

## Menstruation/The pill

# No problem, period



**Your period doesn't affect performance, recent studies suggest.**

**MANY FEMALE ATHLETES ASSUME** that menstruation impairs their performance, and until now, the few studies on the subject have relied on athletes' self-perceptions.

But a recent study at Florida State University indicates that menstrual cycle phase doesn't affect athletic

performance. Researchers who measured speed and strength among sprint swimmers and weight lifters found the women's performances remained consistent through their cycle.

Myths about oral contraceptives hampering athletic women can also be put to

rest. Recent research shows that today's lower-dosage formulas don't cause weight gain and fatigue—and may even enhance a woman's athletic performance.

Pill users typically have shorter periods with little bleeding and cramping. This alleviates pain that might impair performance, as well as lowering the risk of iron deficiency and anemia.

Oral contraceptives may also prevent early bone loss and reduce muscular and skeletal injuries in young athletes with amenorrhea (irregular or missed periods). About 11 percent of all college women experience amenorrhea.

—Karen Karvonen

## American Discovery Trail

# Across the US in 13 months

**THE WAY PLANE FARES** work these days, it was cheaper for Ellen Dudley to buy a round trip ticket from the East Coast to San Francisco—even though she is walking back.

Dudley and two companions are taking a 13-month scouting expedition on the newest of America's long trails, the American Discovery Trail (ADT). The trail, which was completed this summer, connects more than 4,000 miles of existing trails and country roads



**Follow in Ellen Dudley's footsteps: Take a hike across the country.**

across 13 states, beginning in Point Reyes National Seashore in Northern California and ending in Delaware. Along the way, it accesses the other three long trails in the US (the Appalachian, the Continental Divide and the Pacific Crest), which all run north and south. If the hike goes according to plan, 52-year-old Dudley and her two male companions will have dipped their toes into the Atlantic Ocean by the time you read this.

—Kirsten Yaw



## Fitlist

### WHAT'S HOT

The six hottest sports of the '90s, according to a survey of outdoor retailers by *Outside Business* magazine:

- 1 Mountain Biking
- 2 In-line Skating
- 3 Climbing
- 4 Bike Touring
- 5 Fly Fishing
- 6 Snowboarding

Down the road... *Outside Business* predicts that the next three hot sports will be tandem cycling, orienteering and beach volleyball.

A project of *Backpacker* magazine and the American Hiking Society, the ADT travels through or near many urban areas as well as small towns and vast wilderness areas. "We're taking this trail to population centers where it will become part of urban greenways," says Dudley. "We want the ADT to be accessible to cyclists, walkers and hard-core backpackers alike."

For more information, call the ADT hotline, (703) 754-9008; or write to ADT, *Backpacker* magazine, 33 E. Minor Street, Emmaus, PA 18098.