

W.M.A.C. SNOSHU-NEWS

AWAITING WOODFORD

As the summer months were coming to a close, the days were getting shorter and the nights colder, I knew one of my favorite pastimes would be soon approaching. Snow Shoe Racing!

The fall flew by, with three cords of wood to be chopped by hand. Using an 8 lb splitting maul that arduous task kept the afternoons busy. If you wonder why no wood splitter was called in, just take a look at the nationality of my last name and the association of a certain trait that goes with it and you will know why no splitter was called in. Then with a life changing, 10 day hiking, running, and camping trip across Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico that closed out October with a Grand Slam. Now came the month of November. That month can drag sometimes. Well this year it flew by. Having recently taken up the sport of bow hunting, I spent many a day navigating through the woods chasing after the elusive white tail deer. With no avail, I had no venison to call my own, yet I had more amazing wildlife encounters those days in the woods than some city folk have in a lifetime. It's amazing what you can see when you sit against a tree in the woods for hours. With that taking a up a large majority of my time, and running almost every day, I watched the weather faithfully for that glimmer of hope that snow would be soon to fall.

Knowing what old man winter threw at us last year; I wasn't too confident that December was going to be a month of immense snow action! However, my fiancée Sheila's father is a real meteorologist (unlike most on the television news that are just news casters that report the weather and call themselves meteorologists), and he told me that December could be a snow month to remember. He informed me three days before that first big storm that we could have a real big Nor'easter. That was all I needed to here! This guy knows what he is talking about. If he says snow, then we are going have snow. I was already having visions of snow bunnies dancing in my head! Then that Thursday storm hit. Well instead of putting on the Dions and parading through the woods behind the house for hours on end, I ended up shoveling 10 inches of snow because the carbtorator went on my father's 1970 snow blower. As I shoveled, Dad rebuilt the carburetor in the garage. By the time he fixed it, I had already shoveled the entire driveway and yard. So instead of snowshoeing like I had dreamed of, I came inside and fell asleep next to the wood stove to thaw out my frozen body!

The next morning I had to work but I told myself that I would be snowshoeing that afternoon! Well Snowshoe I did! Living only 1.5 miles from where the weekly Northampton 5K XC races are held, I decided I would snowshoe the course. I thought a nice easy three miles to start the snowshoe training off would be perfect. Well with other stuff getting in the way, it was dark by the time I got to the parking area. Owning the invaluable Petzl headlamp, I strapped on those Dions and made my way through the course. The headlamp along with the moonlight lighted my way through the partially packed trail. Waiting all spring, summer, and fall for this moment was unbelievable. All that could have topped it would be if Sheila could have joined me!

Well that next Sunday brought another storm. I knew with this being the 11th anniversary of the WMAC Snowshoe Series, we were going to have snow. We were being blessed from the heavens with the white powdery stuff that the majority of people in New England hate, but us snowshoers love. Well my wish came true and the next day Sheila and I snowshoed the course. We even ran an extra mile to get in a little bonus workout. The trails were already packed down from dog walkers and other snowshoers but they were very narrow and we couldn't run side by side. Wanting a good workout we left the main trail a few times and hacked are way through some unbroken snow. Within minutes we were going anaerobic from the intense workout. We loved it!!! After that evening jaunt, we went to dinner in our sweaty running clothes and then stayed warm by the wood stove at my house!

The next night I snowshoed again, however this time I was alone, the only company I had was a few dog walkers. Now I love dogs, I have no problems with people who walk their dogs; what I do have a problem with is people who do not pick up their dogs, "poop!" when they go on the main trail. Now I know most runners have had "poop" on their running shoes and that really bites but what about dog "poop" on your snowshoes? Well I can give you a forward warning; avoid it!

Human instinct tells us to take the easiest route available to us. Are we going to snowshoe through a foot of unbroken powder or are we going to run on a packed trail? Well I do not have a degree in rocket science, natural resources, yes, but I know how to choose the easiest course. Well so do dogs! After that 2nd snowfall it created an icy layer of crust on top of the snow. For every step on top of the crust you sank in and that definitely exerts a large amount of energy! Well humans are not the only species capable of figuring that out. Mans best friend can also figure out the easiest path to take. That night I snowshoed the narrow packed trail trying to avoid the dog "poop" that presented itself in my path. That night was dark and with the petzl shinning on the trail it created a nice illuminated path. It was easy to see the dog "poop" with my illuminating companion, however, the brown leaves of the oak tree also was looked like "poop". Every few yards I would see a dark shadow on the ground, was it "poop" or leaves? Well to be sure I made giant leaps over these brown spots on the ground and luck be it I finished and had no poop on my snowshoes! Not bad for running in the dark!

The next day I was to snowshoe during daylight. This would be great considering all the races would be done during the day. Well around noon I set out to snowshoe another 5 km. I planned on racing the course to see how fast I could run 5k in. Well I pushed myself to the limits and ran the course in 28:30. I was pleased. I had dodged the "poop" on the course and with it being daylight I thought I could differentiate between all the "poop" and similar looking oak leaves. Well on my drive home I was really sweating and I thought I could faintly smell a disgusting aroma. With the window open I blew it off, but I wish I had paid more attention to it because if I had the following may not have occurred.

