



29 August 2016

To new extremes in 2017

The first and oldest multisport race in Scandinavia – a “paddle-run-bike” event in the majestic mountain town of Åre, Sweden – has new leadership: a passionate endurance athlete with a global multisport network and a military man that understands the logistical and safety challenge involved in getting 600 racers through rapids, mountains, and trails. The new ‘Director Duo’ of Scott Cole and Henrik Weile – both from Jämtland – share a common vision on how to lift this race to another level.

“The event is clearly a winning concept, but we see room for improvement,” says Henrik, originally from Denmark and the behind-the-scenes race manager for the last 12 years. “We want more people to know this race exists, to experience the amazing landscape and challenging terrain, and to test themselves in this classic contest of ‘man vs. nature.’”

Scott, an American who moved to Sweden in 2005 and an 8-time HÅEC competitor, agrees. “As a racer the landscape and competition has been the primary motivator for me. But I’ve always been inspired by the atmosphere in Åre’s town square: the fast transition from paddle to run in the early morning and then, several hours later, the finish line where racers collapse exhausted but content. It’s a real energizing atmosphere!”

The Haglöfs Åre Extreme Challenge (HÅEC) attracts over 600 elite and recreational athletes each year. Just as their predecessors Mats and Natasha Skott, Scott and Henrik will maintain the “tried and true” original race format, but they also have exciting plans to increase the number of participants and make the Solo class more attractive.

The ‘Danish-American’ team see real growth potential. “The Duo and Relay classes are popular, not least because they give participants a chance to test the course before ‘taking the leap’ into the Solo class [where competitors complete the entire course by themselves],” says Henrik.

Scott, who won the race in 2012 and is no stranger to the podium in the Solo class, agrees: “We really want to focus on making the Solo class more prestige-filled and accessible to recreational athletes and ‘weekend warriors.’ My goal is to have several hundred Solo competitors in their kayaks warming up under the awe-inspiring Tännforsen waterfall. This race is called “extreme” for a reason, but I feel that too many people have undue fears of the whitewater and lake paddling or mistakenly believe they must be in ‘perfect fitness’ to stand on the start line. This race is for anybody who wants to see what they’re capable of – not just elite athletes.”

Scott wants to leverage his multisport network to help showcase the inspiring course to the world and to entice sports journalist to write about the unique nature in Northern Sweden. “I want to see more of the world’s elite athletes from places like New Zealand, Australia, USA, Germany and elsewhere. I want to see our neighbors from Denmark, Norway, and Finland. And I really want to see more women participate.”



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What other tricks does this duo have up their sleeves? "Actually quite a few, but we can't take credit for all of them," laughs Henrik. "We received great feedback from racers through our on-line survey in July and we're going to summarize the more promising ones via Facebook."

After so many years of racing at HÅEC, many are wondering what it will feel like for Scott to stand on the other side. "Actually, I won't know. I plan to keep racing. I just hope I can make it another 20 years – but I know I'll never outlive this great event!"

The 21st annual event, which is always held the weekend after midsummer (1st of July 2017), will open for registration at 21.00 on the 21th of September 2016 at areextremechallenge.se.

About Haglöfs Åre Extreme Challenge (HÅEC)

The Open European Championship in Multisport attracts recreational and elite athletes from around the world. The original 1996 course remains intact, demonstrating the "staying power" of the event. Competitors can select:

- Solo class: An individual completes the whole course: paddling, running, and cycling.
- Duo class: Two individuals complete the whole course together, side-by-side. Final time is based on the last person to cross the line.
- Team class: Three individuals complete the course separately, with one paddling, one running, and one cycling. The "baton" is passed in the two transition areas.

The race includes three legs:

- Kayak: 25 km whitewater & lake kayaking from Tännforsen to Åre's town square (Solo class) or 18 km of lake kayaking (Duo/Relay). Wind & water levels make this section unpredictable.
- Run: 15 km mountain running from Åre's town square (400 m) to the top of Åreskutan (1420 m) and down to Huså. Technical and steep, racers are exposed to the elements on the summit.
- Cycling: 35 km mountain bike from Huså back to Åre's town square through forests, over challenging climbs, and on technical single-track trails. Don't expect much asphalt.

About Scott and Henrik

Besides training and racing in multisport events around the world, **Scott** has a Ph.D. in environmental economics and runs his own consulting business, EnviroEconomics Sweden. He also works as a coach and inspirational speaker. Read more at scottcole.se.

After almost 20 years as a career officer in the Royal Danish Navy, in which he was commanding officer under various posts, **Henrik** moved with his family to Åre where they now live and train in the Swedish hills. Henrik has significant experience in organizing and implementing race events in both Denmark and Sweden and works today as manager for a large retail store on the border with Norway.



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