

August 18, 2009

Wait 3 seconds after clicking play for the video to begin.

[On Top of the World: Northwestern Alum Recounts North Pole Adventure](#) from [Northwestern News](#) on [Vimeo](#)

Check out this excellent video and article put together by Northwestern University. I did the interview in May just after returning from the ice. NU used the video to help launch a new version of their website, www.northwestern.edu. The video was produced by Matt Paoletti and the interview was conducted by Sean Hargadon of Northwestern Magazine.

Here's the interview and video. -- John

Northwestern News

Northwestern Alum Recounts North Pole Adventure

John Huston overcame polar obstacles to become first American to ski unsupported to the North Pole.

By Sean Hargadon

John Huston thought he had failed.

Fifty-one days into the “hardest trek on the planet,” Huston and his arctic-expedition partner Tyler Fish realized they might not make it to the North Pole after all.

After three years of planning and preparation, “that was a really dark night in the tent,” Huston recalls. “We just thought, ‘What have we done wrong?’”

With an April 26 deadline looming, Huston (WCAS99) and Fish had less than four days to travel 60 miles to the pole before a Russian helicopter would come to retrieve them.

Near the end of the 480-mile journey across the Arctic Ocean, Huston and Fish realized that wind and ocean currents were causing the ice sheets to drift to the southeast at eight to 10 miles every 24 hours. “It became really stressful to figure out how we were going to travel fast enough to overcome this treadmill of drift that we were on the wrong end of,” Huston says. “Basically we ran out of time.”

They committed to one intense final push, skiing almost nonstop for 3 1/2 days. They paused every 12 hours to eat and sleep for an hour.

“We decided that if we slept we would lose,” says Huston, who napped for just three out of 66 hours in those final days. They finally reached the pole — with 10 hours to spare — and celebrated with a single-malt scotch and some leftover fudge before collapsing in exhaustion.

“It was a big achievement and a really blurry time as well,” says Huston. “We were sleepwalking sometimes, for sure.”

[Click here to read the full article.](#)