AWAITING WOODFORD

When I parked my truck in the garage I grabbed my Dions from the passenger side floor of my vehicle and the second I picked them up I started to curse! Why was I cursing? Well I had my virgin experience with dog "poop" on a snowshoe!! I had already removed my gloves from my hands and when I picked up the snowshoe I had a substance on my hands that no one would desire to have on them. In disgust I threw the snowshoe on the ground and ran into the kitchen to wash and disinfect my hand. Once my hand was cleaned I went to inspect the snowshoe. Not only was cleat immersed in "poop" but so was the binding, and frame! Now was the time I was thanking Bob Dion for having 3 interchangeable parts, it made the cleaning effort very easy, even though it was disgusting! Now the best way to get the cleaning job done in case anyone ever also runs into this same dilemma is to fill a large pot full of steaming hot water and get a rag from the garage. Minus the curse words I will leave the cleaning part up to your own imagination.

Well the day had arrived! It was like Xmas morning waiting to open a present! The start of the 2008 WMAC snowshoe series was here! I had been waiting since last March for the series to begin. I was even more immersed in celebration for my father, as he has just turned 65 two days prior, and he had to no longer pay to run some of the races! Woodford was the start of it all! It was the initial start for my father and I, 5 years ago and it was also the start for my fiancé 2 years ago. This was the beginning of a joyous winter!

Sheila and I joined long time friend and club member Bob Massaro and Patty Duffy in the ride up to Southern Vermont, while my father joined his hunting buddy and fellow Polish teammate Wally Lempart and their comrade and friend William Milkiewicz to Woodford. It is known from past Woodfords that carpooling is the way to commute to this season starting event!

Well upon arrival it was wonderful to see all the faces and voices of folks who made the trek to Woodford. After all, without all of us friendly fun loving athletes what fun would it be? Sheila and I were greeted to a many congratulations. It amazed me how many people Sno-Shoe News reaches out to! It makes us feel very lucky to be part of such a fun and gracious group of people!

After all the greetings and hellos to our many friends, getting our bib numbers at the registration table and the porta-jon stops, Sheila and I made our way to starting line. We arrived with 15 minutes to spare, well what better way to kill the time than to get the heart rate up and do a warm-up! We ran all the way to the single trek and beyond just to get an idea of what we had in store for the race. After turning around we jollyng jaunted back and arrived as Jack Quinn was giving the final instructions for the race. Being rushed with only two minutes to spare, I was able to blow a kiss to Sheila and prepare for the 1st race of the year. After a few more last minute words the horn blew and the 2008 WMAC snowshoe series was on it way into history !

Over 90 snowshoers, from as far away as Maryland, had begun the jaunt around Adams reservoir. Adams Reservoir & Adams MA, a correlation or is it fate? Leave it up to the snow gods to decide. The weather was in the racers favor but this racer had too much energy built up inside from a few months of

AWAITING WOODFORD

anticipation and started out way to fast! Yet starting out fast is one mistake I have made many a time and I am sure to do again. However, it's the camaraderie of my fellow mates that makes this one of my favorite pastimes! So as I started bonking I didn't let it get to me. I realized I had to regain my breathing pattern and recover so I could finish strong. After I hit the single track I soon regained my energy when I heard the familiar voice of Ed Alibozek behind me. He gave me some words of encouragement and it helped. I let Ed pass me and kept my snowshoes in his footprints as we continued on our way around the reservoir. Soon I heard a female breathing behind me, it was Abby Woods. She was racing in her first event and I could tell by her steps, she met business! Now as we rounded the course we were in a tight pack of 5 snowshoers. After about half way though the course we joined a part of the trail before the bridge that was really well packed and made the running part easy. I was back on easy street; so I thought. With Abby on my heals, and myself right on Ed's heals, we kept trudging along. Then, like I do in maybe one out of every five races, I caught my snowshoe and did a face plant! That gave Abby the opportunity to get in front of me. I knew once I hit the gate before the finish, I had saved enough energy reserves to surge ahead. However, the tragedy was soon to come.

We crossed the final brook. I was in 5th place in our little group and when I glanced back I could see Steve Lombardo & Bob Dion back through the trees and knew as long as we kept our pace going we would not get caught. As we were getting closer to what I thought was the gate I made the error many have done in the past, I kept my head down and wasn't looking ahead. Soon we were heading downhill to the reservoir. I questioned our right turn but with Ed being right in front of me, I reneged that thought. As we hit the bottom of that downhill I saw a bench on the side of the trail. I thought to myself, "I've never seen that before." As I was thinking that, Ed said, "Jay, I think we are off track!" I then looked to my left and saw Jay Curry's bright colored jacket way up on the hillside. I then said wonderful words and knew we had gone off course. Frustrated as I was, I knew this trail we ventured down would have to re-join the main trail. So we trucked onward and soon rejoined the main trail. As we rejoined the main trail I could see the gate. I knew this was the point to go balls to the walls. I could see Alan Bates, Jay Curry, and Bob Dion in front of me. I decided this was no time to curse but to see how much ground I (and we) could make up. I put the afterburners on and pushed as hard as I could down the final 1/2 mile. Now I finished strong as did my fellow comrades who also did a longer version of Woodford. The first two woman of the race ran the extra distance and did excellent and my fiancé rounded out the 3rd position.

Now this race hadn't turned out like I had hoped! I bonked and ran extra but in snowshoe racing it's about the memories. I have many memories from the past 5 years and this small detour at Woodford 2008 will only add to the stories to tell in the future. It also may present the first 2008 Barnyard Award of the year. That would be the Erin Worsham Most Lost Award! However, were we ever lost or did we just go off trail and run a little extra for a little while? That decision goes to the Farmer to decide!

