

SNOSHU-NEWS

Snowshoes and Course Records. You (Oxy)Moron !!! !!

An Editorial by the Old Goat...

Numerous times in conversations with trail runners / snowshoe'ers, the topic of snowshoe course records has come up. These two word-groups (snowshoe race and course record) shouldn't be used in the same sentence ! The thoughts of any snowshoe race having a course record is moot at best, ludicrous at worst. As substantiation of this, I present a two-part scenario:

One year, the course is 4 feet of powder on which a breakable crust has formed. As you're running, even if you are very light in weight, you break through and you sink thigh deep, or deeper, into the snow. With every step, each snowshoe sinks in AND forward (as they always do because of your forward momentum). You then have to lift the snowshoe, including the snow on top of it, up to break through the crust again and to extract your foot prior to doing this again. And again. And again. Repeat several thousand times.

Next year, the course is an unbreakable crust with 2-3 inches of powder on top (just to give you a little cushioning). All the gullies are filled in and the knobs are smoothed over. You feel like you're running on a pine-needle trail, only it's softer with better grip.

Think about it. But don't think too long (save your brain for a fair fight). How can you have a truly meaningful course record when the same runner, in the same shape, could take twice (or half) the time compared with the year before? Believe it or not, this is TOTALLY possible for both elite and not-so-elite runners (including all age groups, and thus age-group "course records").

Unlike road race times (with trail race times somewhere between these two scenarios), snowshoe race times are determined by the conditions first and the runner's ability a far distant second. In any 10K road race, I don't care how bad the conditions are for a great runner, he will beat my time even if I run the same course under ideal conditions. But, if that same great runner runs a 10K snowshoe course under abysmal conditions and I run the same course under ideal conditions, I will prevail. Period.

Sure, I'd like to have my name attached to a course record, but if it's jaded it's not worth much. Understand that in snowshoeing, the same course isn't necessarily the same course ! If I happened to win the race that year, let THAT stand in posterity. But to think (or have others think) that I have a course record and that I'm the best runner to have run that course in competition is egotistical at best, a fantasy in reality !

The Old Goat

A True Adirondacker!

Blue Mountain is approximately 3700' and located roughly in the central Adirondacks. The nearest landmarks would be Indian Lake and Gore Mt. Tom Warrington has been putting the race on for 4 years as part of the Indian Lake Chamber of Commerce Winter Festival. It's a freebie with the headquarters being the Adirondack Museum, which is open for the day. The race covers approximately 5 mi. and can be divided into 3 sections:

1. The Climb. This is easily comparable to Blackhead. It's 2 miles to the summit with the first mile mostly up with a few little downhills to give you a break. Then for the 2nd mile it's straight up!! Hands on knees, kiss the hill in your face straight up. This year, when we hit the hoarfrost line, the sky was the most brilliant blue I've ever seen. I died for not having a camera, as we were climbing through a tunnel of brown and green tree branches, covered with bright white frost & snow with a background of deep, deep, cloudless blue. The summit was (surprisingly) not too windy and the views down to the lakes were gorgeous.

2. The Descent. This is a steep 4-wheel access road to the electronics array near the top and the firetower. In winter it is occasionally used by snowmobiles to maintain the equipment and by skiers who must be totally insane. It is an extremely sharp drop down with switchbacks at the higher levels that moderate only slightly near the bottom. It is a scary trip down, except for those vertically inclined people for whom free-fall does not inspire terror. How people can maneuver down such steep slopes so gracefully amazes me! This lasts about 2 miles losing all the altitude gained.

3. The Traverse. This last section is a rolling traverse of 1 mile or thereabouts over a hiking/ski trail across the base of Blue and through a nice second growth hardwood forest. It can be a killer if the quads are blown out by sections 1 & 2 and that is a very likely scenario. This year the erratic snow made for some streambeds being open and the trail being a bit unstable underfoot.

I don't think Tom is a runner, and he expresses amazement that people can do this course under 90 minutes. That seems to be his benchmark time for excellence. The course record was 1:05 and this year it was shattered with a time of 53 minutes. I think I had the female course record of 1:12 until this year when some high school upstart came along and ran somewhere around 1:05. There were 24 runners this year, a great increase as past years have been around 15. It's a most low-key event, but Tom and his crew are great hosts and I'm grateful to him for putting the run on each year. I'm happy it's growing; being free, it benefits nothing other than getting people out to the museum. Tom certainly is a nice guy; a true Adirondacker!

