

dynamic duo or dynamic duel?

ADVENTURE RACING WOMEN
ROBYN BENINCASA AND
CATHY SASSIN

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Her face blistered, her lips cracked and bleeding, American Robyn Benincasa takes the last few labored steps to the summit of Cotopaxi, an active volcano in Ecuador that arches to 19,347 feet. Reaching the summit of this mountain is a feat few humans can claim. Compound this with the reality that Benincasa is climbing it midway through the fabled Raid Gauloises, a week-long 350-mile race, which includes trekking, canoeing, sea kayaking, and mountain biking, and you begin to understand a higher level of toughness, a pain threshold bordering on paranormal. Talk about your clutch performance. Hours earlier she had learned that neither John Howard, Kiwi adventure



racing legend, nor her teammate Robert Nagle would be able to continue to the summit. This meant for her team to remain ranked, she had to summit. "I got on my knees and prayed," says Benincasa. It seems to have worked. She reached the summit with Ian Adamson and Steve Gurney, in what Benincasa describes as "the hardest thing I have ever done." After making the summit, she and her Salomon/Eco-Internet teammates continued a grueling duel to the finish with the formidable Spie Batignolles, anchored by American Cathy Sassin.

Sleep-deprived Cathy Sassin has demons of her own. Grinding it out, trading leads periodically with Salomon/Eco-Internet, she steers her bike through torturous miles in the dark Ecuadorian night, her headlamp feebly rigged to the handlebars. She pedals violently to keep up with her male teammates—European mountain

Robyn Benincasa (L) and Cathy Sassin share a friendly moment prior to the 1994 Raid Gauloises tryouts.