

Running Briefs



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Running Briefs
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YOUR MEDIA LIAISON SPEAKS

"The hardy members of the Running Club North in Fairbanks, Alaska, don't let single-digit temps and negative wind chills trap them inside." So began a sidebar article in February's *Runner's World*, before listing a handful of suggestions by club members (Keith Pollack and Gail Koepf bagged quotes).

Little did *Runner's World* know that single-digits is considered balmy, and many of us endured temperature 50 or 60 degrees colder, and *still* got out. January's icebox was among the coldest on record, and while some, including myself, spent considerable time holed up inside, relegated to the couch, others remained active amidst 40- and 50-below temperatures. They bundled up and, if not embracing the bitter cold, dealt with it, feeling exhilarated not to let Mother Nature get the best of them (though reports of frostbitten - or at least frostnipped - noses and cheeks trickled in.) Many headed to the hills, where the inversion usually provided at least modest relief. Others kept running but retreated to the indoor comforts of the SRC. Some used the motivation of upcoming races - the Boston Marathon, the Susitna 100 (see page 2), the World Masters Ski Championships in Italy (attended by a local group of at least five; those lucky bastards then went to the Winter Olympics in Torino). Many hang up their running shoes for awhile, choosing instead to cross-train, and with skiing, snowshoeing, skijoring, mountaineering and biking, to name just a few, there is no shortage of options. *Runner's World* was right about something: we are indeed a hardy bunch. - Matias Saari

Snowshoe classic last chance to feel the burn

By Chad Carroll

Have you always wanted to try snowshoe running but for some reason just haven't yet? Do you finally realize that you just might not qualify to the U.S. Olympic Trials in the marathon but you still want to qualify to the U.S. Nationals in some event? There's never been a more perfect time to give it a try than the winter's last snowshoe race of the season. The inaugural Fairbanks Snowshoe Classic will take place on Saturday, March 4th on the UAF ski trails. There is a 1-mile, 5-K and 10-K races that all begin at 11 a.m. from the ski hut. There is a \$10 entry fee to go towards re-grooming the ski trails after the race. As a bonus, the first 50 registered snowshoers will also receive a fleece hat. You can register through 5 p.m. on Friday, March 3rd at Beaver Sports or on race day beginning at 10 a.m.

In addition to learning about snowshoeing, this can also be your chance to qualify and participate in the U.S. National Snowshoe Championships taking place on March 25th-26th in Bolton Valley, Vermont. Virtually everyone that races the 10-K will qualify for the U.S. Nationals. The top 10 overall males and females and the top 5 in each 5-year incremental age group qualify for this prestigious event.

Still not convinced to give it a try? Are you concerned that you might not be able to remount those wooden snowshoes back above the fireplace after you dust them off to enter the race? Don't let this stop you from coming to the race because a rep

from Atlas Snowshoe Company will be in Fairbanks for this event and he's bringing a dozen running snowshoes for racers to demo at this event. There will also be extra snowshoes available to use from the Andy Holland Loaner Bucket.

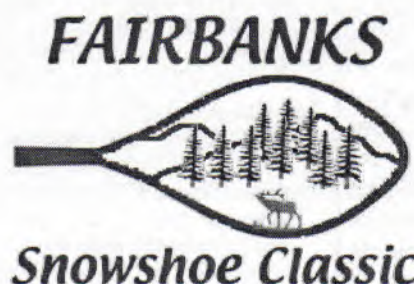
Have you ever entered a ski race on a whim and realize 100 meters into the race that you could be moving much faster if you took off your skis and ran? Snowshoeing does require a slight modification

to your running form, however your "technique" isn't the main predictor of whether or not you'll be competing against racers twice your age or trying to out-kick someone that was potty trained this millennium. After a few miles on snowshoes you hardly know they're there.

This is especially true for the lightweight racing snowshoes that can weight less than 2 pounds per pair.

So what's the big deal about snowshoeing? Well, if you haven't looked outside your window during the past four months it's cold, dark and snowy - perfect for snowshoeing. It's much safer than running on the roads this time of year, so strap on your headlamp and follow that snow-machine trail that's right out your back door. Another option is to create your own trail where you're limited only by your imagination and your neighbor's dog yard. While snowshoeing is prohibited at Birch Hill and discouraged on the UAF ski trails (except for the Snowshoe Classic race), there are many great snowshoe trails in all parts of town created by snowshoe

—See "Snowshoe Classic", page 4



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Running Briefs is published six times a year (in February, April, June, August, October and December). Without contributions from Interior Alaska running enthusiasts, newsletter recipients would be subjected to drivel exclusively from the editor. Spare us that by submitting anything of interest to:

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Um, yeah,
(thank god)
we're co-ed

RCN will be featured in the April, 2006 edition on Health Magazine. But in response to a fact-checkers query: RCN does not offer an all-female running club.