Jay Kolodzinski

WMAC

6th Annual WOODFORD 3.5 MILE SNOWSHOE RACE

WMAC

December 30th, 2007

Woodford State Park

Woodford, VT

#	Name	Age	Time	Points
01.	Josh Ferenc	26	23:13	100.00
02.	Dave Dunham	43	24:36	98.96
03.	Greg Hammett	30	25:21	97.92
04.	Tim Van Orden	39	25:23	96.88
05.	Jay Gump	39	28:24	95.83
06.	Tim Mahoney	28	28:27	94.79
07.	Britt Brewer	44	28:45	93.75
08.	Paul Bazanchuk	53	28:48	92.71
09.	Greg Rems	31	28:53	91.67
10.	Whit Saunders	38	29:02	90.63
11.	Steve Lombard	39	30:49	89.58
12.	Bob Dion	52	31:26	88.54
13.	Jay Curry	36	31:54	87.50
14.	Alan Bates	59	32:03	86.46
15.	Jay Kolodzinski	28	32:18	85.42
16.	Abby Woods	29	32:23	84.37
17.	Edward Alibozek	45	32:27	83.33
18.	Mark Theeman	22	32:27	82.29
19.	Sarah Thomson	28	32:38	81.25
20.	Sheila Osgood	25	32:59	80.21
21.	Wayne Stocker	53	33:03	79.17
22.	Anton Villatoro	37	33:16	78.12
23.	John Pelton	68	33:41	77.08
24.	Richard Bardwell		34:01	76.04
25.	Eddie Habeck	30	34:35	75.00
26.	Patrick Smith	45	35:01	73.96
27.	Dan Cooper	35	35:06	72.92
28.	Mike Lahey	56	35:09	71.87
29.	Bill Morse	56	35:11	70.83
30.	Kelly McKeown	32	35:14	69.79
31.	Bruce Shenker	55	35:25	68.75
32.	Nick Jobok	51	36:28	67.71
33.	Vince Kirby	51	36:36	66.67
34.	Jan Rancatti	47	36:50	65.62
35.	Dave		37:13	64.58
36.	Richard Clark	53	37:27	63.54
37.	Chloe McGrath	16	37:38	62.50
38.	Wally Lempart	62	37:43	61.46
39.	Bob Kolb	47	37:48	60.42
40.	Ed Alibozek Jr	68	37:52	59.37
41.	Ginny Patsun	39	37:55	58.33
42.	Pat McGrath	42	38:00	57.29
43.	Darlene McCarthy	45	38:10	56.25
44.	Howard Bassett	47	38:15	55.21
45.	Dawn Roberts	36	38:30	54.17
46.	Dave Wilber	48	38:55	53.12
47.	Erin Clark	19	39:03	52.08
48.	Martin Glendon	61	39:06	51.04
49.	Tom McCrumm	62	39:08	50.00
50.	Laurel Shortell	41	39:50	48.96
51.	Sam Hurchala	18	39:56	47.92
52.	Jim Carlson	59	40:18	46.87
53.	Audrey Perlow	27	40:52	45.83
54.	Ken Clark	45	40:55	44.79
55.	Laura Clark	60	41:02	43.75
56.	Stephanie Cooper	39	41:06	42.71
57.	Bob Massaro	64	41:45	41.67

#	Name	Age	Time	Points
58.	Patty Duffy	39	41:59	40.62
59.	Karen Costello	45	42:03	39.58
60.	Walter Kolodzinski	65	42:07	38.54
61.	Maureen Roberts	49	42:09	37.50
62.	Lynn Grieger	49	43:50	36.46
63.	Dave Boles	61	44:10	35.42
64.	Claudine Preite	41	45:02	34.37
65.	Peter Finley	46	45:06	33.33
66.	Michelle Albrecht	30	45:49	32.29
67.	Michael Albrecht	36	45:49	31.25
68.	Steve Mitchell	66	45:57	30.21
69.	Richard Busa	78	46:03	29.17
70.	Denise Murphy	43	46:25	28.12
71.	Craig Fitzgerald	39	46:28	27.08
72.	Jan Roth	58	46:46	26.04
73.	Shaun Pero	12	47:27	25.00
74.	Brad Herder	50	47:39	23.96
75.	Denise Dion	46	48:42	22.92
76.	Ginny Kelly	45	49:12	21.87
77.	Richard Kelly	46	49:13	20.83
78.	Tracy Pero	44	50:12	19.79
79.	Susan Mitchell	54	51:20	18.75
80.	Kate Hayes	59	52:07	17.71
81.	Katherine Lavoie	16	52:23	16.67
82.	Scott Hunter	62	53:39	15.62
83.	Daniel Lavoie	49	54:38	14.58
84.	Bill Glendon	61	58:10	13.54
85.	Konrad Karolczuk	55	58:13	12.50
86.	Jeff Clark	61	58:24	11.46
87.	Susan Nealon	57	60:19	10.42
88.	Jacqueline Lemieux	41	60:54	9.37
89.	Mary Kennedy	49	61:15	8.33
90.	Sara Pero	14	63:23	7.29
91.	Beth Herder	49	63:27	6.25
92.	Wilham Milkiewicz	52	63:55	5.21
93.	Rhonda Wood		80:22	4.17
94.	Alexandra Wood		80:22	3.12
95.	Elizabeth Wood		82:18	2.08
96.	Bruce Kurtz	71	91:02	1.04



Mary Kennedy and Jacqueline Lemieux at "I Love Woodford"

SNOWSHOES BEAUTIFUL CONSPIRE

For as long as I can remember, winter gave me a unique right that no other season presented. What it gave me was a time to grumble and whine, mainly about snow. Snow that needed to be plowed or snow that needed to be shoveled. Primarily however, it was snow that messed up roads and trails and prohibited me from running on them. For some reason, a jog down a street, lightly blanketed in snow, with automobiles potentially sliding into me didn't seem all that constructive of a cardio workout. It was for this reason that, winter to me was a dreadful time in which I had nothing in my repertoire to make it pleasurable.