Debbie Briggs

1999 SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND SNOWSHOE SERIES FINAL STANDINGS

NAME	AGE	CITY, ST	S. POND	FIGURE 8	HAWLEY	TOTAL
1. Ken Clark	36	Somers, CT	46	25	90	161
2. Leigh Schmitt	26	South Deerfield, MA	49		98	147
3. Bob Worsham	53	Woodstock, CT	41	23	80	144
4. Jim Campiformio	49	Ashford, CT	40	21	78	139
5. Beth Herder	40	Pittsfield, MA	42	04	86	132
6. Steve Cangemi	37	Red Hook, NY	45		84	129
7. Wayne Stocker	44	Hampden, MA	32	20	72	124
8. Dave Hannon	27	Johnston, RI		26	94	120
9. Steve Jensen	37	Stafford Springs, CT	44		76	120
10. Andy Illidge	32	Windsor Locks, CT		24	92	116
11. David Boles	52	New Paltz, NY	35		74	109
12. Sweep Voll	37	Adams, MA	34	17	56	107
13. Jim Preite	34	North Adams, MA	38		68	106
14. Bruce Marvonek	45	Stafford Springs, CT		22	82	104
15. Dave Dunham	34	Bradford, MA			96	96
16. Naomi LaCasse	19	Lanesborough, MA		18	70	88
17. Adam Weisman	35	Clinton, NY			88	88
18. Ken Fairman	55	Granby, MA	24	12	38	74
19. Steve Mitchell	57	Gansevoort, NY	14		58	72
20. Laura Clark	51	Saratoga Springs, NY	23		48	71
21. Chris Dunne	39	Rosendale, NY	05	10	52	67
22. Ken Gulliver	34	Sterling, MA			66	66
23. Steve Roulier	34	Feeding Hills, MA			64	64
24. Kathleen Aubin	43	Manchester, NH			62	62
25. Doug Fuller	36	Eastern, MA			60	60
26. Gotha Swann	49	Pittsfield, MA	02		54	56
27. Richard Busa	69	Marlboro, MA	19		36	55
28. Karl Molitoris	42	Stafford Springs, CT	37	14		51
29. Tony Manganu	52	Saratoga Springs, NY			50	50
30. Bryan Dragon	15	Cheshire, MA	48			48
31. Keith Schmitt	30	Lee, NH	47			47
32. Sarah Pandiscio	09	Simsbury, CT	09	07	30	46
33. Bob Wurtele	55	Manchester, NH			46	46
34. Pat McGrath	34	Adams, MA	13		32	45
35. Poncho Mach	57	Adams, MA	33		12	45
36. Rebecca Taylor	24	Clinton, NY			44	44
37. John Tremblay	37	Cheshire, MA	43			43
38. Erin Worsham	21	Woodstock, CT	26	16		42
39. Curt Pandiscio	37	Simsbury, CT	08	06	28	42
40. Tom McCrumm	53	Ashfield, MA			42	42

1999 SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND SNOWSHOE SERIES FINAL STANDINGS

NAME	AGE	CITY, ST	S. POND	FIGURE 8	HAWLEY	TOTAL
41. Art Gulliver	60	Leominster, MA		08	34	42
42. Ed Alibozek Jr	59	Adams, MA	30	11		41
43. Jerry Gill	58	Greenfield Center, NY			40	40
44. John Carey	37	Oxford, MA	39			39
45. Paul Hartwig	42	Adams, MA	31		06	37
46. Larry Dragon	38	Cheshire, MA	36			36
47. Claudine Preite	31	North Adams, MA	17		18	35
48. Mark Syrett	50	Hampden, MA	10		24	34
49. Konrad Karolczuk	46	Windsor Locks, CT	03	01	26	30
50. Bob Dion	43	Readsboro, VT	29			29
51. Bill Donovan	44	North Adams, MA	28			28
52. Liam Bradey	42	Lynn, MA	27			27
53. John Grenier	48	Leicester, MA	25			25
54. Meg Dunne	38	Rosendale, NY	04	05	14	23
55. Tristan Syrett	14	Hampden, MA			22	22
56. Debra Reno	44	Hopedale, MA	22			22
57. Leon Beverly	72	Stamford, VT	21			21
58. Matt Rauch	16	Hampden, MA			20	20
59. Stan Tiska	41	Hinsdale, MA	20			20
60. Dave Fleming	32	Deerfield, MA		19		19
61. Linda Urko	44	Sheldonville, MA	18			18
62. Pam Murphy	45	Saugus, MA			16	16
63. Scott Rollins	50	Shelbourne Falls, MA	16			16
64. Michael Kryzanski	28	Woodstock, CT		15		15
65. Laurel Rollins	42	Shelbourne Falls,	15			15
66. Rob Whalen	42	Ashford, CT		13		13
67. Tracy McGrath	31	Adams, MA	12			12
68. Charles Cutler	61	West Hawley, MA	11			11
69. Mia Dambrosio	35	North Adams, MA			10	10
70. Dave Durand	20	Woodstock, CT		09		09
71. Shelly Odowd	29	North Adams, MA			08	08
72. Bobby Voll	36	Pittsfield, MA	07			07
73. Karin Bradley	41	Pittsfield, MA	06			06
74. Judy Hartwig	43	Adams, MA			04	04
75. Dave LaPiere	31	Enfield, CT		03		03
76. Ellen Mach	53	Adams, MA	01		02	03
77. Fritz Zingler	67	Windsor Locks, CT		02		02

Double Points were given out at Hawley Kiln Klassic this season!!

