How does *The Amazing Race* earn its title? Watch! sent Deputy Editor Jim Colucci to South America for the first leg of the race to find out.

**BY JIM COLUCCI**

Would he have a prayer in this Race challenge? Author Jim Colucci takes "The Hard Way Up" the stairs at *O Pagador de Promessas* church.
The scale of the operation awaiting us in Salvador is truly... well, as I listen in on their cell phone calls, I try to avoid jotting down that obvious adjective from the show’s title that so aptly describes it. More than 200 staff—a combination of American field producers and local hires—have been in the Bahian capital for a week now, crisscrossing its old-city section of Pelourinho to set up and double-check two fast and furious days’ worth of the show’s trademark route markers, detours and pit stops.

Suddenly, Bertram van Munster zips by. An indefatigable sexagenarian, the Dutch-born Bert co-created the Race with wife Elise Doganieri in 2001. Now, as the duo launches their 13th edition, producers and local “facilitators” are already scattered in each of 11 disparate cities. Plus, every 24 to 36 hours, the traveling crew of 70 to 100 people, lugging literally a ton of camera equipment, hops on yet another plane. Add to those numbers the more than 100 staffers working on the Race in the office here at home, and the scale of this operation seems all the more... let’s use “staggering.”

“We've counted so far 2,014 people waiting for a paycheck,” Bert says, smiling, “and of course waiting for us to arrive. We've got people all around the world right now with knots in their stomachs.”

MEET THE CHALLENGERS
Just a few weeks earlier, I learned that I would be joining this first leg of what would be the Race's shortest, tightest-ever edition: 11 teams, 11 cities, only 23 days. On the Saturday before the start, I get the chance to meet my fellow travelers and compare the few notes I’m allowed to reveal. Elise had told me she’s particularly excited about this season because this batch seems full of competitors with a particularly strong killer instinct. Now, as I sit with them two by two, I see what she means. The first thing almost every team says is, “Mark our...
words, we’re going to win.” This being the first look the teams have gotten at each other, I catch a whiff of some nascent strategies and alliances among this brutal bunch. Menschy Arizona State grads Andrew and Dan plan to “play” pretty, pink-loving South Carolina natives Marisa and Brooke. And, I learn about 20 minutes later, vice versa.

A few teams in, I also realize I’ve never met with so many people so utterly convinced of their own abilities. Even the two New Yorkers in the mix, an undeniably impressive duo named Terence and Sarah, are unstereotypically non-neurotic. “He’s the brawn, I’m the brains,” so many of the team members say. “We’re really street-smart.” “We complement each other.” “We know each other so well.” And when I ask if they have a conflict resolution strategy, they say, “We’ll just listen to each other and compromise.” Yeah, right. Have they never seen this show?

But clearly many of them have, and the smarter ones have done whatever they could think of to prepare. They’ve timed themselves running with their backpacks. Long-distance runner Terence and Wall Street whiz Sarah have rappelled and practiced milking cows. A slightly older but incredibly fit-looking couple, Ken and Tina—he’s a former college football coach, she’s a charismatic corporate executive—have come up with a code phrase, “O Canada,” to remind them to stop bickering and concentrate on winning the endgame. On the other hand, the cutest—and oldest—couple on this year’s show, Oregon blueberry farmers and self-described hippies Arthur and Anita, plan to just “hug it out.” At the end of my time with them, they hug me, too. I admit it: At this point, I want them to win.

AROUND THE WORLD IN 22 DAYS

I arrive at 7 a.m. on Tuesday at Los Angeles’ historic Memorial Stadium. By 10-ish, the stadium’s huge thermometer reads 70 degrees, and it only rises for the next hour as Race host Phil Keoghan is filmed making introductory remarks to the competitors poised on the starting line. “I love that moment, right before the Race,” Phil later tells me on one of our seemingly endless flights. “It’s like I’ve been invited with a VIP pass to a cool special event. And when I put my hand up in the air and I’m about to say, ‘Go!’, I get goose bumps thinking what will be.”

The competitors seem to be having the same reaction. Take after take, they look ready to sprint, not knowing whether this time Phil’s moves are for real. And then finally, at about 11 a.m., they are. Immediately, a well-muscled young college kid named Dallas bounds up the stadium stairs, with his single mom, Toni, not far behind. The teams rip into the envelopes left atop their backpacks and get their first assignment: Make your way to Salvador. Quite a few of them have no idea where the city of Salvador is even located (and I have to admit, a few weeks earlier, neither would I have). Nonetheless, they all hop into a series of waiting cars and speed off to Los Angeles International Airport. There, at an American Airlines counter marked with the show’s trademark yellow-and-red striped flag, the first six teams score the earlier flight option, traveling via Miami to Brazil. As the remaining teams stand in line, it becomes clear how familiarity with the show’s format can be a distinct advantage; instead of waiting, a few have the savvy to get themselves quickly over to United for option B, a flight leaving several hours later and connecting through Chicago.