Suffering at Susitna

By Matias Saari

Prior to starting the Susitna 100 race near Big Lake on Feb. 18, Brian Jackson said he was "looking forward" to the suffering he anticipated experiencing.

He just never imagined the pain would be so intense.

Jackson was one of five Fairbanksans to finish the 100-mile race, and the only one to do so on foot. Ed Plumb, Lisa Beattie, Tina Devine and John Shook all opted for skis.

"It was pretty brutal," said Jackson on his cell phone near Big Lake on Monday, the day after hobbling to the finish in 36 hours, 27 minutes. "It's the hardest thing I've ever done."

Jackson said he "blew out" his legs to pieces, experienced severe blisters, and suffered swollen and bruised ankles.

"If you asked me today, I'd never do another one," said Jackson, whose longest outing before the Susitna 100 was the Equinox Marathon, where he finished 11th overall in 2005.

The first half of the race went well enough, said Jackson. He and Ryan Haack, a friend from Deerfield, Wisc., alternated running and walking and reached the Mile 46 checkpoint in 13 hours, 22 minutes.

On Sunday night, though, the weather took a dramatic turn for the worse, with 20 mile-per-hour headwinds, gusts to 35 miles-per-hour and a persistent and pelting rain.

"I had to keep moving," said Jackson. "It was a real challenge staying warm."

The problem was, moving became increasingly slow and difficult. His ankles, in particular, took a beating.

"At the end, I had no flex left," Jackson said. "It was so painful on the uphill, I crawled in places."

Amazingly, 53 runners, skiers and bikers finished the race with only two entrants dropping out.

Did Jackson ever consider quitting?

"About a thousand times," said Jackson, though he was pleased to have persevered. "Near the end, I'm really glad that no one asked if I wanted a ride."

The last stretch was a final insult.

"I ran the last two miles, and it's embarrassing to say, I was nearly crying," said Jackson, hardly a back-of-the-pack runner, adding that it took 27 minutes to cover that distance.

Jackson's training, like the other Fairbanks competitors, was curtailed by the lengthy cold snap the Interior experienced earlier this winter.

Jackson, unlike some competitors, never stopped to sleep during the event.

But "you'd fall asleep when you were walking," he said.

Hydrologist gets wet

Meanwhile, Fairbanks' Ed Plumb took 23 hours and 16 minutes to ski the course, finishing together with Lisa Beattie.

"It was way easier" than anticipated, said Plumb. "I couldn't believe I wasn't that tired."

That despite hunkering down for nearly six hours at the Mile 87 checkpoint just 13 miles from the finish.

"My hands all of a sudden got cold. I could feel my core temperature dropping and I started shivering," said Plumb, who recovered by drinking hot fluids and drying his sodden clothing in a wall tent set up by race officials. "We decided not to go until we got warmer or the rain stopped."

Plumb, a National Weather Service hydrologist, carried plenty of food and gear in his 23-25-pound pack, but the storm caught him by surprise.

"I had a windbreaker. I didn't expect pouring, drenching rain," said Plumb. "It was crazy. My ski boots were filled with water when we got to the checkpoint. The weather really knocked a lot of people down."

Earlier, the conditions prac-

tically stopped Plumb and Beattie in their tracks.

"The wind was so strong you couldn't even make forward progress," he said.

The "lollipop" course, set in the shadow of Mount Susitna, followed sections of the Susitna and Yentna Rivers and crossed swamps, lakes and the Iditarod Trail. But the trail was difficult to follow in sections because the wind had knocked down trail markers. One positive the weather provided, however, was that the rain had turned the snow granular and provided relatively fast skiing, said Plumb.

Plumb kept his energy up by stopping to eat every 30 minutes. Among the buffet he packed was a whole pizza, sausage and cheese and a variety of snacks.

Plumb and Beattie leapfrogged much of the race but stuck together when the conditions got nasty.

Traveling on skis was the right choice for Plumb.

"I have a hard time running a marathon," he said. "I can't imagine running (100 miles)."

Tina Devine, once the Equinox Marathon record-holder, also encountered difficulty. She spent nine hours and 16 minutes traveling from Luce's Lodge (the mile 55 checkpoint) to Flathorn Lake (Mile 75 checkpoint), then waited nearly another four hours before departing Flathorn Lake. Her finishing time was 27 hours and 8 minutes.

John Shook, a skier from Fairbanks, caught up with Devine late in the race and also finished in 27:08.

Jay Petervary of Jackson, Wyoming won the race on bike in 11 hours, 27 minutes.