BARNYARD AWARDS / 1999 WMAC SNOWSHOE SERIES

The DRAGON Award: This award is named after the 1st overall male champion (1998) of our snowshoe series, Bryan Dragon. The men's 1999 S.N.E.S.S. Champion is Connecticut's Kenny Clark, who had an outstanding season on snowshoes. Ken finished 4th, 2nd and 5th respectively at the three events, and scored a total of 161 out of a possible 173 points in the series. This was his first season on snowshoes and he really has adapted well, there is only room for improvement once he gets a pair of racer shoes on!! Ken rounded up the season with an overall win at the Mt Goat Snowshoe Race on February 28th. We expect to see much more of the same from this guy next season.

The LAUREL Award: Named after the 1st overall female champion (1998) of our snowshoe series, Laurel Rollins. The women's 1999 S.N.E.S.S. Champion is Pittsfield's Beth Herder, who was far and away the top point producer in the ladies division with 132 total points at the three events. Beth is crowned ladies champion in 1999, and ended up 5th overall in the standings. Two remarkable things stand out; one being that Beth finished in the top ten at both "snowshoe" events (8th at South Pond and 7th at the Kiln Klassic). The other thing is she did this while suffering from a stress fracture and a complete fracture in her foot. Beth Herder exhibits more determination and competitive spirit than many of the rest of us put together.

Men's Snowshoer of the year: Leigh Schmitt walloped the rest of the participants at both of our "snowshoe" races. This included the ordeal at South Pond where he broke trail much of the way for everyone else, and also the flight at Hawley where Leigh just demolished any pre-conceived idea of a finish time. This young man has an incredible mix of speed and strength, it was a pleasure watching him participate in our series.

Honorable mention: Ken Clark had the overall victory, and is deserving of consideration here also. Nice job Kenny!! The other shoer worthy of notice is the Woodstock Warrior – Bob Worsham. *The Worsham* managed to finish 3rd overall at age 53, all the while searching for material for his written explorations. Like Kenny, watch this guy next year when he sports racing snowshoes.

Women's Snowshoer of the year: Beth Herder takes her 2nd award for 1999. Usually I would try to spread this stuff around, but Beth was just heads and shoulders ahead of any other female competitor. I don't know if it is the cardio-vascular system, technique or something else, but everyone else is running for second until she decides it will be different.

Honorable mention: Sarah Pandiscio finished all three events while not even reaching double digits in age yet. She really was the finisher who made the biggest impression on everyone, and was the recipient of the stained glass work made and donated by Sweep Voll. Wonderful season on the snow Sarah!!

Men's Rookie of the year: On the eve of hitting the half century mark, 49 year old Jim Campiformio was the most impressive rookie on snowshoes in Southern New England. Jim finished 4th overall with 139 points, and enjoyed the activity so much he purchased a pair of shoes almost immediately.

Women's Rookie of the year: Naomi LaCasse won the Figure Eight race and finished as the second woman at Hawley. She is a real welcome addition to the series as she encourages competitiveness among the lead women. While trailrunning has had it's difficulties attracting women and young people, snowshoeing (at least in 1999) hasn't. Thank you Naomi for participated and making the races better.

Honorable mention Rookie/ Male: Wayne Stocker brought the whole family to the events and made them proud with his 7th overall finish in the final standings. The whole Stocker family wore snowshoes around the events... I hope we have some future participants among them!
Steve Jensen also had wonderful performances at South Pond and Hawley Kiln in his first season on snowshoes, he is a very strong snowshoer who we hope to see more of next year.

Honorable mention Rookie/ Female: Laura Clark jumped into snowshoeing with fervor, and won the 50+ division. What really makes me happy about Laura's participation is she is gung-ho about holding a race of her own next season!! You bet, Saratoga Springs will have snowshoe racing in 2000!! Final addition to the Rookie of the Year mention goes to Meg Dunne, who is a wonderfully cheerful participant and constantly improving snowshoer. Meg was the final finisher at Hawley Kiln, bringing the season to a positive close.

