

City Chase brings wild race to Atlanta

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Scaling down Stone Mountain in Saturday's City Chase USA urban adventure series would be a welcomed challenge for Rochelle Lofstrand, compared to, say, eating live worms.

Truth is, neither Lofstrand nor the nearly 300 participants in Saturday's competition will know what challenges they'll face until game day.

"As far as the physical endurance is concerned, I'm pretty sure I'll push through anything," says Lofstrand, 34, a triathlete and North Springs High School science teacher. "It's eating those weird things that I'm worried about."

Atlanta is the second stop in the City Chase USA series, which spans eight metropolitan areas. This year's series, which is part scavenger hunt, obstacle course and endurance race started in Philadelphia on May 3 and concludes in New York City in September. Top performers will go on to a national championship series in an unknown city in October. A world championship contest will also be held in Morocco in November.

Locally, it all starts on Saturday when teams of two will gather at the World of Coke to pick up Marta passes and clue sheets from City Chase staff and volunteers. Then they will scour the metro area tackling a variety of challenges.

Think "Amazing Race," but on a slightly smaller scale. "It's not an extremely physical event," says Jason Erkes, with City Chase USA. "It's a full day of fun and discovering your city."

Still, the competition is no cake walk, he adds.

The City Chase competition first launched in Canada in 2004 and quickly expanded to other countries. Last year Erkes, who is president of Chicago Sport and Social Club, partnered with City Chase to bring the U.S. version of the competition to the Windy City.

His company, Chicago Sport and Social Club, brings recreational sports leagues to cities with active lifestyles.

"Once we pick a city, we start with blank piece of paper and a map to organize the competition," Erkes says. "What kinds of buildings are there? Are there ponds, lakes, rivers we can get people wet in?"

Erkes giddily recalls last year's Chicago adventure when participants held an alligator for 15 seconds and had to withstand a python snake slithering down their back.

Even though they don't know what's in store on Saturday, teammates Marc and Thebither Michael of Fairburn, aren't worried. The married couple has sky dived and hiked around volcanoes in Costa Rica, says Marc Michael, 37.

"We like extreme sports and for us it's a way to spend time together and get out of the house," he says.

To participate:

Registration for Saturday's adventure series is open until 3 p.m. Friday through online registration at www.citychaseusa.com. The fee is \$190 per team.