

Berman lends Joe the Intern a shoulder after running his first set of Hood River's 425 stairs.

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28 HOURS WITH TAO BERMAN

Joe the Intern's primary assignment was to, well, intern for the demanding extreme kayaker



11 A.M. TO NOON (or so): Tao greets me at the front door of his White Salmon, Washington, home with his cellphone pinched between his shoulder and ear. He shakes my hand. "Put your workout clothes on," he says, smothering the phone's mouthpiece. "I've been waiting." Tao takes off his shirt. We do pullups and abs on his Body by Jake Ab Scissor, a gift from Jake for the infomercial Tao did with him back in 2005. My first set of pull-ups: 14. Tao's: "Ahhh, about 45."

NOON TO 1 P.M. (or so): Tao says he wants me to paddle the Class V waterfall-studded Green Truss section of the White Salmon with him—at the end of my internship. "If you get injured," he figures, "I will still get the most use out of my intern."

I write e-mails as Tao dictates. One is to Samuel, a 7-year-old fan from West Virginia. Samuel wants Tao to visit his elementary school and watch Tao kayak Gorilla Falls. Tao thanks Samuel for the letter and tells him if he has time, he'll visit his school.

1 P.M. TO 3 P.M. (or so): Mail out a copy of Tao's new film, *Pulse*. Then climb the 425 stairs in nearby Hood River, Oregon—twice. Before I go, Tao takes off his shirt and suggests I do the same. He also tells me he doesn't "want to see *any* walking" on my second set. I crawl up the last 100 stairs. Literally. On the way home, Tao smiles and waves to a panhandler from the driver's seat of his Subaru-donated WRX. At home, Tao gives me some chores: write about \$20,000 in checks to the IRS and Klickitat County, superglue together the pieces of his first-place trophy from the 2002 Pre-World freestyle championships in Austria, and find room in a garage closet for a stand-up paddleboard, which he plans to paddle down 16-foot BZ Falls. Later, as I stack 24-packs of Red Bull into his laundry room, Tao asks me if he is being a good boss. I affirm him.

4 P.M. (or so): While Tao showers after our second pull-up and Ab Scissor session, I count the shoes that consume half the floor space in his office. Sixty-six pairs—I think. I lose count several times.

Berman in his garage of toys before his intern got to work on it.

5 P.M. (or so): Tao treats me to Thai food at Lampoei's served out of a fifth-wheel trailer. He asks Lampoei about his winter hiatus in his native Thailand and shakes his hand heartily. Tao and I talk about women.

10 P.M. TO 1 A.M. (or so): Tao offers me an Oreo but tells me to eat it in one bite so I won't spill crumbs on his living room carpet. It's full of wasabi. He asks me if that is a funny joke. I affirm him. We watch *The Italian Job* and talk about women.

1 A.M. TO 7 A.M (or so): Too scared to sleep.

7 A.M. TO 9 A.M. (or so): Tao pours a bucket of cold water over his head and then tells me to do the same. He starts "every morning this way," usually naked, and even when snow is

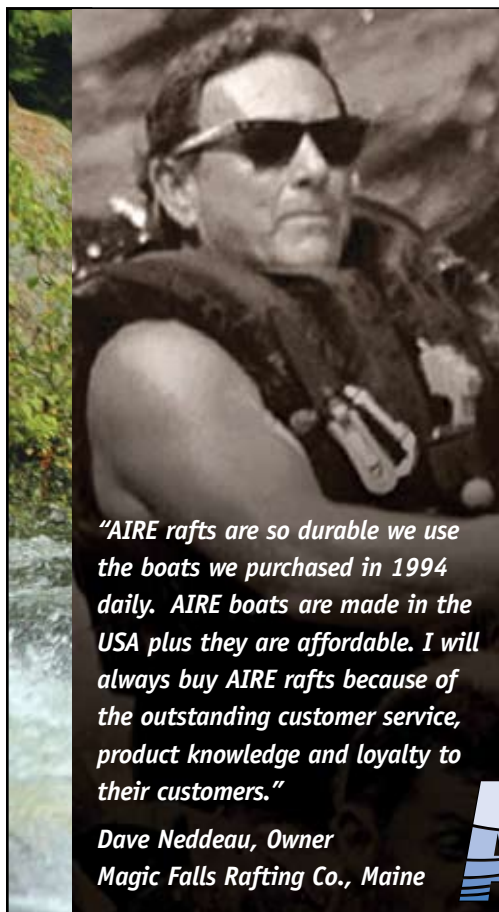


piled on his deck. Afterwards, endure another workout in his home gym. This time we wail on "chest, bis, tris" until failure. We run a 2.6-mile loop at full speed. Tao tells me he doesn't want to see *any* walking, then compels me to sprint the last 100 yards. I dry heave.

10 A.M. (or so): Tao tells me that I don't have to cook breakfast. "Aren't I being a good boss?" he asks. I affirm him.

11 A.M. (or so): Put in on the Truss. I swim twice. Scout 28-foot Big Brother for 10 minutes. Tao says it can kill me. I portage Big Brother. Tao pushes me to paddle faster through the flat stretch. Can't. I am broken. I tell him, "No." I hike out above Upper Zigzag.

3 P.M. (or so): Over spicy pork burritos served out of a taco stand, I assure Tao this has been the most difficult 28 hours of my athletic life, that I cannot do another physical task. This seems to please him. He asks me if he has been a good boss. I affirm him. And like a good boss, he lets me off early on a Friday to go home to my anxiously awaiting girlfriend.



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