Performance of the year, Men: It would have to be Leigh Schmitt finishing on top at the Hawley Kiln Klassic on February 20th. I don't know if anyone will ever shoot through that course at that speed again.

Performance of the year, Women: Likewise, Beth Herder's race at South Pond was simply outstanding. She battled in with John Tremblay and Steve Jensen, and got knocked into 8th but was only 2 seconds off of 6th overall!!

The K2 Award: Hereby given to the most improved snowshoer. Konrad Karolczuk took almost an hour off his time at Hawley from last year, and like Mr. Molitoris has said, is the only individual to have raced all 5 events over the two-year history. K2 had walked the entire Hawley course the day prior to hang ribbon (and returned a few days later to take it down) so he wasn't exactly rested for the event. His improvement is obvious, as last year he worried about merely finishing. Nice progress Konrad!!

Race of the year: Hawley Kiln Klassic just took home too many compliments to not hand it the award in 1999. Great day, wonderful snow conditions, TV coverage... you couldn't have had more!!

The WORSHAM Award: In honor of Erin Worsham doing two loops at South Pond in 1998, awarded to the directionally challenged. After the big downhill at Hawley, where suddenly you turn left onto unbroken snow and leave the snowmobile path, we had put up about 12 yards of ribbon and a yellow and black arrow to mark the turn. Only one person went wrong, the unequaled Bruce Marvonek. Luckily he was called back to the proper course. The interesting thing is Bruce said he saw the arrow and the ribbon leading the opposite way, but chose to go right (wrong!!) anyway. Hummmmm. This is the same guy who marked the Breakneck course for Karl in October and then got lost during the race on the section he marked.....

HANNON Award: Given to the top snowshoe article of the year, named after New England Runner Trail Troll Dave Hannon (who can never be eligible). Taking first prize would be Deb Reno's snowshoeing for dummies in the self-documentary category. Funny tale, Debra!!
Really nice introspective writing from Steve Cangemi also, thanks Steve. He provided plenty of insight and feeling along with a slew of technique hints in all his articles.

BARNYARD AWARDS / 1999 WMAC SNOWSHOE SERIES

BEVERLY Award: Awarded to the top snowshoer over age of 60, in honor of two time champion at South Pond Leon Beverly. Winner is Richard "Lionhearted" Busa who managed to stay on course during these events. Silverbacks rule!!!!

Volunteer of the year, Men: Curly Voll stood out strong as the whole deal cooking at Hawley, thank you!! Honorable mentions to John Scalise who timed and tore numbers in freezing weather at two events, thanks buddy! And also Tim Zelazo for doing a ton at South Pond.

Volunteer of the year, Women: Judy Alibozek cooked to perfection at South Pond and Figure Eight, no easy task in the dead of winter. Thank you. Where would the snowshoe series be without Donnalee? All the food preparation and serving at the events certainly didn't go unnoticed. Thanks.

Comeback of year: Charles Cutler had not participated in competitive events in a long time, but came out to South Pond and did wonderful. We hope to see this "silverback" next year along with many more mature snowshoers.

Fashion Freaks: Two outfits really stood out at the races, and one other sort of drew attention to it at Paul Hartwig's fun run. And of course there was Andy... First, Karl Molitoris really caused some chuckles (unintended I believe) with his golfing getup at South Pond. Second, Sweep Voll's panties / G-String on the outside of her tights inspired Mr. Worsham to new running heights. I think Bobby took them home as memorabilia on his car mirror. Thirdly, Bob Dion returned to the Glen wearing a one-piece neon lit body suit that had several folks asking him where he keeps the batteries. Lastly, worth mentioning, was Andy Illidge and his "ode to Molitoris" at Hawley Kiln. Going with bare legs at that one was brave!! When I mentioned the "ode to Molitoris" thing to him, he thought it was some type of reference to Greek mythology, and not merely the Old Goat.

Lucky 17 to watch out for in 2000: Potential Unlimited!!!!

