

body & soul

Emily will compete in the first-ever World Cup of Freestyle Kayaking September 1.

river rider

Emily Jackson competes with pro women kayakers by pulling off “boys-only” tricks. That’s what we call a *rapid* learner!

NAME: Emily Jackson

AGE: 16

HOMETOWN: Rock Island, TN

CLAIM TO FAME: This two-time National Junior Champion won the 2005 Teva Mountain Games Pro Women’s Event and is the youngest girl ever to have kayaked the Zambezi and Nile rivers in Africa.

I LOVE KAYAKING BECAUSE: “You make your own moves, and nailing a trick or sticking to a line down a rapid makes you so proud and happy. I’ve always got a big grin on my face.”

BIGGEST GOAL: “To do tricks that only the boys do now—like the Phonix Monkey, where you do a pirouette into a forward somersault in your kayak.”

FAVORITE VACATION SPOT: “Africa! It makes you the most grateful person and teaches you the meaning of happiness. Kids there have nothing, but they’re still happy.”

WORDS TO LIVE BY: “There are no shortcuts to any place worth going.”

READER CHALLENGE: “Do something today that scares you. Kayaking actually frightened me for a long time, but now I try something new every day. First it was doing a roll, then it was another trick, then a new river. When I was younger, I was afraid of roller coasters. My dad made me ride every new one even if I screamed the whole time. It’s scary to face your fears, but at the end of the day it’s more fun and rewarding if you do.”