



ROBYN BENINCASA

Adventure Athlete,
Judo Champion

PRAY THAT BENINCASA NEVER TAKES A liking to *your* sport. In the last five years, the 31-year-old firefighter from Solana Beach, California, has become the toast of the zestfully masochistic world of adventure racing, first as the star of an all-woman team that famously outlasted a squad of Navy SEALs at the 1994 Raid Gauloises, and more recently having been picked to fill the female slot on a team that's swept the Eco-Challenge and the X Games two years running. But apparently joining the world's elite in a single sport isn't enough for the 5-foot-7, 156-pound Benincasa: Four years ago she decided to try her hand at judo, and predictably, last May she won the U.S. national championship. But even more fun than winning the title, she says, is training with—and beating the tar out of—would-be tough guys. “These 200-pound men think they’re going to take me, and they can’t,” she says with a chuckle. “But every once in a while I throw them a bone and let ’em pin me.”

How did Benincasa become the bully of her proverbial schoolyard? She credits a workout routine that includes 90-minute weight sessions twice a week and at least one daily aerobic stint of anywhere from one and a half to five hours. Oh, yeah, then there are also the judo workouts: two hours apiece, three times a week. And oops, almost forgot, there's a little something extra on Tuesdays: a hilly, 12-mile run at race pace with triathletes Paula Newby-Fraser, Greg Welch, and Scott Tinley, followed immediately by a stair session in which she runs 125 steps at least 40 times, first touching each, then skipping a step, and finally hopping up on one leg. “My friends call me the human cockroach,” she says by way of explanation. “I guess the idea is that if there were ever a nuclear war, I’d be the one left standing.” —C.J.