Ed Alibozek Jr	(Older farmer turns 60 in '99, new age division!)
Kathleen Aubin	(Ventured down from NH and had a wild Hawley)
Debbie Briggs	(MIA in '99, will we see her in 2000?)
Bob Dion	(He has racing shoes, everyone better watch out)
Bryan Dragon	(Young buck impressed us, older/stronger in '00?)
Chris Dunne	(With a year of shoeing under his belt, no telling!)
Dave Hannon	(The most speed on the circuit just bought shoes)
Andy Illidge	(The Great Brit looked too comfortable at Hawley)
Peter Keeney	(Very talented, temporarily out of the area)
Bruce Marvonek	(Cemetery Man will be a force with training)
Karl Molitoris	(Sidelined with an injury, his focus is on webfoots)
Claudine Preite	(Victory at Mt Goat fest will give her momentum)
Debra Reno	(Serious competitor when she can stop laughing)
Gotha Swann	(Just might enjoy snowshoeing more than anyone)
Tristan Syrett	(Another youngster who I noticed doing trail races)
Linda Urko	(Vows to finish ahead of Deb Reno in 2000!!)
Erin Worsham	(The offspring of the Warrior keeps getting better)

Best new additions: #1) The changing areas at South Pond and Hawley were nice features in '99. Last year we all changed in cars or outside. Liam Brady still went the outdoors route at South Pond though... #2) We expanded with an event in CT this season, the Figure Eight. We didn't have any snow, but it was a race and it was fun. #3) The availability of Sherpa Snowshoes for sale after the season. #4) Converse getting involved and awarding prizes to age group winners!! #5) TV coverage from the always professional Steve Roulier. #6) Eric Perez' new shirt design. 7) Sweep donating the stained glass piece as a prize, thanks, and can we count on you again next year? 8) John Scalise helping out big time one way or another at all three events. We didn't have the West Virginian last season.

On tap for '00: It will be a wild one in 2000 with potentially 4 new events added to the series.

First up will be Paul Hartwig dropping the Glen 5km on us sometime in January. Over 20 snowshoers came out in early March to preview this course and it is a beauty. Lots of rolling terrain and scorching views of Greylock as you split your time between the cover of the pines and open fields in the Greylock Glen Reservation.

Laura Clark brings February in with the Saratoga Springs Winter Fest Snowshoe Race, also 5km. This one has a ton of other family events happening along with it and should be fun. The noon start time certainly helps make the journey appealing too!!

A hill-climb from the Mt Goat folks at Mt Prospect on the last weekend of February will have me heading back. They actually would like to put on something in late December also!!

Finally, if everything goes well, a mystery man will allow you all to sink your teeth into an early March event in West Hawley. Hopefully the course will lead to the infamous Moody Spring.

1999's three events (South Pond Shuffle, Frigid Figure Eight and Hawley Kiln Klassic) will be back again for another year also.

SHERPA SNOWSHOES AVAILABLE

Jeremy Quinn from Sherpa Snowshoe Company has made the loaner snowshoes we utilized throughout the season available for sale. These shoes are in really good shape as they only have been used a couple times. Cost is \$100 a pair, and there is still a limited warranty available from Sherpa. We have a few pair left, and they will be sold to the first people who contact us. Hope this helps bring the 1999 season to an even happier end for some of you!!

Edward Alibozek
860-668-7484

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE SNOWSHOE SEASON 2000

Saturday, Jan. 15, 2000	10:30 am	Florida, MA
South Pond Shuffle	4 miles	Edward Alibozek
860-668-7484		
Saturday, Jan. 22, 2000	10:30 am	Adams, MA
Greylock Glen	5km	Paul Hartwig
413-743-0722		
Sunday, Feb. 06, 2000	12:00 pm	Saratoga Springs, NY
Saratoga Snowshoe Fest	5km	Laura Clark
518-581-1278		
Saturday, Feb. 12, 2000	10:30 am	Union, CT
Frigid Figure Eight	5km	Edward Alibozek
860-668-7484		
Saturday, Feb. 19, 2000	10:30 am	Hawley, MA
Hawley Kiln Klassic	7 miles	Edward Alibozek
860-668-7484		
Sunday, Feb. 27, 2000	11:00 am	Woodford, VT
Mt. Goat Snowshoe Fest	5km	Ron
802-362-5159		
March 4th or 5th, 2000	10:30 am	West Hawley, MA
Moody Springs'	? miles	Edward Alibozek
860-668-7484		

BLUE MOUNTAIN SNOWSHOE RACE

Le Shoe de Blue This past weekend, I traveled to Blue Mountain Lake to run Le Shoe de Blue. This five-mile snowshoe race runs up, and back down Blue Mountain in the Adirondacks.

On Saturday, some handicapping was going on. I was being touted as pre-race favorite. This was with no knowledge of what north-country runners would be showing up. In past years, the Mid-Hudson Valley contingent has made up a surprisingly large portion of the field. Counted in my favor, as compared to fellow southerners who might be running was my snowshoeing experience, and to some extent my running ability. I think too little attention was paid to my poor climbing ability.

Though this was all in good fun, it made me a little excited. I've never had jitters for a snowshoe race before, and seldom have them for any race anymore. This was especially silly, because it all depends on who shows up. I'll run what I can regardless.