RUN AND GUN

On my flight to Miami, I meet Cris Graves, a “host producer” on the show since season three. An erstwhile screenwriter, Cris has taken 11 trips around the world with this coolest of all day jobs, traveling every leg with a portable printer in her checked luggage, for making up clue cards and route signs. One becomes an adrenaline junkie working on The Amazing Race, Cris says. “You get on another show, and you’re just bored.”

The contestants are clearly feeling the surge too; I already can see some of them starting to

FOR THE BEST PRICE ON DVDS OF PAST SEASONS OF THE AMAZING RACE, VISIT MYSIMON.COM.
work it. Self-avowed geeky gamers Mark and Bill, friends since a long-ago sci-fi convention, score a Portuguese-English dictionary from their seatmate. Divorcees/best friends Kelli and Christy have changed into chic blue tank tops studded with Texas longhorn skulls and, as much as many of the women swore to me that they were forsaking vanity on this Race, begin sur-reptitiously applying makeup. Sarah, who conveniently studied Portuguese in business school, spends her time in the Rio airport charming a backpacker out of various leftover currencies. The extra cash, she tells me later, will hopefully make the difference between hoofing it and a game-winning cab ride.

As she and Terence walk away, their cameraman—there’s a two-person team assigned to cover each duo, with assignments rotating on each leg in order to ensure fairness—approaches the back-packer with a release form to sign. As the show’s Executive Producer Hayma “Screech” Washington explains to me, Race cameramen, most of whom have been with the show since the beginning, are really “more like segment producers.” And part-time athletes as well; contestants are required to stay within 25 feet of their camera team at all times, and, together in the heat of the moment, in Amazing Race lingo they “run and gun.”

THE HARD WAY UP OR THE SOFT WAY DOWN

To Screech’s relief, we finally do make it out of Rio that Wednesday morning, and on our last little commuter flight to Salvador, the game gets into high gear. Dallas Cowboy cheerleader Starr, a contestant along with her New York actor brother Nick, doesn’t recognize me as one of her American compatriots as she flirtatiously convinces me to switch seats with her, giving up my perch in row 11 for one way back in 37. On this flight, I realize, placement matters. The race is on.

We land in Salvador and I immediately head off in a boxy gray van to the commercial district. There, before a tiny storefront, lies the contestants’ first challenge: to steer rickety pushcarts, loaded with boxes of a gum brand called Blong!, into the elevador Lacerda, a 240-foot cliff-straddling structure linking the lower commercial district with historic Pelourinho above.

Teams are already arriving and locating their target, a candy vendor supplied with a batch of yellow-and-red Amazing Race envelopes. I see Ty and Aja, an African-American couple in a long-distance relationship between Los Angeles and Detroit, open their envelope and breathe a sigh of relief. Inside is good news: For the contestants, today’s work is done. But for me, the challenges are just beginning.

“We DELIBERATELY ZIGZAG THEM UP AND DOWN THE GLOBE.”
– BERTRAM VAN MUNSTER
they reach the concrete barrier at the bottom, they are sweaty, their legs wobbly. It takes them a few tries to stand up straight.

From here, we’re all off to check out the next challenge, later to be described as The Hard Way Up. A few squares away, on a steep uphill street, is the church O Pagador de Promessas, where the challenge will be to crawl up the plaza’s many flights of outdoor stairs. Two local men have been recruited as judges, to watch for crab-walking cheaters, and two more to demonstrate, with towels taped around their knees for padding.

This time I’m game to give it a try. We both take our places at the foot of the stairs. In the Catholic world, crawling like this is intended to be a religious experience, with a prayer to be said on each step. Now, as the local judge shouts “Go!” my path leads up three steps and then right through some mystery liquid. And so I do find myself praying after all—that I didn’t just get pee on my one pair of jeans.

