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Chasing the Rush

You do have to be just a little bit crazy to do this kind of thing: Extreme sportsmen and women aren't content with regular challenges. They need to push themselves to the limits of their physical and mental capacity, and sometimes even beyond those limits. The pains and strains, the dangers and fears that would deter most mere mortals, serve only to spur them on and provide them with the incentive to continue. For them, the greatest satisfaction comes once the challenge is over, when they're able to say: "I did it."

01 Boot Camp – Running to the Limit

One of the toughest cross-country races in the world takes place every winter near the English city of Birmingham. The course exudes the dubious charm of a military training camp. The physical demands made on the participants – both men and women – are only comparable with selection trials for elite military units.

02 The Cliff Divers

"Each time it's as though you've been in a moderately serious traffic accident, but it's fantastic." That is how cliff divers describe their dangerous sport, which sees them jumping from heights of over 20 meters into water that's just a few meters deep. Just as in the case of regular high diving in a pool, they perform acrobatics that are scored by a panel of experts. Cliff divers need to be top fit, with perfect timing and total concentration.

03 The Race for Russian Gold

Competitors in the Expedition Trophy Race chase a handsome prize, 15 kilograms of pure gold, but they have to work hard for it. In temperatures as low as minus 50 degrees Celsius, they have to cover 12,000 kilometers by car in 14 days: from Murmansk in the far northwest of Russia, across the Urals and over the ice of Lake Baikal, to Vladivostok in the far east.

04 Northern Islands, Rowdy Games

Every Christmas and New Year, the capital of the Scottish Orkney Islands hosts a game that could, with a little goodwill and flexibility, be called "mass football". The aim of the opponents from the south and north of Kirkwall – the "Uppies" and the "Doonies" – is to get the ball into their own goal. It's a process that involves a lot of pushing, shoving and general uncoordinated battling. Rules are as non-existent as team colours. The pitch is the entire town. It can be hours before a winner is decided – but victory is also possible within just a few minutes.

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05 Bavarian Rodeo

The tradition of ox racing in the southern German town of Haunshofen is certainly no Olympic discipline, but it does have one thing in common with the Games in that it takes place every four years. Each rider has his own training methods, which can only be put to the test on race day itself. That's when success depends entirely on whether the oxen decide they want to run or not.

06 Hooked on Adrenaline

What is it that drives adrenaline junkies to take ever greater risks? Psychologists, researchers and emergency medics have no clear answer to that question. Some people, they say, seek out risk to compensate for their monotonous everyday lives. Others use it to escape the fact that their biographies are somewhat lacking. One thing is certain: When some people seek out a challenge, then it has to be an extreme one.

07 Jumps From Dizzying Heights

They jump from buildings, bridges and cliff tops and only open their parachutes on the way down. BASE jumpers are practitioners of what is perhaps the world's most dangerous sport. They themselves fully expect that one of their risky jumps might one day cost them their lives, but they are not put off by that prospect. "When your time's up, your time's up" is their simple philosophy, one that empowers them to perform their daring feats.