As Sunday dawned, I had gotten over the previous night's silliness, and was feeling fine. After eating a small breakfast of oatmeal, and getting dressed, I was ready to go. I drove to the registration at the Adirondack Museum with Kay and Claudia. They stayed at the museum, while I headed to the Blue Mnt Trailhead with Debbie, Harold, Vizla Tansy, and John Brooks.

It was a beautifully clear morning. The temperature was about five degrees for the start. We all did some jogging, stretching and equipment checking. John's not a runner, so he decided to hike around rather than being compelled to go to the summit, and follow the prescribed route, as he has in previous years. There was a record turnout of 24 runners for the event this year. Debbie and Harold are among the few runners who have run this race every year.

The course climbs up a hiking trail for the first two miles, gaining 1725 feet en route to the summit. This elevation is lost just as quickly. The next two miles run down a snowmobile road, which is used to service a radio tower on the summit. The last mile is on flat, ungroomed ski trail, bringing us back to the start.

With my experiences from South Pond, and my arbitrary tag as pre-race favorite, I charge into the lead pack at the start. It is clear early on, that there are a few guys in the field who can really climb. They are out of sight before long. As the course gets too steep we all walk, and this is when the pack spreads out the most. As I'm happily following one runner, two other runners, including the lead woman shoot past. Before long, I pass the guy I'm following, and then the second woman passes both of us.

My calves are really hurting on this climb. The cold, dry air makes it hard to get enough air. Through the dense trees, I can't tell how much progress we are making. What's keeping me going is the belief that the rest of the race will be easier.

Blue Mountain is not a High Peak. It peaks at 3759 feet. For a variety of reasons such a height in my neck of the woods is often above the tree line. Here it is still very much Adirondack Spruce Forest. There are some ash, and some birch struggling with the conditions, but here the spruce rule.

On the runnable portions of the climb, I stretch the distance between me and the runner trailing me. I am happily convinced the race is in front of me. As we get near the summit, the sky becomes visible through the trees. It is the most intensely saturated blue sky I have ever seen. In the brilliant sunlight, the white snow, green spruce, and blue sky are all bolder colors than I usually associate with a run.

Soon I can see the tower, and know I have almost reached the summit. I see the two runners ahead of me. I convince myself that when we get to the downhill, I should maintain control, and not try to make up the distance all at once. There are some great views from the summit, but I barely get to take them in.

When I hit the downhill, the two runners ahead of me are already out of sight. Soon the runner from behind charges past me at a pace I can't imagine running on snow. He is immediately out of sight as well. There's nothing I can do, but maintain a pace that is comfortable for this flatlander.

As I run past a ranger who is skiing up this service road, he tells me I am 7 1/2 minutes behind the leader. This is impressive and interesting, but I'm more interested in knowing where the three runners ahead of me are. I thank him, and continue.

Finally, I reach the bottom of the snowmobile trail. A course monitor is there to make sure we take the left turn. The trail to the finish is mostly flat, but it's twisty, dippy and difficult. The snow is of poor quality. Finally, we are in my house!

Do I wish this trail were longer, giving me more time to catch runners, or do I just want to be done with this affair? It doesn't matter. The course is what it is. I see a runner and make up the distance pretty quickly. When I pass her, she still looks pretty good, so maybe there is hope for my pace. Soon I see another runner. It's the guy who climbed the hill with me. I'm closing the gap, but there doesn't seem enough course left to catch him.

I finish 6th in 1:05:18. There is a considerable gap between 7th and 8th place. The 8th place finisher is a young boy. His younger brother is not far behind. They start young in the north-country. Back home in the Mid-Hudson Valley, along with Western Mass, and Northern Connecticut, snowshoeing is a sport, an eccentric passion. Here in the north-country, it's a way of life.

We stood around and talked, as runners continued to finish. I told them about our race next week in Hawley, Mass. They were skeptical of my assurances that there is snow in the upper elevations of Western Mass.

I don't have the times, but I think Birgher Ohlsson, ran 52 something. This is the second year this version of course has been run. Last year's winning time was in the high 1:05's. The 2nd male finisher and lead woman also ran impressive races. After the race, I heard someone ask this woman where she was going to school next year. She'll be going to West Point, which is about 40 miles further south from where I live. She'll be bringing her athletic ability and enthusiasm. I hope she doesn't miss the snow.

