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## 'Dreamer' drawn to the extreme ends of the Earth

### Journey to the South Pole, Part 3 of 3

#### **PAUL LEGALL**

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FOR INTERACTIVE content, including an updated route map and features on equipment, food, personnel and the project, go to [thespec.com](http://www.thespec.com) and click on Journey to the South Pole.

Doug Stoup has combined modern technology with the grit and determination of the legendary polar explorers to survive the most extreme conditions in the world.

He's skied to the North and South Poles more times than any other human being, climbed some of the highest mountains and pushed the bounds of extreme sports by snowboarding down the highest peak in the Antarctic. A former pro soccer player, he also trained Sylvester Stallone for the movie Cliffhanger and competed in an American Gladiator-style show, Battledome.

He's a committed environmentalist who has used polar regions as his classroom to teach students about the dangers of global warming. In spring 2006, while guiding a group of local businessmen to the North Pole, he beamed back images of the expedition and fielded questions from local students.

Describing himself as a "dreamer," Stoup, 43, admits he has a bad case of the "polar bug" that draws him from his comfortable California home and family to the extreme ends of Earth. This week, he was back on the polar plateau with a team of local adventurers for a 160-kilometre trek to the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station.

It will be the second time this year he's reached the bottom of the world. On Jan. 18, he made polar history by completing a 48-day expedition from the Weddell Sea to the South Pole, a distance of about 1,100 kilometres.

It's the route legendary explorer Ernest Shackleton chose in 1915. He aborted the trip after his ship was crushed in pack ice and his crew marooned on Elephant Island near the Antarctic Peninsula. Shackleton and five crew returned to rescue everybody after braving the Antarctic waters in an open boat to find help at a whaling station on South Georgia Island, 1,280 kilometres away.

Stoup replicated a portion of that epic voyage by scaling a dangerous mountain on South Georgia that Shackleton had been forced to cross after landing on the wrong side of the island.

He's loathe to compare himself with Shackleton and his ilk. "I'm not even in the same league as these guys," he said in a recent telephone interview.

He admits his global positioning system (GPS) gives him a decided advantage as he's never out of touch with the outside world. The old explorers, however, disappeared for months as they walked off the map, pushing the boundaries of the known world.

Unlike earlier explorers, who used ponies and dogs to pull their loads, Stoup dragged his gear and supplies in sleds when he pioneered Shackleton's route. There were no supply depots or air drops.

When he reached the Pole, however, he had a plane to take him home. For Roald Amundsen and Robert Scott (the first explorers to get there in 1911 and 1912, respectively), the journey was only half done. They had to trek home. Amundsen and his crew succeeded; Scott's team perished.

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A group of Hamilton adventurers has embarked on an epic journey to one of the most desolate and inhospitable places on Earth, the South Pole. The same men travelled to the other end of the world two years ago, reaching the North Pole after a two-week trek. Paul Legall sets the stage for the current trip while Jon Wells recounts the journey to the North Pole.



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