Five Fairbanksans also finished the Little Su 50-kilometer race on foot. They were Eric Mtika, 5 hours, 23 minutes, 55 seconds; Ethan Caldwell 5:43.04; Nathan Burnham 5:52.48; Peter Nesbitt 6:14.32; and Joshua Hull 7:38.37.



He'd catch him if they were snowshoeing

Chad Carroll chases Kevin Brinegar through a birch forest in the general Skyline Ridge vicinity last November.

Photo by Matt Hage

New trails park on Skyline Ridge in the works

Fairbanks residents are organizing to create a new trails park. A 470-acre parcel of land formerly known as "Bender Mountain", on the ridge just north of Fairbanks, has been used for over 50 years as a recreational site. Since the 1950s the Skyline Ridge Trail has been used by walkers, equestrians, runners, snowshoers, skiers, mountain bikers, snow machiners and ATVs. New trails in the area, and events like the Heart of Darkness snowshoe race and It Ain't Easy Race, have increased the area's popularity. Friends of Skyline Ridge Park is a user group dedicated to encouraging conveyance of the land from the State of Alaska to the

Fairbanks North Star Borough Parks & Recreation Department for use as a park. The group intends to create a trails park to preserve trails and open space for multiple trail uses. There were 35 people in attendance at the January 31 organizational meeting, indicating an intense interest in the area. The next steps include building support and recognition before asking the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly to draft an ordinance requesting DNR to convey the land. Anyone wishing to be kept abreast news affecting the proposed Skyline Ridge Park should contact Jon Underwood at jonu@alaskafeed.com.

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1
169

Snowshoe classic, from page 1

RESULTS

enthusiasts. For the past 14 years Andy Holland breaks in the trail used for the Heart of Darkness Snowshoe Run covering several miles of trails on the Skyline Ridge trail system. The trails at the new Isberg trail system are used for Dave Cowee's Chena Ridge Snowshoe Run, Rocky Riefenstahl puts in a snowshoe trail and hosts the Snowshoe and Hot Chocolate race off Goldhill Road and Keith Polluck breaks in a snowshoe trail every winter dropping north off Goldfinch Road into the Goldstream Valley for the Balaine Ridge Snowshoe Run.

Have you been so dizzy from running laps around the SRC that you can't find the weight machines? Are you still convinced that runners don't need to lift weights to maintain proper muscle balance? Once again, snowshoeing is the answer. Going out for a snowshoe run just once or twice a week can provide a great strength workout that your spring running will certainly benefit from. With an extra pound or more on each foot the snowshoes can act like ankle weights, but without the dangerous impact concerns that go along with using ankle weights. Most Fairbanks winters have adequate snowpack that allows even the most injury prone runners the chance to log some miles before spring breakup. Just think how much better the Equinox might feel if you've trained for 6-7 months instead of the typical 3-4 months.

If every summer Fairbanks can regularly have thousands of runners toe the starting line of the popular road races, there's no reason one of the most snow-covered towns in the U.S. can't host a major snowshoe race. So come on out and give it a try, it might just change the way you think about winters in Fairbanks.

The following is a non-comprehensive list of recent running results for local runners. The runner's name is followed by the name of the event, date, "chip" or "net" time when available (as opposed to the "gun" time, which would be slower at larger races), overall placing, and for women, place by gender. Notes of interest follow at the bottom. A runner need *not* be an RCN member to be listed.

Karoline Davis	*Rock 'n Roll AZ	1/15/06	3:53.18	366
Tracey Martinson	Rock 'n Roll		4:11.18	783
Claire Doran	Rock 'n Roll		4:41.51	1576
Gina Jay	Rock 'n Roll		4:41.22	1561
Keith Kimbrell	Rock 'n Roll HM		1:39.49	794
Shirley Winther	Rock 'n Roll HM		1:55.52	1059
Sandra Kimbrell	Rock 'n Roll HM		1:55.53	1060
Richard Winther	Rock 'n Roll HM		2:06.43	4418
Joanna Smith	Rock 'n Roll HM		3:18.30	9590
Charlotte Berhahl	Miami HM	1/29/06	3:01.30	2222
Bob Hildebrandt	Tybee Island, GA	2/4/06	5:45.39	306
Bob Hildebrandt	Ocala FL	2/5/06	6:18.50	175

* The P.F. Chang's Rock 'n Roll Arizona Marathon from Phoenix to Tempe was the only out-of-town running race well attended by Fairbanksans in recent months. Five locals competed in the same event where Haile Gabreselassie of Ethiopia shattered the world record in 58 minutes, 55 seconds. In the marathon, Karoline Davis PR'd with her 3:53 run. Claire Doran, meanwhile, ran 4:41 in her marathon debut despite being delayed en route to Phoenix due to the ash fallout from the erupting Mount Augustine.