Eddie Haback leading Britt Brewer at the start of Woodford.

Two months ago I was at a running store getting fitted for new trail shoes, and struck up a conversation about their establishment. The employee was telling me about all the various running gear they carried, and then chimed in "and this winter, were even getting running snowshoes!"

In all honesty, it didn't hit me until I left what the guy had said. He told me they are going to carry a product which he described as a 'Running Snowshoe'? Is that even technically feasible? As far as I could recall, snowshoeing was a slow moving ordeal that guys did with girls they were trying to impress. They could seem outdoorsy and maybe convince them to go on another date that doesn't offer clammy feet and snotcicles.

The more I played with the concept of running on snowshoes, the more gratifying incentives I started to derive from it. It was a way to run in the winter without having to share all the black ice with the cars. It probably would also eradicate my fear of slipping off an icy bridge and landing head first in a watery ravine with a moose. Then and there, I was mentally convinced: My newfound tactic to get thru the perils of winter was to establish a goal of running a snowshoe race.

A month later I made a purchase. After hours at home of painstaking research on the models available, I happily settled into a pair based on the fact that it was the only one the store I went to sold. After buying them, I frequently gazed at them in awe, questioning how these contraptions were going to magically obliterate all my winter dilemmas. Nevertheless, I couldn't wait to get out and use them on some fresh snow.

Turns out, it was actually the 'fresh snow' that would prove to be my logics hurdle. I revealed a vital lesson the first time I strapped my snowshoes onto my trail runners and took my first stride into the loose powder: They sink. More notably, they sink all the way to the bottom, depending on how feathery the snow is. Retracting your shoe out of the snow creates a colossal amount of weight that you challenge with each strike. After taking several steps I realized my dreams of briskly gliding along thru a workout on the snow wouldn't be possible. Instead, I was handed the most punishing physical workout of my life. After a quarter mile of running, I honestly thought I was going to collapse, and the idea of making it to a mile seemed theoretically impossible. I clomped thru with every step and repeatedly looked at my GPS watch, realizing that aside from my laborious heart rate, I was barely moving.

This first workout I ended up running one mile, then five minutes of walking, followed by running another mile then 10 minutes of walking, and concluding with one and a half miles of

running. The only way I survived is because I continually ran thru my old tracks, constantly easing my footing with the now-packed base. I contemplated that in snowshoe running terms this must be some form of cheating. However, all I wanted was practice on my feet and to get accustomed to the feeling of various conditions. This proved to work in that regard.

It wasn't long before I found my first race. While online I stumbled on the WMAC 2008 Snowshoe Series. The series initiates with a 3.5-mile race thru a state park near Bennington, VT. After discovering that their events offered loaner snowshoes, it conveyed to me a message that this is a type of race which beginners might frequent. Aside from the whopping 5 1/2 miles I ultimately put into my 'preparation', I will be the first to attest to my novice status. For me, doing a couple half-marathons a year is one thing, but this is new territory.



Jay Kolodzinski breaking away from Farmer Ed & Abby Woods.

I drove to the race alone, and pondered on my 60-mile drive what I was getting myself into. Remember those first race jitters? Of course you don't. You were too busy hanging out in the porta potty.

CONSPIRE CONTINUED

Upon arrival and after I registered, I watched as others strapped on their shoes and headed to the starting line. I went along with the flow. Being encircled by several dozen people with huge-duck-looking-things on their feet is bewildering. But really, I was more worried about what happens when two peoples snowshoes get entangled while running, causing them to fall off into my imaginary watery-ravine with the moose. That must suck. Trust me, when you're all crunched up at the starting line this is what you think of, well maybe just me. But I do really want to see a wild moose.

As the race set off I was pleasantly surprised. The course was hard packed powder and running on it seemed rather undemanding. That was the case until after going a tenth of a mile and coming to a hill, which wasn't as hard packed as the start. After roughly a half mile of uphill single-track, I was utterly spent. I had nothing else in me and was rather irritated. My lack of training was evident and I became discouraged. This was much harder than anticipated. I huffed it out until the hill finally broke, walking a few steps in between strides to regain composure. In being entirely out of breath, it occurred to me that I forgot to use my inhaler before the race (How could I forget about my asthma now!). After this ascent concluded, the snow became very hard and significantly icy at times. I realized the snowshoes were not doing much, rather all the work was done by the protruding steel spikes under the balls of the foot. I didn't care though; it was considerably faster with less effort.

The remainder of the course was like this, and the field had scattered so much I ran the last half completely alone, trotting over little streams and bounding over branches. Setting aside the fatigue, it was one of the most serene affairs I have experienced. Seeing the finish line was also very gratifying, as was crossing it and receiving a loaf of bread as a finisher's prize. After all I just put myself thru, it was kind of surreal being outside in the freezing cold with ninety others sporting snowshoes grasping our 'reward'. I loved every minute of it.

I ended up finishing 25th place, and very content with that as well. Snowshoe racing to me started as a delightful idea, followed by engrossing agony, and concluded in providing me materials to make a sandwich. I already planned my next few races, and as I look at my winter schedule, I come to an exciting realization. I now have an incentive to want snow, and its not that bad if I have to shovel some- as long as I get to run thru the rest of it.