Steve Cangemi

MT GOAT <5KM SNOWSHOE RUN

01.	Ken Clark	Somers, CT	20:56
02.	John Pelton	Rupert, VT	24:19
03.	Edward Alibozek	Suffield, CT	26:42
04.	Paul Hartwig	Adams, MA	28:03
05.	Jack Quinn	Sandgate, VT	28:21
06.	James Preite	N Adams, MA	28:51
07.	Bruce Marvonek	Stafford Sp, CT	29:21
08.	Scott Bradley	Pittsfield, MA	31:27
09.	Ray Robidoux	Somers, CT	33:19
10.	Stan Tiska	Hinsdale, MA	38:51
11.	Claudine Preite	N Adams, MA	41:26
12.	Herbert Kalish	Manchester, VT	59:25
13.	Shelly O'Dowd	N Adams, MA	59:58
14.	Karin Bradley	Pittsfield, MA	59:59
15.	Judy Hartwig	Adams, MA	59:59

Mt Prospect, Woodford, VT - February 28, 1999 - There was a lot of activity at this downhill turned x-country area on the last day of February 1999. Some sort of collegiate ski race was being held, but for the less speedy it was the locale of a 5km snowshoe race organized by the Mountain Goat. The retailer brought half of their merchandise to display at wonderful reduced prices, and what they didn't sell they gave away to all the snowshoe participants as raffle prizes!!

The area itself sort of reminded me of one of those wild west resort type places from my youth... Six Gun City, Frontier Town, etc. The buildings were just sort of scattered throughout a "Main Street" and the wind was blowing quite fiercely making me wonder about tumbleweeds. There would be no salon to raise the roof in afterward though, as many of the participants decided to head to Bennington to celebrate.

The course was slightly less than 5km according to the Race Director, but no one noticed because other than the last ¾ mile you were pretty much red-lining it the whole way. It was up an old ski slope for a ½ mile or so, then dip into the woods for some rolling terrain over the next 1 ½ miles along wide groomed ski paths. I am almost positive that if a snowshoe course is being held at a ski area, you can bet your butt that you'll be climbing up one of the darn slopes for sure. Just when you thought your lungs might burst you opened onto a clear-cut section of the mountain that once acted as a downhill run. Flying down the slope, each and every time you came to a turn you thought you would see the finish, but it wasn't to be. This final downhill section was much longer than I thought and revealed how much climbing we actually had done.

In the end, it was 1999 WMAC Champion Ken Clark destroying the rest of us by a huge margin. The only competition that Ken had was the initial climb when Paul Hartwig blasted to the front of the pack and lead the race for a ¼ mile or so.

The ladies race was won by Claudine Preite. Claudine has been an active participant on the snowshoe circuit for several years and it is wonderful to see her have this success. The brand new pair of Sherpa Bolt Racers that she had just bought looked great too. The next women across the line, Shelley O'Dowd, had her first experience on snowshoes a week prior at Hawley Kiln.

Edward Alibozek

1999 WMAC AGE GROUP WINNERS**01 – 19**

Naomi LaCasse	Lanseboro, MA	88 pts
Sarah Pandiscio	Simsbury, CT	46 pts
<hr/>		
Bryan Dragon	Cheshire, MA	48 pts**
Trsitian Syrett	Hampden, MA	22 pts**

20 – 29

Rebecca Taylor	Clinton, NY	44 pts**
Erin Worsham	Woodstock, CT	42 pts
<hr/>		
Leigh Schmitt	S Deerfield, MA	147 pts
Dave Hannon	Johnston, RI	120 pts

30 – 39

Sweep Voll	Pittsfield, MA	107 pts
Claudine Preite	N Adams, MA	35 pts
<hr/>		
Ken Clark	Somers, CT	161 pts
Steve Cangemi	Red Hook, NY	129 pts

40 – 49

Beth Herder	Pittsfield, MA	132 pts
Kathleen Aubin	Manchester, NH	62 pts**
<hr/>		
Jim Campiformio	Ashford, CT	139 pts
Wayne Stocker	Hampden, MA	124 pts

50 – 59

Laura Clark	Saratoga Sp, NY	71 pts
Ellen Mach	Adams, MA	3 pts
<hr/>		
Bob Worsham	Woodstock, CT	144 pts
David Boles	New Paultz, NY	109 pts

60 – 69

Richard Busa	Marlboro, MA	55 pts
Art Gulliver	Leominster, MA	42 pts

SNOWSHOEING FOR DUMMIES OR, WHEN STREAMS ATTACK

It seemed like a good plan. Really. But sometimes plans don't come out like you, well, er, planned.

After about an hour and a half of low-key snowshoeing on some trails near my house, I headed back home. When I reached the soccer practice field, which I would normally go around and catch a trail back to my street, I was suddenly attracted by the large expanse of white, unbroken snow. Hmmmm.... I could go home the regular way, or...(this would have been the better choice, as it turns out, but I refer you again to the title).

