

SPOKANE NORDIC NEWS

April 2014

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One for (all) the Ages

Looking back at the Spokane Nordic Challenge

- by John McCarthy

John Hatcher had an idea: a long, timed ski—not necessarily competitive, but more of a challenge to oneself. He organized this by himself for ten years. Every year, twenty to thirty people would participate, with John standing out in the cold offering encouragement, timing and snacks. The “fee” was a requested donation to the ski team.

It was one of my favorite things to do.

This year, John asked if Spokane Nordic would take it over (I think because he really wanted to ski it). Spokane Nordic did, with Brad Thiessen heading up the organization of the event with options for twenty, thirty or fifty kilometer routes. And it was a rousing success, with 150 skiers signing up.

I had the opportunity to ski it this year; it was great fun and I was truly impressed with the skiers who stared down winter and came out and accepted the challenge. It was in tough but not impossible conditions, with cold weather and fresh and getting-fresher snow. My Seattle friend who attended, and ski team racer Ellie Weisblat, assured me that conditions were far more challenging at the Birkebeiner the weekend before. There were lots of smiles to be had on the trail and some pretty amazing skiers who were

challenging themselves to an activity that was at the edge of their abilities.

Four sixteen-year-olds skied the fifty kilometer course as a group and although exhausted upon completion, stuck together and took on something few of us considered at that age. There were the “yetis,” a renowned Nordic Kids gang who led their parents over the twenty kilometers.

And there was John Hatcher, not timing the event, rather out there, still encouraging, smiling and showing all of us that winter could be accepted as a friend and an entity we could successfully challenge rather than threatening us or sending us to the recliner and the latest episode of American Idol.

Photo: Joe Korus



Photo: Jayne McLaughlin



U10 takes on 20k

- by Alison Liaboe

For many of us, the thought of skiing fifty, thirty or even twenty kilometers is daunting. Not so for many of our most hardened skiers—namely, those who are under ten years old. The inaugural Spokane Nordic Challenge welcomed 150 skiers from age five to seventy-five, with a fifth of the total under the age of eighteen. And of those under eighteen, a good one-third were aged ten or under.

The fact that there were that many young skiers that put themselves to the test of skiing twenty kilometers is more than impressive. It's extraordinary. The ten-and-under crowd from Spokane Nordic

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Thank-You to Our Sponsors

A big thanks to all the sponsors who helped make Spokane Nordic and Mt. Spokane cross-country ski events so successful this year. Support these businesses who have supported us!

Spokane Nordic Season Sponsors

Numerica Credit Union | Elements Massage | Camp Spalding
Out There Monthly | BeFAST Sportgear

Pocket Trail Map

Brian Hawkins, Builder | Karen E. Nelson CPA | Mountain Gear
Fitness Fanatics | Pressworks

WinterFest

Season Sponsors, plus REI | First Choice Health | U District PT
Roast House | BumbleBar.

Spokane Nordic Challenge - Sponsors

Season Sponsors, featuring Numerica Credit Union, plus Spokane Fitness
Rocket Bakery | BumbleBar | Mt. Spokane Nordic Ski Patrol

Spokane Nordic Challenge - Prizes

Fitness Fanatics | Elements Massage | Flamin' Joe's | Wiley E. Waters | Pacific Ave Pizza
Title9 Sports | Boots Café | Rockwood Bakery | Bike Hub

Mt. Spokane Nordic Cup (JNQ)

Fitness Fanatics | Mountain Gear | Four Seasons Coffee | URM
Mt. Spokane State Park | Rocket Bakery

Souper Bowl

Numerica Credit Union | REI | Fitness Fanatics | MSR | Mountain Gear

Langlauf - Sponsors

Fitness Fanatics | Europa Restaurant | Spokesman Review | Gus Johnson Ford
Great Harvest Bakery | Rocket Bakery | River Ridge Hardware | Roast House Coffee
Pegasus Media Group | Mt. Spokane Nordic Ski Patrol | Interlink Advantage
Nomadz Racing Services | Walters Fruit Ranch | Waterglider International

Langlauf - Prizes

Sun Mtn. Lodge & MVSTA, Rendezvous Huts | Izaak Walton Inn | Elements Massage
Mustard Seed Restaurant | Senior Froggy | Bennidito's Pizza | Manito Tap House
Froyo Earth Yogurt | Nothing Bundt Cake | Bloomsday Road Runners

... and of course,

Mt. Spokane State Park, Inland Empire Paper and Idaho Forestry for
dedicating the trails on their land for all of us to use as part of the
Mt. Spokane Cross-Country Ski Park.