Eddie Habeck III

A HEADLINER ONCE MORE

Laura Clark -- This December Woodford again assumed its assigned place at the head of the WMAC snowshoe pack. And finally it was more than just a paper title as the race was Actually Held on its Scheduled Day! Yes! Let's hope that this is a portent of things to come. Goodness knows, Chief Snowshoer Edward Alibozek could use a break from our revolving menu of events, not to mention the long-suffering folks at the RRCA insurance office who are now expert at switching place names on insurance documents.

Altogether 96 snowshoers kept the faith during the worrisome journey through a depressingly snowless Bennington and onward to neighboring Woodford, an enchanted area where snow falls early and stays late despite what it is doing in the rest of the Northeast. And at this time of year if you are in the proper frame of mind you might just catch a glimpse of red or a whisper of sleigh bells...

We were all in holiday reunion type mode as we greeted old friends, some not seen since October's Monroe, others since last March's pancake breakfast. Santa must have paid a special visit to the Dions because their van was obviously way over the legal occupancy limit for snowshoes. Besides dispensing loaner snowshoes, Dr. Bob was busy holding court to all those (Clark household included) who discovered that crampons, once broken, do not miraculously mend themselves while in storage mode.

There were other surprises, too, which mostly had to do with folks not wearing last year's outfits. Rich did come through with his customary red and black attire despite the fact that he was missing his Santa hat, and Darlene McCarthy made her signature fashion statement in her oversized basketball shirt, possibly left over from an earlier version of High School Musical I. Bob Massaro, however, did not wear his trademark yellow jacket which caused his followers some consternation. Luckily, I was dressed in fall mode with my day-glo Sugarloaf Mountain jacket, ready and eager to perform stand-in duties which meant that our clique of runners was following me, thinking I was Bob. This was a potentially serious situation since I have a reputation for embarking on interesting side trips.

If you attend enough WMAC races, you will generally find yourself running with the same folks every week. Our group usually consists of: Bob, Martin Glendon, Jim Carlson, me, Denise Dion, and Laurel Shortell. Bob, wearing the "yellow jersey" starts out in front. Today, though, the yellow jersey didn't stand a chance: it was Laurel's turn to shine. When interviewed shortly after her victory she admitted that she had been running regularly with a speedy local group and that she had even acquired a coach. Her new duds echoed her competitive mindset. She had discarded her swishy "zuber-zuber" pants in favor of sleek, compression-enhanced Body Armour tights, guaranteed to help her remain upright even if her snowshoes should stumble. Some folks will go to any extreme to win the yellow jersey! In another switch, Denise hung back with knee problems but in the preliminary results still managed to come in 12th overall and 1st female. It sometimes helps to have a speedy spouse who forgets to read the name on his race bib.

Again, we shared the parking lot with the snowmobilers who were out in full force, eager to show off their new Christmas gear, including huge trailers, one of which could have contentedly hauled everyone's race stuff. Jeff and I snatched one of the last available parking spots, right next to Race Director Jack Quinn's soup kitchen. This was not the honor it seemed as we placed ourselves directly downwind of the porta pottie as well as the free lunch. This mistake was even more apparent to us after the race as we attempted to change in full view of the folks in the soup line, all the while breathing in a rather heady mixture of sweat, beans and latrine. Perhaps Jack might want to rethink his outdoor decorating options next year. At any rate, I'm guessing we might also try to arrive a bit earlier! Happy first snow!

WOODFORD -- WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES

What a difference a year makes. Last year snow was tough to come by and this year we get record snow (at least in Eastern Mass.). I was really excited to kick-off the season at Woodford. I hadn't been there since 2003 when I got a victory by being the first person to correctly navigate the course. That year the top five runners (and many more behind them) went the wrong way at around two miles. I remember hitting that intersection and thinking "why aren't there any footprints going this way". I forged on, never really sure if I had gone the right way until I emerged on the road. I distinctly remember Rich Busa kicking it in to beat one of the top guys. I think he may have framed that picture ☺

I showed up pretty early at Woodford after stopping for a run in Leyden and Colrain. I'm trying to run in every town in Massachusetts, so I have to squeeze in a run whenever I get near a town I haven't been to yet. I parked at a scenic covered bridge straddling the Green river, in the aptly named town of Greenfield. I then headed out for an "easy" three miles crossing both of the town lines. The drive to Woodford was very scenic, I had forgotten how nice Route 9 can be. The sun was shining and some of the views were spectacular.

The parking lot at Woodford may have been the most treacherous footing of the day. I was greeted in the lot by a snowmobiler firing up his engine and billowing smoke. I was a bit concerned about the course markings from past experience and overheard John asking if anyone would be pre-running the course. I jumped in and told him I'd do some additional marking. After some very in-depth directions (I kept asking to make sure I had it correct), I was off to the same intersection that caused problems in '03.

The snow was pretty solid and the going was easy. I was a bit tired from racing at BU, on the indoor track of all things, the day before. I hung a bunch of surveyor tape at the intersection and loped back to the start. After a quick change of clothes I headed for the line. My new uniform from Atlas caused a minor stir. I preferred the black uniform from years past. The new bright yellow tights and shirt got "two thumbs down" from Ed Alibozek and a couple of interesting comments from others.

There was a very large contingent on gathered at the starting line which was great to see. I bumped into Greg Hammet and Josh Ferenc. Greg brought Josh along for his first SS race, and he noted "this is just my fourth time on snowshoes". Josh is a very strong runner, he crawled across the finish line of Mt Washington in 2004. His legs gave out but he was still able to run/crawl to a 1:06 seventh place finish. I also spotted Tim Van Orden who runs for the Raw Food project and was also doing his first snowshoe race. Tim is a unique character who specializes in tower races (like the Empire State building run-up – sick stuff like that!). I gave them both a few words of advice on the course, especially to be cautious about punching through on the stream crossing. Nothing like a hyper-extended knee to ruin your first snowshoe race experience.

