

DAILY BRIEFING

A QUICK GUIDE TO TODAY'S SUN-TIMES

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But Massachusetts senator still leading the pack of Democratic presidential hopefuls.

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You won't realize how much you've missed Richard Hatch until you see him Sunday night. **Page 47**

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Debra Pickett works on weights as she prepares for a trip to Africa that will include climbing the continent's highest mountain, Kilimanjaro. —JEAN LACHAT/SUN-TIMES

Preparing for Africa trip is a workout

"I hate her," I thought, as Ann demonstrated the most efficient way to pack a duffel bag. Two months before we were set to leave for Africa, all her gear was neatly organized and stored in those little canvas-and-net packing cubes. Also, all her climbing clothes were cute and fashionable, especially the pale green down jacket that looks awesome on her because she's tall and thin but would make me look like an unripe grape.

Later, I couldn't help noticing the way her husband, Jay, managed to drop the terms "Denali" and "ski patrol" into conversation more often than seemed absolutely necessary. Although, to be fair, we were talking about snow-capped mountains.

It seemed, when our group first came together in Ann and Jay's gorgeous South Loop loft, that I would not fit in. Linda had ridden her bike across Wisconsin. Christa mentioned her fondness for "adventure travel." Sam laughed about how, the last time she was in Africa, she lost her brush and didn't get the knots out of her hair for two months. I just looked down at my manicure and tried to remember the last time I stayed in a less-than-three-star hotel. The sum total of my camping experience is an overnight hike in New Jersey when I was 13.

I am, as my friends delicately put it when I told them about my travel plans, "not really the outdoorsy type."

But, after eight weeks of hard-core training, I am ready to take on Mt. Kilimanjaro. I've been working out for almost two hours a day: lifting weights, climbing imaginary stairs and running uphill while wearing a 20-pound pack on my back. I am, without a doubt, in the best physical condition of my life.

I am also scared out of my mind.

It's the goat that gets me

The 10 Chicagoans I'm accompanying on this trip — two weeks in Africa with a six-day attempt to climb "Kili," as I like to call the mountain when I want to sound like it doesn't intimidate me — are going for the excitement and the adventure of it all. But they are also doing it as a way to raise money and bring attention to the

In Africa, of course, a goat is a source of protein.

Nature girl

My main goal, when we tour the orphanages, is not to weep. If I can also find the strength to get out my camera and my notebook and find a way to tell the story, I hope to do that as well. But I don't know of an emotional work-out routine that can get me ready for that.

So, instead, I've focused on the things I can handle. I cut my nails extra-short so I won't have to worry about breaking them. I've devised a strategy for managing my hair during the week I won't be able to wash it. I've copied Ann's packing method and practiced rolling up my sleeping bag into a basketball-sized lump.

I am, in short, learning how to be low-maintenance, if not actually outdoorsy. I've seen enough of "Survivor" to know that there is at least one princess in every group. And I'm determined not to be her.

With two weeks to go before our departure, the group got together again. Since our first meeting, I'd been eagerly courting all the "adventure travel" experts I could find and soliciting their advice. I'd learned how to keep my stuff dry in the rain forest (garbage bags and Ziplocs); where to buy extra memory for my digital camera (Costco); which drugs to take ("Try to get the doctor to prescribe you some codeine"), and how to handle my, um, waste in an environmentally appropriate fashion.

There wasn't a quiz.

But my traveling companions did figure out how seriously I've been taking my trip preparations. They watched as I inhaled four servings of dinner, a sure sign that I'd been sticking to the rigorous strength-training regimen we'd discussed at our first meeting.

They were impressed. I was relieved.

Now, all I have to do is find a way to prepare myself for the really hard part.

DEBRA PICKETT



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plight of the 13 million African children who have been orphaned by the AIDS pandemic. Each of them has gathered at least \$5,000 in pledges to Global Alliance for Africa, a nonprofit group dedicated to providing care and education for AIDS orphans.

As part of the trip, we'll be visiting some of their facilities, including the Good Samaritan orphanage in the slums of Nairobi.

"The kids there don't have a lot of meat in their diet," said Tom Derdak, Global Alliance's founder, "so, while we're there, we'll treat them to a nyama choma — a roasted goat dinner."

Until that point, I'd been focused on all the physical details of getting ready for the trip: exercising, buying gear, getting vaccinated. But, right then, the emotional side of what we'll be doing almost knocked me right over.

Because my first thought was: Oh, the poor little goat.

I've lived an amazingly easy, pampered life. By African standards, we all have.

It's hard to even conceive of living without running water, electricity, food and medical care. It's harder still for me to get my mind around the idea of 13 million orphaned children.

In my spoiled, Western way of thinking, a goat is a cute little animal that comes up and eats from your hand at the petting zoo.

WEATHER



Today: Variably cloudy, brisk and cold. Highs of 4 above zero, lows at 5 below zero. **Saturday:** Mostly cloudy and cold. Highs in the upper teens, lows in the low teens. **Sunday:** Mostly cloudy with a chance for snow. Highs in the upper 20s. ♦ **Details on Page 56.**

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LOTTERIES

For tickets dated
Thursday, January 29, 2004

Illinois

Midday Pick 3—010
Midday Pick 4—4799
Evening Pick 3—151
Evening Pick 4—1842
Little Lotto—12 13 18 21 28
Lotto Grand Prize: \$14 million
Mega Millions
Grand Prize: \$73 million

Indiana

Midday Daily 3—391
Midday Daily 4—6252
Daily 3—858 Daily 4—8400
Midday Lucky 5—06 08 15 18 24
Evening Lucky 5—02 04 05 07 11
Lotto Grand Prize: \$10 million

Michigan

Midday Daily 3—895
Midday Daily 4—9179
Evening Daily 3—193
Evening Daily 4—2954
Rolldown—05 11 13 21 33
WinFall Jackpot:
\$2.3 million

Wisconsin

Pick 3—925 Pick 4—7506
Badger 5—07 10 12 25 27
Super Cash—04 14 25 27 34 35
Megabucks Jackpot:
\$1.9 million
Powerball Jackpot:
\$74 million