Everyone had been acting as if this is the harder challenge, dealing huge pain to one’s knees, but I’m finding it quite easy and exhilarating. I advance quickly forward, with the other reporter close behind. But when I look back, I can see him clearly cheating, squatting and running through the intermittent landings while I continue to crawl. At the top, it’s a photo finish. The leader of the African band playing at the top—mostly to disorient us, Bert later admits—asks us both the magic question, the correct answer to which will be considered the completion of this challenge. Once again, it’s a twist that anyone who has watched the past seasons of The Amazing Race might be able to anticipate. “How many stairs are there?” We both stand up quickly to proclaim, “53!”

INTO THE JUNGLE

It’s now 6 p.m., and we head off to visit the contestants at the “nighttime hold,” where Bert’s sadistic predilections are clearly evident. “I like to set a tone on the first day,” he tells me, “that you may think this is uncomfortable—and yet it’s all downhill from here.” The competitors, Bert has found, tend to be too buddy-buddy at first, viewing the first leg as some kind of bonding mutual adventure. “I remind them right upfront that this is not a vacation. In 12 hours, someone will be saying goodbye.”

Behind a military base on the outskirts of town, we drive for a few minutes, then hike for a few more, until we finally reach a muddy, klieg-lighted clearing in the midst of a jungle. Here, under a single open tent, the teams are already making a futile attempt to get comfortable in an abutting series of two-man mosquito nets. To be fair, under a second tent, a small field production team will spend the night in a similarly awful setup.

By 7 p.m., Starr, who claims to be “a walking pharmacy,” splits an Ambien tablet with her brother Nick. As we visitors to this encampment prepare to leave, Bert can’t resist twisting the knife. “We’re off to The Ritz-Carlton!” he proclaims loudly, and some of the contestants manage a laugh. The last things I see as we exit the clearing are the faces of New Jersey couple Anthony and Stephanie. Sitting wide awake and miserable under the white jungle netting, she in particular looks as if she’d much rather be in the Meadowlands.

DETOUR

By 8:30 the next morning, I’ve been told that everyone’s first stop will be at the Detour box, in the courtyard of the 1702 sandstone Church of São Francisco. I soon find out the trick: There are three churches of São Francisco, all in a row. About half an hour later, the show’s roving scouts radio in word that the first contestants are en route. As previously planned, we duck into the doorway of the post office across the narrow street, although I wonder how the teams won’t notice us standing there so brazenly. But as the experienced crew members predict, the contestants arrive so focused on their task they blow right past us.

I then head for the base of the elevator Lacerda. I’m surprised to learn that, after retrieving the card from the Detour box detailing the two choices, 10 of the 11 teams have opted for the terrifying cargo net—even after realizing that with the wording “Soft Way Down,” they have clearly been duped. I’m not surprised to see that, at the base of the net, a huge crowd of locals has gathered to watch. As teams descend, a local news helicopter begins to hover—not even as high as the top of the net—and a cameraman leaning out videotapes the crazy Americans pulling this never-before-attempted stunt. Finally, Nick and Starr are the first at the bottom, ripping into their envelope, which reveals the pit stop location: a fortress several hundred yards out in the Bay of All Saints, reachable only by boat.

PIT STOP

I take the brief water taxi ride with co-Executive Producer Amy Chacon. Amy is able to travel on only the first three legs of each Race before racing
IF YOU HAVE HIGH CHOLESTEROL,
YOU MAY BE AT RISK FOR
ATHEROSCLEROSIS.

Talk to your doctor about high cholesterol and
the risk for plaque buildup in your arteries.

These three important facts may help start the conversation.
• Plaque buildup in arteries is a progressive disease called atherosclerosis that
can start in early adulthood
• High cholesterol, family history of early heart disease, diabetes, and
high blood pressure may play a role in the buildup of plaque
• CRESTROR® (rosuvastatin calcium), along with diet, lowers bad cholesterol
and raises the good. And CRESTROR is approved to slow the progression of
atherosclerosis in adults as part of a treatment plan to lower cholesterol to goal

Important Safety Information about CRESTROR:
In adults, CRESTROR is prescribed along with diet for lowering high cholesterol. CRESTROR is also prescribed
along with diet to slow the progression of atherosclerosis (the buildup of plaque in arteries) as part of a
treatment plan to lower cholesterol to goal. CRESTROR has not been determined to prevent heart disease,
heart attacks, or strokes.

CRESTROR is not right for everyone, including anyone who has previously had an allergic reaction to
CRESTROR, anyone with liver problems, or women who are nursing, pregnant, or who may become pregnant.
Your doctor will do blood tests before and during treatment with CRESTROR to monitor your liver function.
Unexplained muscle pain and weakness could be a sign of a rare but serious side effect and should be
reported to your doctor right away. The 40-mg dose of CRESTROR is only for patients who do not reach
goal on 20 mg. Be sure to tell your doctor if you are taking any medications. Side effects occur infrequently
and include headache, muscle aches, abdominal pain, weakness, and nausea.