A Banner Year for Kids' Programs

For seven weeks in January and February, 140 Nordic Kids and ten Youth Rangers skied, tromped and played their way to fun and fitness. The season was capped off on a sunny Saturday, March 8 by the annual Nordic Kids Olympics.

Many thanks to all the volunteer coaches, organizers and helpers who continue to make this one of the best ways for kids to enjoy the outdoors.

Biggest thanks go to Alison Liaboe for heading up the program for an extra year, and to Chris Oxford for leading the inaugural year of Youth Rangers.

Here are pics from the NK Olympics and Youth Rangers.

Photo: Brad Thiessen



Photo: Brad Thiessen



Photo: Brad Thiessen



Photo: Brad Thiessen



Photo: Chris Oxford



Youth Rangers helped put up trail signage, learned back-country skills, took skate ski lessons, and more.

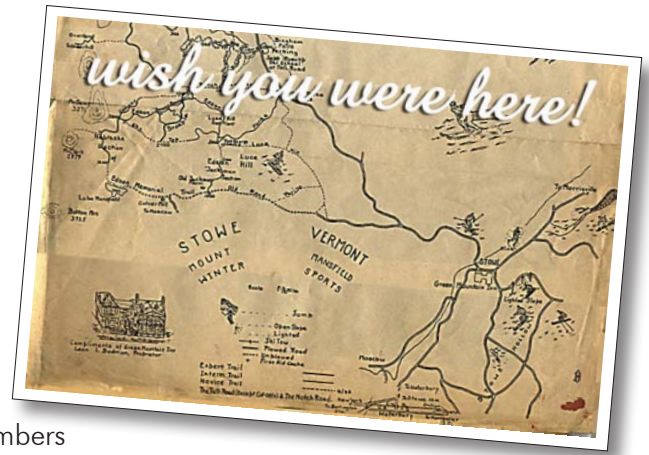
Kids Ski 20km and beyond (cont'd from p.1)

Ski Association is one that has braved the elements week after week, being tricked into learning by the most fun and energetic Nordic Kids coaches in the State.

I was one of the parents being led by a number of young skiers during the Challenge this year and could not believe the energy and terrific attitudes all these skiers had. I think they laughed and chatted the entire way. I look forward to many years ahead, skiing with these delightful individuals, letting them lead and provide encouragement to each other (and me!) along the way.



POSTCARDS FROM STOWE-AWAYS



As reported in the February newsletter, Spokane Nordic Ski team members Brett Ford, Lauren Potyk and Ian McCarthy earned spots on the Pacific Northwest Ski Association (PNSA) team that went to the 2014 USSA Junior National Cross-Country Ski Championships in Stowe, Vermont on March 1-8. Here are some reflections on the experience.

Photo: Carol Guthrie



Lauren attacking the 5 km classic

LAUREN:

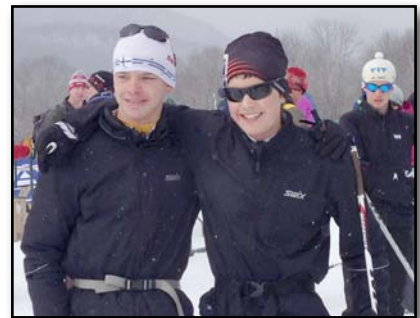
Junior Nationals were a blast. The entire PNSA team was just hilarious and so nice, we all got along well. Aside from having a ton of fun we did race our hardest too. The competition was hard, the best skiers in the nation! But that didn't mean I couldn't race my own good race and try to do my best. I definitely think Spokane could be a strong force at Junior Nationals in the near future. It takes hard work and focus but as long as you enjoy what you're doing and keep it fun and enjoy the people around you, it's such an incredible learning racing experience, creates such good memories, and is all around just so much fun. With strong younger skiers coming in and joining the team I would definitely encourage them to make Junior Nationals a goal and work towards it.

As my first year I was honestly just ecstatic that I even made the team, and just being there was surreal, but the people, races, venue, just everything was so incredible!

BRETT:

Racing at Stowe was an incredible experience for me because I learned so many new things about how I race, and how my racing compares to the best in the nation. I went into the first race feeling really nervous, but soon learned that I race better when I am relaxed. This was my main challenge for the week, and I feel as if I had a handle on it by the end of the week. It also was a fun week, because I got to spend most of my downtime with people who are amazing skiers, and a lot of fun to be around. Reaching Junior Nationals again is definitely a goal to work for next year, and I hope more of my teammates can join me there.