The race commenced and we clomped off down the road. I felt like I went out pretty hard, but Josh and Greg were already moving away. Josh took the lead on the climb to the single-track. I tried to relax, knowing I had about 25minutes of racing

in front of me. Greg seemed to be out of sorts and I reeled him back in by about 1 mile into the race. He kindly gave way when I called "on your left" and went passed him. On some of the straighter parts I could see Josh up ahead. He stopped to adjust one of his shoes at about 1.5 miles and that was the last time I saw him. He powered away to his first victory.

I kept pushing pretty hard, through the section I marked (which I think was about 2 miles into the race) and then onto the interesting part of the course. There were a lot of little dips and turns and very narrow bridges with snow piled up on them. It made for a cool obstacle course for the last 1.5 miles. I had to stop with about ½ mile to go when I got to an intersection that was not marked. I looked to the right and it lead down to the lake. It also was marked as the trail I was on was marked, in blue blazes. I took a couple of steps back and saw a sign that said ".15 miles – Day use area". I hoped that the day use area wasn't where the finish line was and proceeded straight through the intersection and the next one. I knew I had to get to the northern end of the lake so I was pretty sure it was correct. I was happy to get to the road soon after and the final 400m to the finish.

I turned around and jogged back out to do a short warm-down and try to warn some of the people to go straight at the intersection. There were some good duels to watch as well. Greg and Tim each kicked pretty hard, with Greg taking third. He said "I was feeling pretty lousy, then my shoe broke". He showed how his direct mounted shoe had popped a rivet (or two) and his crampon was useless. He had a pretty good run considering the damage he did to his shoe. I believe that the last time I beat him was at Bolton Valley when he blew out a shoe. Such is the way if you live on the edge by direct mounting shoes (I direct mount, but don't use them in every race).

I wish I had thought to bring out some flagging to the intersection but was glad to see that Bob Dion (who had gone off course in the race) had thought to bring out some cones. After warming-down I got my loaf of bread, which is a pretty cool thing to get at a snowshoe race, and hit the road. I stopped off in Clarksburg at the state park for another 3 mile run and was amazed at how bad the trail around the lake was when compared to what I'd just raced on. The Woodford course was very smooth, Clarksburg was post-holed and rutted. Very ugly for running, but I got my mileage and bagged another Mass town. 191 done and 161 to go!

I'm really fired up for what will hopefully be an excellent winter of snowshoe racing. 96 finishers at Woodford also bodes well for this to be a banner year of racing in the WMAC circuit. See you out there....

dd

UPCOMING WMAC SCHEDULE

Keep checking www.runwmac.com

and click the snowshoe link. The weather usually does some funny things to our plans, keep current and check the news before each weekends events to be safe!

ARE 4TH Annual BRAVE THE BLIZZARD 4 MILE SNOWSHOE RACE ARE

January 6th, 2008

Pine Bush Preserve

Guilderland, NY

#	Name	Age	Time	Points
1	Josh Merlis	26	28:01	100.00
2	Dave Dunham	43	28:15	99.13
3	Tim Van Orden	39	28:22	98.26
4	Joseph Hayter	27	28:35	97.39
5	Britt Brewer	44	30:47	96.52
6	Jay Kolodzinski	28	31:39	95.65
7	Andrew Rickert	28	32:21	94.78
8	Rich Gargano	30	32:23	93.91
9	Gary Robinson	45	32:36	93.04
10	Ken Clark	45	32:42	92.17
11	Keith Strack	49	33:01	91.30
12	Chuck Ryan	53	33:16	90.43
13	Edward Alibozek	45	33:56	89.57
14	Drew Anderson	39	34:48	88.70
15	Jeff Andrews	31	35:38	87.83
16	Lisa DAniello	21	35:50	96.96
17	Eric Recene	36	36:10	86.09
18	Christopher Shaw	14	36:11	85.22
19	John Pelton	68	36:23	84.35
20	Mike Lahey	56	37:07	83.48
21	Jessica Hageman	32	37:37	82.61
22	David Shumpert	37	38:01	81.74
23	Rachel Clattenburg	23	38:13	80.87
24	Justin Corelli	23	38:13	80.00
25	Tom Mack	43	39:27	79.13
26	John Paduano	47	39:27	78.26
27	Ed Decker	53	39:48	77.39
28	Vince Kirby	51	40:06	76.52
29	Gerard Colling	26	40:36	75.65
30	Dennis Sullivan	52	40:40	74.78
31	Andrew Sattinger	35	40:42	73.91
32	Chris Johnson	50	40:53	73.04
33	Martin Glendon	61	41:00	72.17
34	John Butler	40	41:29	71.30
35	Sam Hurchala	18	42:29	70.43
36	Frosty Smith	30	42:31	69.57
37	Jim Carlson	59	42:37	68.70
38	Douglas Fox	63	42:59	67.83
39	Dan Buttrick	27	43:03	66.96
40	Kevin Schwenzfeier	24	43:09	66.09
41	Frank Boscoe	39	43:12	65.22
42	Frank Paone	50	43:19	64.35
43	Kim E. Scott	39	43:34	63.48
44	Erin Clark	19	44:00	62.61
45	Mark Stuart	45	44:01	61.74
46	Eric Sanborn	44	44:06	60.87
47	Joe Bouck	45	44:09	60.00
48	Barbara Sorrell	50	44:11	59.13
49	Chris Varley	43	44:54	58.26
50	Tom Carcia	50	44:59	57.39
51	Frank Broderick	55	45:00	56.52
52	Laurel Shortell	41	45:46	55.65
53	Laura Clark	60	47:27	54.78
54	Bob Massaro	64	47:30	53.91
55	Jackie Frost	34	47:33	53.04
56	Michelle Pendergast	34	48:01	52.17
57	Michael DellaRocco	56	48:03	51.30

