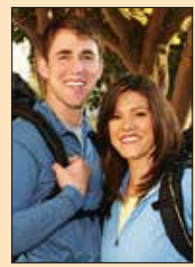


**'THE AMAZING RACE 7'**  
Around the globe first for a million dollars

The show selects 11 teams each made up of two people that have a relationship. The teams are sent on a race around the globe for about 30 days. At stops along the way, the teams take part in a series of mental and physical challenges. Teams can only move forward to the next stop when the current task has been completed. The quicker the tasks are completed the quicker a team advances. Teams that fall farthest behind are gradually eliminated as the race progresses. The first team to arrive at the final destination wins a million dollars.

**THE 11 TEAMS COMPETING IN "THE AMAZING RACE 7"**

-  **RAY HOUSTEAU, 44**  
Occupation: Stockbroker  
Hometown: Canfield
-  **DEANA SHANE, 27**  
Occupation: Marketing and promotions  
Hometown: Youngstown
- Relationship:** Dating on and off
-  **DEBBIE CLOYD, 25**  
Occupation: Photographer  
Hometown: Woodbridge, Va.
-  **BIANCA SMITH, 26**  
Occupation: High school teacher  
Hometown: Woodbridge, Va.
- Relationship:** Lifelong friends
-  **UCHENNA AGU, 40**  
Occupation: Energy Broker  
Hometown: Houston
-  **JOYCE AGU, 44**  
Occupation: Sales Manager  
Hometown: Houston
- Relationship:** Married
-  **BRIAN SMITH, 27**  
Occupation: Bartender, actor  
Hometown: Santa Monica, Calif.
-  **GREG SMITH, 24**  
Occupation: Bouncer  
Hometown: Santa Monica, Calif.
- Relationship:** Brothers
-  **MEREDITH SMITH, 69**  
Occupation: Retired executive  
Hometown: Easton, Md.
-  **GRETCHEN SMITH, 66**  
Occupation: Retired flight attendant and registered nurse  
Hometown: Easton, Md.
- Relationship:** Grandparents
-  **RYAN PHILLIPS, 31**  
Occupation: General contractor  
Hometown: Landrum, S.C.
-  **CHUCK HORTON, 32**  
Occupation: Sales  
Hometown: Inman, S.C.
- Relationship:** Best friends



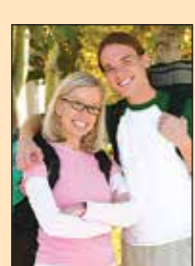
**RON YOUNG, 28**  
Occupation: Motivational speaker (former Iraq War POW)  
Hometown: Villa Rica, Ga.



**ROB MARIANO, 29**  
Occupation: Runner-up, "Survivor: All-Stars"  
Hometown: Canton, Mass.



**LYNN WARREN, 30**  
Occupation: Executive assistant  
Hometown: West Hollywood, Calif.



**SUSAN VAUGHN, 54**  
Occupation: Director for Judicial Affairs, Miami University  
Hometown: Hamilton, Ohio



**HEIDI HEIDEL, 31**  
Occupation: Stay at home mom  
Hometown: Oak Park, Calif.



**MEGAN BAKER, 26**  
Occupation: Fashion designer  
Hometown: Oak Park, Calif.



**BASKET CASE:** Ray and Deana perform a detour in Huambutio, Peru, above, during the season premiere of "The Amazing Race 7."



**PREVIOUS WINNERS:** Last fall more than 12 million viewers watched "The Amazing Race 6" finale to see Freddy and Kendra, shown with host Phil Keoghan at right, cross the finish line and claim the \$1 million first prize.

REALITY TV  
**Racing residents of the Valley**  
Area couple hopes for amazing results

Ray Housteau and Deana Shane aren't talking.

As contestants on the upcoming "The Amazing Race 7" season, which debuts March 1 on WKBN-TV Channel 27, the two Youngstown area residents are as tightlipped as can be expected, with the possibility of \$1 million in winnings on the line.

While their family members are talking, they know just as much you do.

"I know nothing," said Deana's mother, Char Shane. "Nothing."

