benefit of Elete electrolytes comes from the fact you can continue to drink throughout an event and replace what you're losing.”

For the average person who doesn't participate in ultra-endurance and marathon events, what advice would you give them?

“Everything is achievable. I'm a big advocate of getting up, getting out and moving. Be self-propelled, but set realistic goals. You can't go 0 to 60 in one day. It's going to take patience and time to put it together, but with formulation and a plan, everything is achievable.

I recommend Elete Add-In™ to my friends as well as to the athletes I coach. I have carried Elete Electrolyte Add-In™ through triathlons and ultra races for the last two years. Not only has it helped me, but I have given it to other athletes I am racing with, and I have watched it benefit them as well.





Although Dave, Nancy, and I are garage-sale athletes, and I say that term and mean it with all affection, we don't have a professional contract, we haven't raked in millions of dollars, but we've worked extremely hard to get where we are.

We really believed in ourselves and the goals we had created as a team. We battled high-altitude issues, incredible winds, hellish heat, frigid cold, blisters, chafe, dehydration, weight loss, etc. As awful as that may sound, it has been the adventure of our lifetimes.

It has made us appreciate the good things to a greater degree, and we have learned that some of the bad things aren't as awful as we may have first believed. Things are all relative to the situation you are in. Let the past be your guide, live for the moment, and always look to the future."

Note: *The Power of TEAM—The True Life Story of Team Illinois*, author Peter Wortham, is available through Fire and Ice Media (ISBN: 9781434305589). The book can be purchased online at <http://www.authorhouse.com>.

For more information, go to:

<http://www.authorhouse.com/BookStore/ItemDetail-bookid~44537.aspx>

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