Please read the important product information about CRESTROR on the adjacent page.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA.
Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

If you can’t afford your medication, AstraZeneca may be able to help.

IT’S TIME.

800-CRESTOR  CRESTOR.COM

AstraZeneca
IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT CRESTOR® (ROSUVASTATIN CALCIUM)

Please read this summary carefully and then ask your health care professional about CRESTOR. No advertisement can provide all the information needed to determine if a drug is right for you. This advertisement does not take the place of careful discussions with your health care professional. Only your healthcare professional has the training to help weigh the risks and benefits of a prescription drug.

WHAT IS CRESTOR?
CRESTOR is a prescription medicine that belongs to a group of cholesterol-lowering medicines called statins. Along with diet, CRESTOR lowers “bad” cholesterol (LDL-C) and increases “good” cholesterol (HDL-C). CRESTOR also slows the progression of atherosclerosis in adults with high cholesterol, as part of a treatment plan to lower cholesterol to goal.

WHAT IS CHOLESTEROL?
Cholesterol is a fatty substance, also called a lipid, normally found in your bloodstream. Your body needs a certain amount of cholesterol to function properly. But high cholesterol can lead to health problems. LDL-C is called bad cholesterol because if you have too much in your bloodstream, it can become a danger to your health and can lead to potentially serious conditions. HDL-C is known as good cholesterol because it may help remove excess cholesterol. Common health factors such as diabetes, high blood pressure, smoking, obesity, family history of early heart disease, and age can make controlling your cholesterol even more important.

WHAT IS ATHEROSCLEROSIS?
Atherosclerosis is the progressive buildup of plaque in the arteries over time. One major cause is high levels of LDL-C. Other health factors, such as family history, diabetes, high blood pressure, or if you smoke or are overweight, also play a role in the formation of plaque in arteries. Often this plaque starts building up in arteries in early adulthood and gets worse over time.

HOW DOES CRESTOR WORK?
Most of the cholesterol in your blood is made in the liver. CRESTOR works by blocking an enzyme in the liver. Blocking this enzyme causes the liver to make less cholesterol. CRESTOR helps the liver absorb and use more cholesterol from the blood.

WHO SHOULD NOT TAKE CRESTOR?
Do not take CRESTOR if you
■ have had an allergic reaction to CRESTOR or are allergic to any of its ingredients. The active ingredient is rosuvastatin calcium. The inactive ingredients are: microcrystalline cellulose, lactose monohydrate, tribasic calcium phosphate, crospovidone, magnesium stearate, hypromellose, triacetin, titanium dioxide, yellow ferric oxide, and red ferric oxide
■ have liver problems
■ are pregnant or think you may be pregnant, or are planning to become pregnant
■ are breast-feeding
CRESTOR can pass into your breast milk and may harm your baby
The safety and effectiveness of CRESTOR have not been established in children.

HOW SHOULD I TAKE CRESTOR?
Take CRESTOR exactly as prescribed by your health care professional. Do not change your dose or stop CRESTOR without talking to your health care professional, even if you are feeling well
■ Your health care professional may do blood tests to check your cholesterol levels during your treatment with CRESTOR. Your dose of CRESTOR may be changed based on these blood test results
■ CRESTOR can be taken at any time of day, with or without food
■ Swallow the tablets whole
■ Your health care professional should start you on a cholesterol-lowering diet before giving you CRESTOR. Stay on this diet when you take CRESTOR
■ Wait at least 2 hours after taking CRESTOR to take an antacid that contains a combination of aluminum and magnesium hydroxide
■ If you miss a dose of CRESTOR, take it as soon as you remember. However, do not take 2 doses of CRESTOR within 12 hours of each other
■ If you take too much CRESTOR or overdose, call your health care professional or a Poison Control Center right away or go to the nearest emergency room