"It's extremely hard," said Housteau's sister Charlene Kozak. "We try. Every time we see him, we try. We'll mention countries, we'll mention places and things. We'll say what was it like when you were there or what was it like when you crossed the finish line? And they just smile and look at us and don't say anything."

**A long journey**

Considering the skill and agility needed in traveling the world in "The Amazing Race 7," let's hope for Ray and Deana's sake such elementary deception is futile. After all, it's been quite a long road. After sending an audition tape in last summer, the two adventure seekers went to Chicago and Los Angeles for interviews before leaving Nov. 15 for their five-week trek.

An avid watcher of "The Amazing

“My brother is an amazing guy and an amazing race kind of guy”

Ray Housteau's sister

Race" series, Kozak said she was thrilled when she heard her older brother Ray was going to try out for what she calls the best reality show on television.

"My brother is an amazing guy and an amazing race kind of guy," Kozak said. "He's very smart, very successful. He wouldn't go unless he was prepared in every way."

**Getting prepared**

Due diligence is nothing new to her stockbroker brother, Kozak said Ray, 44, and Deana, 27, did quite a bit of working out and research to prepare for their travels, ranging from cross-country athletic training to studying all six previous seasons of "The Amazing Race" and memorizing continents and flags.

"I thought it was an awesome idea," said Deana's mother, a Boardman resident. "I was proud of her. She likes competition. She golfs, hunts, fishes, takes karate and exercises every day." Currently, Deana is studying phlebotomy at the Choffin Career and Technical Center.

**Not a clue**

With "The Amazing Race 7" season expected to run through early May, the families of Ray and Deana aren't completely in the dark. The couple, which was dating off and on prior to the experience, is now engaged with a May 21 wedding date. If there has ever been a compatibility test for a couple, spending five weeks together in a nerve-racking competition with \$1 million hanging over your head is definitely a sign of marital harmony.

"That would be a good test," said Char Shane.

Added Kozak, "I would think so. From what I understand, you're not allowed to be more than 20 feet apart from each other. And that's 24/7 nonstop for about five weeks."

When asked if she could do that with her husband Robert, she said, "Hell no. I said if that was me, I probably would have thrown him off a cliff."



**THE AMAZING LOCAL RACERS:** Ray Housteau from Canfield and Deana Shane from Youngstown are a dating couple competing against 10 other teams in a global race to win a \$1 million. The two teammates make their TV debut in the two-hour premiere of "The Amazing Race 7" at 9 p.m. on March 1.

**Despite recent flops, reality TV not out of the picture**

By ROB OWEN  
PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

Last fall, after the successful premieres of scripted dramas "Lost" and "Desperate Housewives" and the simultaneous failure of multiple reality shows — Fox's "The Next Great Champ" and "The Rebel Billionaire; Branson's Quest for the Best," ABC's "The Benefactor," NBC's "Last Comic Standing" — conventional wisdom held that the era of reality TV was dead.

More recent ratings disasters — Fox's "Who's Your Daddy?" and "My Big Fat Obnoxious Boss" and CBS's "Wickedly Perfect" and "The Will" — would seem to prove the point.

But not so fast. We've been through this cycle before. Before "American Idol" became a hit in the summer of 2002, there was a whole raft of reality failures. Anyone remember ABC's "The Chair," Fox's "The Chamber," The WB's "No Boundaries," CBS's "American Fighter Pilot" or UPN's "Under One Roof"? Reality didn't die then, nor did it die in 2003 when ABC's "I'm a Celebrity — Get Me Outta Here!" and "Are You Hot?" and CBS's "Cupid" failed to catch enough viewers' attention to stick around long.

Once "The Apprentice" hit it big a year ago, it encouraged another cycle of reality shows.

Despite several reality-show failures this past fall, this season "The Amazing Race" has become a ratings winner for the first time in its history.

"American Idol" is back and bigger than ever. "Survivor" continues to hold up in the ratings, helping to give CBS a winning Thursday night. Although NBC's "The Apprentice" doesn't look like it will have the longevity of "Survivor," plans for a spinoff with Martha Stewart in the Donald Trump role will breathe some new life into the franchise. And ratings for ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" have skyrocketed.