Intoxicated by the power of my snowshoes to take me anywhere, I headed across the field, knowing that through the trees on the far side was a lovely little hidden waterfall down the middle of a steep embankment. I wanted to see it in the snow.

Shoeing my way through the bushes and trees at the edge of the field, I spied the waterfall. It really was beautiful, I have to admit. Large icicles hung from the boulders, which were perfectly capped by the new snow, and the crystal clear water poured over the top, bouncing off the rocks below before flowing into a small stream at its base. I got as close as I could, for this stream ran between me and the waterfall. I knew that if I could get to the other side, I could climb up the steep embankment and snowshoe home by way of some seldom traveled woods on the edge of our neighborhood. That was the plan. If I could only get across...

I pondered the options for a few minutes, traveling up and down the edge of the water to see if there was a spot I could cross. Nothing. The stream was shallow, but at least 6-feet across. I finally found a spot that was only 2-3 inches deep. The bottom was covered with decaying leaves, but the water was perfectly clear. (an evil trap! A lure for unwary snowshoers!) I stood there for a minute, reasoning with myself. My feet were already wet from being out there over an hour, and surely I could stand a bit of cold water. I gingerly put one snowshoe in right at the edge. It was a little squishy, but seemed firm enough. Okay, I was committed, 1 more step.

That step proved to be my undoing. My foot, snowshoe and all, disappeared suddenly into at least 8" of slimy, rust-colored silt. Have you ever tried to pull a snowshoe out of 8" of sucking goo? It was stuck, but good. Now the fact that one foot was suddenly buried this deep threw me somewhat off balance. The natural reaction was to step forward with the other foot and....no..wait! I better not do th..... Aarrghh!!!

Too late! I now have both legs buried mid-calf in icy cold muck and can't move. I tried, but my feet were not gonna budge. I was already having a hard time maintaining balance, and I sure didn't want to sit down in this mess. I look around. Aha! A tree branch conveniently stretched across the stream. I grab it, hoping to pull myself out. The branch is too flimsy, it bows down with my weight, and splash! sends me sprawling face first toward the water.

I catch myself with my hands, which means I now have both feet stuck fast, I'm on my knees in the mud up to mid-thigh,

and both arms are buried nearly up to my elbows. I immediately noticed, after realizing that maybe this plan was not working out, that this mud really smelled BAD! I mean, REALLY bad - I didn't want to think about where it originated.

I should probably add here that, as I was stuck there in the middle of nowhere in this gooey mess, that it was approximately 26 degrees and still snowing heavily. I could see the other edge of the stream, could almost touch it - that is, if I could just move. Realizing how stupid this looked, I also was having a terrible time keeping my balance. I really was stuck in this oozing slime. My hands were now so frozen that I didn't think I would have been able to undo the several straps and laces on the snowshoes, even if I'd been able to reach them. There was no way out.

I'm going to die right here, I thought, and everyone will know how dumb I am. They'll find my body next May, or at least what parts the coyotes have left behind. And, damn, this is my best pair of tights and my favorite fleece! (it's amazing what thoughts go through your head).

Okay, I am getting really, really cold now. I gotta get out of this water. I manage to pull one arm out, lean forward a bit and grab the bank on the other side. Somehow, I sort of belly crawl, dragging those snowshoes through the muck with all my strength and get myself almost on the other side. Crack! Another trap!!! The snow had disguised thin ice and I went down again. I'm mad now, and really smelly. With last gasp effort, I finally pull myself out and crawl onto the snow.

I am totally covered in horrible, stinky, rusty colored slime with bits of decaying leaves stuck here and there for decoration. And I am very cold. I gotta get out of this weather. I know that if I can make it up this hill, I can take a short cut onto a road, and walk home safely.

I thought I was home free - just had to get up this hill. Except the laws of physics intervened. It seems that when you mix wet snowshoes with snow, you get ice. Big clumps of solid ice quickly developed around the claws on the bottom of the shoes, and I was trying to go up this hill wearing what amounted to little icy sleds. I am sliding and falling, crawling, grabbing branches, anything. It took forever to make it up that hill, but I did it. I take the short cut, and see the street. Civilization! somehow, I maneuver the snowshoes off my feet. Now all I have to do is walk home, frozen, smelly, muddy, with clumps of snow and ice stuck to various parts of my anatomy.

I am intensely happy to be here. I know I can make it home. Just a few hundred yards on a nice, safe, clean road. I'm alive, and life is good. And, look! There are people out clearing their driveways, and children playing! Wonderfully normal stuff!

As one guy stopped his snowblower in disbelief as I pass, I try very hard to act natural. Given my present appearance, this was an Oscar-worthy performance.

"Hi!", I wave, as I walk by. "Great day for snowshoeing!"

Debra Reno