WHAT SHOULD I TELL MY HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL BEFORE TAKING CRESTOR?
Tell your health care professional if you
■ have diabetes, thyroid, liver or kidney problems
■ are pregnant or think you may be pregnant, or are planning to become pregnant
■ are breast-feeding
■ have a history of muscle pain or weakness
■ drink alcoholic beverages
■ are of Asian ancestry
Tell your health care professional about all medicines you take or plan to take, including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.
Some medicines may interact with CRESTOR; causing side effects. It is particularly important to tell your health care professional if you are taking or plan to take:
— cyclosporine (used after organ transplants)
— gemfibrozil (used to lower cholesterol)
— fibrates (used to lower cholesterol)
— niacin (used to lower cholesterol)
— warfarin (used for thinning blood)
— lovastatin/atorvastatin combination (used to treat HIV/AIDS)
— birth control pills that contain ethinyl estradiol or norgestrel
— antacids containing aluminum and magnesium hydroxide (used for heartburn)
Know all of the medicines you take and what they look like. It’s always a good idea to check that you have the right prescription before you leave the pharmacy and before you take any medicine.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF CRESTOR?
CRESTOR can cause side effects in some people. Serious side effects may include:
Muscle problems. Call your health care professional right away if you experience unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness, especially with fever. This may be an early sign of a rare muscle problem that could lead to serious kidney problems. The risk of muscle problems is greater in people who are 65 years of age or older or who already have thyroid or kidney problems. The chance of muscle problems may be increased if you are taking certain other medicines with CRESTOR.
Liver problems. Your health care professional should do blood tests before you start taking CRESTOR and during treatment to check for signs of possible liver problems.
The most common side effects may include: headache, muscle aches and pains, abdominal pain, weakness, and nausea.
This is not a complete list of side effects of CRESTOR. Talk to your health care professional for a complete list or if you have side effects that bother you or that do not go away.

HOW SHOULD I STORE CRESTOR?
Store your medication at room temperature, in a dry place. If your health care professional tells you to stop treatment or if your medicine is out of date, throw the medicine away. Keep CRESTOR and all medicines in a secure place and out of the reach of children.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CRESTOR?
Visit www.CRESTOR.com. Or call the Information Center at AstraZeneca toll-free at 1-800-CRESTOR.

CRESTOR was licensed by AstraZeneca from Shionogi & Co. Ltd., Osaka, Japan. CRESTOR is a registered trademark of the AstraZeneca group of companies.

©2008 AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals LP. All rights reserved. AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals LP, Wilmington, DE 19850. Rev: 01/08 258864

Visit www.CRESTOR.com. Or call the Information Center at AstraZeneca toll-free at 1-800-CRESTOR.
herself back to L.A., where she supervises an Emmy-winning team of 16 editors in fashioning more than 200 hours of footage into each 43-minute, 11-second episode. By matching the common Los Angeles-time code on each camera’s output, Amy’s team whittles the 11 separate perspectives into one common narrative, while being careful to maintain its integrity. Editors can compress, but not alter, the overall timeline, she says, in building episodic and season-long story arcs. They scour the footage for any dynamic moments between two people or teams, but sometimes, squeezing it all in, she says, “is like a big Sudoku puzzle.”

It’s nearly 100 degrees atop the morro, where Phil leans on a stone wall beside long-dormant cannons, shielding himself under an umbrella against the relentless sun. Several teams have already raced up the ramp to finish on the show’s famous world-map mat, and in between interviewing them, the overheated host has also been taping some stand-ups to insert later. “It’s taken 12 seasons for people to truly understand what happens with our schedule on the road,” Phil half-complains to me later about his days spent racing ahead of—or in some cases, behind—the competitors to tape bits and pieces of the show. “In the beginning, I think people honestly thought that I was going back to my hotel room, or sitting near a pool, drinking piña coladas and then going shopping.”

I linger in the heat, ducking down when I’m told that the shot will be swinging my way. Finally, it’s clear: Last-place Arthur and Anita, when they finally do arrive, will be told they’re being eliminated. It’s hard to feel bad for them, though, because these hippies are not exactly going back to the berry farm. They’ll be spending the next three, expense-paid weeks vacationing at the show’s “elimination station,” this time in Portugal.

Downstairs in the fortress museum’s café, I meet up with the surviving 10 teams to talk about their experience. For one thing, no one got much sleep in the jungle last night. Nick complains about having been pressed up against a sweaty Mark in the neighboring tent. For his part, Mark notes that Tina spent part of the night moaning in her sleep. I remind Tina that, as Phil had already warned me, the anti-malaria medication we’re all taking often causes lurid dreams, but still she turns bright red. Ken steps in to defend his wife. “We’re having a group sleepover, and they feed us beans before bed,” he says, shifting attention elsewhere. “Yeah,” Tina chimes in, laughing. “I could talk about some of the guys with that one, but I have a little bit more class.”