Photo: Carol Guthrie



Brett and Ian share a moment



Thanks to Ski Team coaches Matt Halloran, George Bryant and Jeannie Nelson for building a strong Ski Team this year. **Kudos** to George on being selected as coach for the PNSA team at Junior Nationals!

So, here we are. The end of March. We made it. Dozens of finish lines, preceded by races both good and bad, have brought us here: the end of the season.

We really look forward to it, the end. We start dreaming of it around February, when we know we're not supposed to, when pre-race routines have degenerated from exhilarating to obligatory, when the end is just distant enough to be a dream, not a reality.

A Parent's Perspective of Junior Nationals

by Kate Hagan

Cold crisp morning

Parents appear, start list in hand

"Go PNSA"

Warmed-up game-faced youth corralled to the start

"Go PNSA"

Parent's eyes seeking the racy blue and white

Nods are sought, sometimes delivered

"Go PNSA"

Racers off: Power-Skill-Strength

Determination everywhere

"Go PNSA"

Crashes/broken poles/falls

A physical mental challenge

"Go PNSA"

Goals reached/goals missed

The awe of Nationals

"Go PNSA"

** PNSA stands for Pacific Northwest Ski Association, the region Spokane represents at the Junior National Cross-Country Ski Championships. Kate's son Ian McCarthy was one of three members of the Spokane Nordic Ski Team who qualified to compete in the 2014 Junior Nationals.*

And why not dream of it? The end of the season brings with it so many great things (beer. French fries). Released from our schedules, we have the choice to do what we want (beer. French fries) when we want (beer. French fries) and how we want it (beer. French fries!). Dancing! Alpine skiing! Staying up late! Skipping meals! Adding meals! High heels! Getting sick! Sleeping in! It all sounds so wonderful, so free, we can't wait to get there.

But then we're there. Standing on the line of our last race, 30 kilometers from Spring, and suddenly, instead of forward, we look back. On the last page of a long book, we want more. More of what? We don't know. We just don't want it to be over. Sometimes we're not wild about what we have until someone tries to take it away.

When I stood there, on that line staring down the barrel of the final race of the season, I looked back on an incredible year. From where I stood, I could see a year of transition, challenge, a little bit of triumph, and quite a bit of growth. For whatever disappointments and trials that come with living this lifestyle, there is a tremendous amount of good that accompanies them. I feel incredibly lucky to be a part of this sport, in this community, and to have the mitochondria and will power to be able to pursue my goals. For now, those goals still revolve around skiing, and I expect that they will for quite some time.

However, while I look at this week as an end to a season, I'm spontaneously aware that for many of my friends, it will be an end to a career. That's the cycle. It happens everywhere, in every business, family and town; people grow up, they grow out, they move on to make new goals and find new places. To some people, that change will be amicable, a result of time and new opportunity. To others, it will not.

Now that I've crossed the finish line, I feel nothing but (an impressive amount of) gratitude to those who have supported me, both monetarily and otherwise, this year. So to all of you, thank you. I hope that I'm doing my part to add to the community that raised me. That, above all, is my greatest goal.

- Annie is a former Spokane Nordic Ski Team member. She just completed her first year as a professional Nordic skier.

THE METAPHORICAL

by Annie Pokorny

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SPOKANE NORDIC MEMBERSHIP FORM

Spokane Nordic Ski Association develops and maintains trails, updates facilities, provides pocket maps and trail signs, organizes races and events, chops firewood, gives a daily online grooming and conditions report, plus a host of other services to make the Mt. Spokane Cross-Country Ski Park one of the best Nordic facilities in the Pacific Northwest. We are skiers like you, supporting the trails we love, and we can't do it without YOU!

Yes! I want to become a Spokane Nordic member.

** Membership runs October - September. Please include payment as directed below.*

| | | |
|---|-------------|------------------------------------------|
| — | Member | \$30 (include payment as directed below) |
| — | Contributor | \$50 |
| — | Friend | \$100 |
| — | Advocate | \$250 |
| — | Benefactor | \$500 |
| — | Champion | \$1,000 |

| | | |
|----------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Name: _____ | Additional family members: _____ | Age (children) _____ |
| Address: _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Phone: _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Email: _____ | _____ | _____ |

Date: _____ Total Contribution \$ _____

In signing and submitting this form, I recognize that cross-country skiing involves strenuous activities, is potentially hazardous, and involves inherent risk. I knowingly and voluntarily assume all responsibility and risk for my actions and my family's actions while cross-country skiing, during travel related to Spokane Nordic activities or during use of Spokane Nordic facilities and equipment. This includes, but is not limited to, falls collisions, effects of weather, conditions of equipment and trails and other areas while skiing or participating in Spokane Nordic activities. I hereby for myself, my heir, administrators, or anyone else who may bring claims on my or my family members' behalf, covenant not to sue, release and discharge Spokane Nordic, its Board and Committee members, and all related organizations or individuals, for any and all claims of liability for death, personal injury, or property damage arising from my or my family members' participation in Spokane Nordic activities.

