



Photo: Jay Bayer

## KICKIN' ASS WITH CARDAMONE

Aspen's Kate Cardamone chargin' hard

You want Kate Cardamone with you the next time you head into the backcountry. It's not just because she's a nationally ranked telemark skier who looks like a cross between Katie Holmes and Natalie Portman. It's because she may save your life.

"I'm a self preservationist," says Cardamone, 26. "I ask questions about the snowpack every two seconds. That's why it's good to have a girl along."

She's used to being the only girl in the group. She's worked with cowboys in Argentina, archeologists in Peru, and spent weeks in Alaska in an RV packed with unkept guys. Growing up in Aspen, Colorado, with her younger brother, Will (also a sponsored telemark skier), Cardamone quickly became part of a nascent crew of athletes known as the Aspen Ripper Factory. In 2006, Will encouraged her to sign up for a telemark-specific big mountain competition held at Alpine Meadows, California. She had no idea what she was getting into when she plunged off a small cliff and made fast, sweeping turns to the finish area. She won the event—and was hooked. "I was so surprised. I'd never stood

on a podium before," she says. "It's addicting when you do well."

Last March, she competed with the best women alpine skiers in the country at the U.S. Freeskiing Nationals at Snowbird, Utah. She was the only freeheeler to qualify for the semifinals. "Kate is one of the more impressive tele skiers I've ever seen," says Jess McMillan, who won the 2007 World Freeskiing Championships. "She's not afraid to step into big lines, while being true to her discipline. The girl drops a knee no matter what she gets herself into."

In April, she placed third at the World Freeskiing Telemark Championships in Aleyaska, Alaska. And this fall, she'll appear in the Powderwhore Production's film, *The Pact*.

"I'm not a tomboy," she says. "But I've found that I enjoy being able to do exactly what the boys do, and turning it into something girls do, too. I've encountered some guys who think there are things that only guys do—but I like to prove them wrong."

—Megan Michelson