#	Name	Age	Time	Points
58	Darleen Buttrick	28	48:25	50.43
59	Walter Kolodzinski	65	48:36	49.57
60	Peter Thomas	60	48:38	48.70
61	Susan Johnson	47	48:47	47.83
62	Peggy McKeown	50	49:24	46.96
63	Kathy Furlani	59	49:30	46.09
64	Tony Manjano	61	49:40	45.22
65	Peter Finley	46	49:00	44.35
66	Donna Lustenhouwer	54	49:40	43.48
67	Fran Lewis	46	51:15	42.61
68	Kathleen M Goldberg	49	51:16	41.74
69	Jamie Howard	42	51:39	40.87
70	Randy A Goldberg	48	51:52	40.00
71	Richard J. Busa	78	52:43	39.13
72	Dan Ampansiri	37	52:56	38.26
73	Ronald Boutin	57	53:17	37.39
74	Dan Pollay	38	53:20	36.52
75	Jon Roth	58	53:31	35.65
76	Patty Paduano	50	55:01	34.78
77	Megan Donnelly-Heg	32	55:33	33.91
78	Kristin Murphy	36	55:40	33.04
79	Stacey Kelley	31	56:08	32.17
80	John DellaRocco	46	56:11	31.30
81	Donna Charlebois	49	56:47	30.43
82	Greg Taylor	61	57:15	29.57
83	Summer Farina	33	57:17	28.70
84	Phyllis Fox	55	57:56	27.83
85	Gail Hein	55	58:28	26.96
86	Scott Hunter	62	58:50	26.09
87	Uzma Qureshi	46	59:19	25.22
88	Kate Hayes	59	59:47	24.35
89	Dave Cole	50	59:48	23.48
90	Sue Motler	45	59:54	22.61
91	Cheryl Couchman	37	60:05	21.74
92	Annette Cashin	32	60:14	20.87
93	Justin Mueller	27	61:31	20.00
94	Lidia Ryan	46	61:38	19.13
95	Cathy Biss	60	62:09	18.26
96	Bill Glendon	61	63:19	17.39
97	Konrad Karolczuk	55	63:19	16.52
98	Melanie Snay	37	63:20	15.65
99	Betty Langevin	67	63:28	14.78
100	Armand Langevin	70	63:31	13.91
101	Ray Lee	65	63:33	13.04
102	Mark Gregory	31	64:09	12.17
103	Jaime Ian	29	67:29	11.30
104	Jami Costello	29	67:30	10.43
105	Mary Jane Lewis	49	70:20	9.57
106	James Morgan	53	72:07	8.70
107	Vince Juliano	51	72:15	7.83
108	Katherine Karlson	55	72:25	6.96
109	Kerri Morgan	51	73:01	6.09
110	Renee Crisafulli	54	74:38	5.22
111	Debbie Kelley	54	74:39	4.35
112	Karen Costello	53	79:14	3.48
113	James Costello	54	79:14	2.61
114	Dawn Pallor	43	92:31	1.74
115	Andy Keefe	77	92:32	0.87

BACK OF THE PACK REPORT: BTB / GUILDERLAND, NY

As an occasional snowshoer from the Southern Tier, I try annually to run one of the WMAC snowshoe series, if only for bragging rights among my circle of running friends. Since 2005, I've done Woodford twice, Hoxie Thunderbolt once, each time questioning my sanity at attempting a sport only once a year as I slip down gullies into frozen streams, court frostbite, and punish my glutes so they beg me to start marathoning again.

Well, fourth time was the charm, not just for me, but for the previously ill-fated and possibly misnamed "Brave the Blizzard" 5km snowshoe race, expertly organized by the Albany Running Exchange, and held on January 6, 2008 in Guilderland, NY. The course, estimated at close to four miles, comprised well-packed snow, not ice. The temperatures of low 40s and negligible winds were ideal for a brisk run through a peaceful, pretty course of forest and right-of-way trails. I was thrilled once I got into the Pinebush preserve, because this was the kind of snowshoe course I had been bugging my cousin, Laura Clark of Saratoga Springs, to find me ever since she dangled a pair of loaner snowshoes under my nose. I run and hike a similar trail in Chenango Valley State Park near my home in Binghamton, and I love the terrain, which always translates into personal best road race times by year's end.

The ARE neglects none of the important aspects of a snowshoe race (careful trail marking, shelter, plenty of good, hot food and drink afterwards, loaner shoes) but they strive to equal the fun component with that of serious event planning. How else to explain the jovial Mr. Frosty, who greeted and directed racers as they drove into the school parking lot, or those snowperson marshals out on the course, silently holding bright orange flags, but grinning widely through twig mouths? Only the cheerful verbal encouragement of their human partners surpassed it: "There are pancakes at the end.... with chocolate chips!" is but one example of such friendly repartee out in the woods.