Member Signature

Date Signed

Make check(s) out to Spokane Nordic and mail your tax-deductible membership contribution with this form to: Spokane Nordic, PO Box 501, Spokane, WA, 99210.

*Spokane Nordic is a non-profit, 501(C)(3) organization
Learn more about our programs online at www.spokaneNordic.org.
Email questions about membership to info@spokaneNordic.org

The Last Word

A farewell message

Wow. I am looking back at the last couple of years as Spokane Nordic president and it has flown by. As is typical for outgoing leaders, I want to share with you a few things I learned in my role and highlight some of the changes that have occurred since I first joined the Spokane Nordic board six years ago.

I have learned that there is a huge amount of interest and energy that surrounds cross country skiing in and around Spokane. There has been remarkable growth in many areas; it seems as though our community was primed for this growth. I have learned that much of the work is done by a limited number of dedicated people who are passionate about what they do and we would not have what we do were it not for their contributions. I have learned that our community has put together a phenomenal Spokane Nordic board who have put hundreds of hours into creating an excellent skiing experience. They truly have helped to advance Nordic skiing to a level that is much less fragile than it was seven years ago when I arrived in town.

It is possible that Nordic skiing would have caught on no matter what Spokane Nordic did, though I doubt it. The board has been very intentional about advancing Nordic skiing to our community. It has formed alliances with Idaho State, Mount Spokane, Inland Empire Paper, Mountain Gear, Fitness Fanatics, REI, Ski Patrol, skijoring, the state's Winter Recreation Advisory Committee, Langlauf, and others. It has worked to advertise itself and events with Out There Magazine, the Inlander, Spokane Public Radio, and the Spokesman Review.

It has had the maximum possible number of Nordic Kids sign up (140) this year; the Transition Team has flourished as a group of potential racers and it was non-existent three years ago; a new group has been formed with some staying power, the Youth Rangers, who don't necessarily want to race but do want to be "ski ambassadors;" the racing team has routinely been sending racers to compete nationally as representatives of the Pacific Northwest Ski Association (PNSA), most recently with three racers at

Stowe, VT; ski lessons on the mountain have been remarkably successful with hundreds of people receiving lessons.

Grooming has been excellent with many more trails added and well-defined grooming approaches developed.

Wifi now exists at the lodge. We have three races that are routinely being put on in Spokane: a Loppet that has found "its legs" this year with 150 people signing up, the Langlauf that brings people together of all abilities, and the JNQ (Junior National Qualifier) that allows us to ski with some of the region's best skiers. We hired Brad Thiesen as Marketing Director and he has done a yeoman's job of achieving the goals we set out for him in terms of getting more skiers to the snow.

Of course, we have further to go in terms of developing skiing in our community. That is where my colleague Lisa Sunderman comes in. Lisa has been with the board in a number of critical roles and has aided in Spokane Nordic's transition to more stable footing. She has helped to make our organization fiscally viable and responsible, she has helped to market Spokane Nordic to our community and through her work with ski lessons has helped create a larger number of invested skiers. I am very confident that our board, under Lisa's leadership will continue to enhance all of our skiing experiences.

There are discussions regarding a new lodge, more parking, a second "hut" that will be out by Tripp's Knob, and consideration of a biathlon range. Lisa and the board will be busy. We ask that you consider helping us grow our user base, contribute when and if it makes sense, and please join Spokane Nordic or renew your membership next season, so that we can best represent you as we continue growing Nordic skiing for our community.

- John is outgoing President of Spokane Nordic



by John McCarthy

There are discussions regarding a new lodge, more parking, a second "hut" that will be out by Tripp's Knob, and consideration of a biathlon range. Lisa and the board will be busy.

Have a wonderful off-season!



Spokane Nordic
P.O.Box 501
Spokane, WA 99210

Photo: Joe Korus



Photo: Joe Korus



Photo courtesy Ted Barnwell



Warming energy gels at the Junction 8 aid station

Views from the Spokane Nordic Challenge



Spokane Nordic is committed to creating, developing and delivering programs and facilities to foster cross-country skiing within the greater Spokane community.