**Too much of a good thing**

Fox Entertainment president Gail Berman said everything in TV is cyclical. She points to the current dearth of comedies as an example of a genre that's down but not out and likely to rise again. What she learned from this fall's Fox reality failures was that it's never a good idea to overdo.

"We had too much of it on our schedule at one time," Berman said. "Our balance was out of whack and that was not

“Despite several reality-show failures this past fall, this season "The Amazing Race" has become a ratings winner for the first time in its history.”

a good thing for us."

Mike Darnell, Fox's executive vice president of specials, alternative and late-night programming, is pretty much the guru of reality TV, not just at Fox where he works, but he's pretty much the top dog for the entire industry. He's the one who sent Rick Rockwell down the aisle in "Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire?," helping to jumpstart the reality genre. He's the one who sent straying couples to "Temptation Island." He even wanted to crash a jumbo jet in the desert for a reality special, although the federal government nixed that idea.

Darnell said overkill will kill ya every time.

terested longer than others.

**Not all news is good news**

Though controversy can garner attention for a reality show, it doesn't necessarily draw in viewers, as Fox found this year. Rival networks and producers accused Fox of stealing their ideas for several shows, including "The Next Great Champ," which flopped. And adoption advocates tsk-tsked "Who's Your Daddy?" "That became a big news story, but not necessarily something that would drive people to watch the television show," Darnell said.

Nice is the new mean? Simon Cowell ("American Idol") with a zinger works. Lorenzo Lamas — insulting contestants with a laser pointer on ABC's 2003 series "Are You Hot?" — does not. That was true two years ago and it may be more true today.

"The pendulum has sort of swung, and now the sort of mean-spirited, edgier stuff has fallen by the wayside," said Mike Fleiss, executive producer of "The Bachelor," "The Bachelorette," "The Will," "The Real Giggan's Island" and the WB's upcoming find-an-actress reality show "The Starlet." "Now they're looking for more inspirational, feel-good stuff...."

Darnell thinks having a mean charac-

ter at the core still helps. He said one of the reasons Fox's "Rebel Billionaire" failed last fall was that star Richard Branson was too friendly.

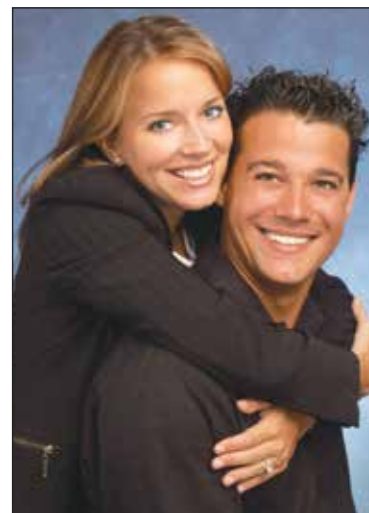
"He's a nice guy, and that doesn't work in reality television," Darnell said.

**Really, it's not going away**

Reality is a genre that's here to stay. But like comedy and drama, not all reality is created equal.

"Good TV is good TV," said Tom Shelly, an executive producer on "Survivor." "There's a rush to oversaturate with reality, maybe because they think it's a save-all, but it's not. It's the execution, it's the storytelling."

Need further proof that reality is not dead? Just look at what's coming up on cable: Oxygen's "Mr. Romance" (search for the next romance-book-cover model), ABC Family's "Las Vegas Garden of Love" (docudrama on a Vegas family that runs a wedding chapel), SOAPNet's "I Wanna Be a Soap Star 2" (aspiring actors vie for a soap-opera role), MTV's "Meet the Barkers" (docudrama about Blink-182's Travis Barker) and CMT's "Popularity Contest" (10 big-city types are dropped in a small Texas town and attempt to become the most popular).



**REALITY CROSSOVER:** Amber Brkich and Rob Mariano were last seen on "Survivor: All-Stars" as winner and first runner-up respectively. They are now engaged to be married and have returned for another dose of reality TV, competing against 10 other teams in "The Amazing Race 7."



**ON YOUR MARKS:** The 11 teams of "The Amazing Race 7" gather in Long Beach, Calif., and listen to final instructions from host Phil Keoghan. The teams, including Ray Housteau from Canfield and Deana Shane from Youngstown, pictured on the far right, are about to begin their worldwide race for \$1 million.