

Northern couple up against Mantracker

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A local couple will learn what it feels like to be a deer in hunting season when they star on a reality television series.

"We're not hardcore outdoors people," admitted Samantha Lefebvre, 24, who was born and raised in Mattawa.

"We camp a lot in the summer, but we haven't spent three weeks in the bush or anything," said her boyfriend Brian Robinson, 25.

Lefebvre and Robinson leave Sunday for a mystery location somewhere in the Canadian wilderness to shoot an episode of Mantracker.

The show debuted in the spring on the Outdoor Life Network. The first season paired complete strangers against the Mantracker.

Contestants have 36 hours and more than 40 kilometres to outrun and outwit the Mantracker and reach the finish line before he catches them. The couple will travel through dense bush, raging rivers and rough terrain for nothing more than bragging rights.

There is no prize, except the satisfaction of beating an expert tracker.

The second season features contestants with pre-existing relationships - couples, families, co-workers and enemies alike.

Lefebvre is a customer service representative for Canadian Blood Services, while Robinson recently graduated from the police foundations program at CDI College.

Lefebvre and Robinson, who have been together for 2 1/2 years, say being from Northern Ontario gives them an advantage.

The couple filled out an online application form a month ago and sent a one-minute video on why producers should cast them.

Robinson views the challenge as "going back to your childhood roots of hide and seek.

"It's a mixture of running and hiding," he said. "You have to utilize your surroundings."

The couple's No. 1 priority is getting in shape for

their 36-hour trek in the bush.

Although the couple will be given a kilometre head start, Mantracker is on a horse and has years of experience on his side.

Terry Grant plays the Mantracker. He's a full-time ranch cowboy from Alberta and a member of the Foothills search-and-rescue team.

Last season, only one team beat the Mantracker.

"We're going to try to maximize our lead for the first five or 10 minutes and run," said Robinson, revealing part of his strategy.

Lefebvre admits they are not long-distance runners so they'll have to try and fool the Mantracker. Friends are giving the couple tips, such as using pine branches under their shoes to beat the Mantracker's tracking skills.

A tarp and a rope will provide shelter overnight and whatever food Robinson can stuff in his backpack will give them fuel.

Some contestants have eaten grasshoppers, said Robinson. Lefebvre is quick to respond they should be sure to bring granola bars.

A broadcast date has yet to be announced.

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