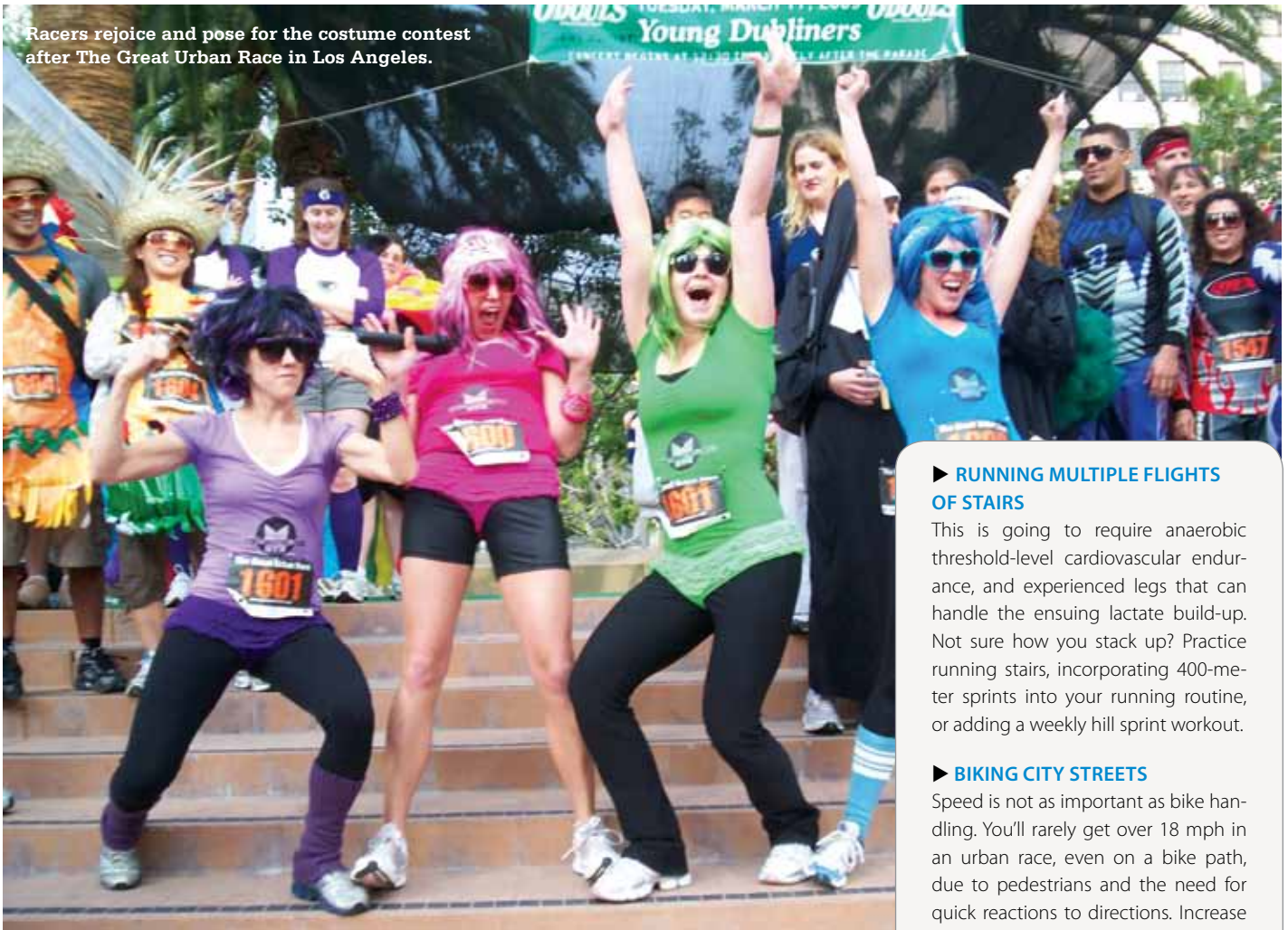


Racers rejoice and pose for the costume contest after The Great Urban Race in Los Angeles.



GREAT URBAN RACE

when fun and fitness collide

Put your fitness into play with an urban race.

By Jayme Otto

My teammates and I had already biked through downtown Denver to locate a paintball coliseum, ran up and down 20 flights of stairs, skidded down a giant Slip 'n Slide, used clues to piece together a secret location and ran four miles to reach it, schlepped 40-gallon water jugs across a parking lot, biked to a graveyard to locate a statue shown in a photo, and were now running to our final destination: The Deschutes Brewery where we'd be tasked with tasting six beers and matching them up with their correct names. What on earth was going on? Just your run-of-the-mill urban adventure race.

Urban adventure races are an offshoot of adventure racing, popularized in 2002 by Primal Quest, an expedition-length race that combines

orienteering/navigation with other disciplines like trail running, mountain biking, paddling and climbing. The urban version lasts only a few hours and takes place in the city, which allows for some interesting interpretations of athleticism, and a whole lot of fun.

Like traditional adventure racing, urban adventures require both brain and brawn, with the ability to quickly solve route riddles and piece together clues factoring in heavily. Unlike traditional adventure racing, which is done in coed teams of three, urban adventure team composition requirements vary by race, with 2-3 members being the norm, either coed or single gender.

Sound intriguing? Check out how your fitness will translate into a successful urban adventure race:

get in the game

Find a race in a city near you at one of these recommended sites:

oysterracingseries.com

gourban.org

greaturbanrace.com

citysolveurbanrace.com

▶ RUNNING MULTIPLE FLIGHTS OF STAIRS

This is going to require anaerobic threshold-level cardiovascular endurance, and experienced legs that can handle the ensuing lactate build-up. Not sure how you stack up? Practice running stairs, incorporating 400-meter sprints into your running routine, or adding a weekly hill sprint workout.

▶ BIKING CITY STREETS

Speed is not as important as bike handling. You'll rarely get over 18 mph in an urban race, even on a bike path, due to pedestrians and the need for quick reactions to directions. Increase your handling comfort by riding in groups, navigating your own city streets with car traffic, and getting proficient at clipping into your pedals after a stoplight.

▶ NEGOTIATING THE SLIP 'N SLIDE

Getting to the bottom of the slide the fastest is all about core strength. Whether you dive head first or feet first, you need to keep your arms and legs elevated above the slide so they don't drag and slow you down. Incorporate plank pose and side plank pose into your ab workout for smooth sailing.

▶ CLIMBING

Whether it's a rope slung over a concrete wall, or an actual rock-climbing wall, there's a good chance you're going to have to climb something. The trick is to use your legs just as much as your arms, so they don't tire. Help keep arm muscle fatigue at bay by adding pull-ups to your workout. Can't do a pull-up? Have a friend lift you into proper pull-up position, and practice the negative, slowly lowering yourself.