I enjoyed this snowshoe race tremendously, because I felt more in charge of my own pace than any previous event, thanks to the fairly level terrain. I soon found a steady running rhythm that let me speed up or take a breather when I wanted to. I also never fell down – that's a first! I actually felt sorry for a couple who passed me, obviously enjoying the packed snow trail, but not on snowshoes. Yes, one could run faster that way, but I was out there to snowshoe, and this was the day and the course I had long been hoping for.

Obviously, so did many of the other 115 finishers, many of whom were first-time snowshoe racers, including a few who took home age group medals. I think the veteran runners, such as Laura and her friend Laurel Shortell, she of the WMAC snowshoe race streak, greatly appreciated the set of ideal conditions that allowed their race efforts to produce some excellent times and earn more series points.

The post-race scene at the Guilderland Elementary School gym continued the first-class treatment for all participants: four types of pancakes with toppings, fruit salad, plenty of drinks to warm you up; plus, a licensed massage therapist, Gail Bouck, who stretched out tight muscles in a professional and caring manner. It was a real treat to enjoy the food and friendship at leisure and

in warm comfort. I even got a hot shower before hitting the road down Interstate 88.

So, come rain, come shine, come snow, I'm comin' back to Brave the Blizzard!

Katherine "Kate" Karlson



Bill Glendon and Konrad "K2" Karolczuk smiling through Woodford.

USSSA EARLY JANUARY UPDATE

Happy New Year and Happy Snowshoe Season!! I hope you all enjoyed the recent Holiday season. I just wanted to bring you up-to-speed on our 2008 PowerSox U.S. National Snowshoe Championships.

We've hooked up with the Team Unlimited folks who host all the XTERRA Off-Road Triathlon events around the World. Check out their Winter World Championships Festival at: www.xterraplanet.com

Our snowshoe events will comprise the second day of competition the weekend of March 8th & 9th, 2008 at the Snowbasin Resort near Ogden, Utah just outside Salt Lake City.

This will be an awesome weekend of winter competition in a number of events, plus the XTERRA showcase event, a multi-sport winter race. The weekend's action will be eventually nationally televised as a 30 minute show, so the visibility our events will receive should be amazing! The northeast's regional qualifying races include:

- 1) Mendon, NY
- 2) Drums, PA
- 3) Wilton (Camp Saratoga - Saratoga Springs), NY
- 4) Jeffersonville, VT (Smuggler's Notch)
- 5) New in 2008 Sandwich NH - Paul Kirsch's Sidehiller

Check out our regional calendar at www.snowshoeracing.com

Thanks again and best wishes in 2008!

Sincerely, Mark Elmore / USSSA

Phone 919-295-4236

Cell - 518-420-6961

snowshoeguy@yahoo.com

I WASN'T GOING TO JUST HAND HIM THE LEAD... BRAVE THE BLIZZARD '08

Another great weekend for snowshoe racing! I started my trek out to Guilderland on Saturday morning. I stopped in Otis for a three mile run in four towns. Then off to Alford for another three mile run, this time getting three towns. My last run was in Richmond where I again ran in four towns. The Richmond run was the nicest, with views of Lenox and Stockbridge and a nice section of packed trail (Burbank trail) on Lenox Mountain. My Massachusetts town total is now 202 down and 150 to go.

Race morning brought ideal conditions with temperatures in the 30's under cloudy skies. I did a three mile warm-up in the cemetery which was adjacent to the Elementary school where the race was based. The indoor facilities were great for mixing and mingling and gave a warm place to change clothes. I got on my race gear, a toned down outfit this week, and set off for another mile on the course. I bumped into Ken Clark who was out doing a longer than usual warmup. Ken had pulled a calf muscle at Woodford, but nursed of it during the week and felt that he was ready to go again. I also bumped into the indomitable Rich Busa who was about ½ mile from the start with 10 minutes to go. I half-jokingly asked him if he was going to make it back for the race.

The crowd assembled, in the field behind the elementary school, for final instructions before the start. I promptly stomped down a short path to give myself a clean start. The race director asked how many were doing their first snowshoe race and shouts went out. I believe about 40% of the field of 115 were first-timers. Runners came from six states and ranged in age from Christopher Shaw (age 14) to Richard Busa (age 78). With a "ready, set, snowshoe!" we were off.

I was in the lead right from the start, which was where I wanted to be for the first ¼ mile of unpacked snow. I wanted to be able to pick my footing carefully and not get jostled by the pack. After looping the field we hit the single-track which was well packed and in great shape for fast running. I had asked about the course design to get a feel for where we'd be going and heard that the first section would be repeated at the end. This was helpful for racing strategy as I'd know the how much racing remained when we got back onto the opening section. Unfortunately the distance was much longer (a mile?) than the advertised 3.1 miles.

I was surprised by how far we went before hitting the power-line and after that kept expecting to pop back out on the trail soon. I could hear at least one runner right on my tail from the start. Leading has its advantages, you set the pace and the others have to follow. Leading also has disadvantages, you can't see your competition and you have no idea how many are sitting and waiting to kick. Tim Van Orden (who I later found out was in 2nd place most of the race) noted one disadvantage/advantage of trailing "I was getting hit by snowy kick-back the entire way, but it did keep me cool". Every once in a while I'd hear "left turn coming" or "sharp right" called out from behind. I found out after the race that this was Josh Merlis the race director. I figured it was a local who was familiar with the course and that worried me as I knew he'd have the advantage of knowing exactly how far we had left to go and therefore could mete out his energy for the remainder of the race. I took a sneaky glance behind me on one of the turns

(I didn't want to look back which might give the followers the impression that I was hurting – which I was) and was surprised to see two runners right behind and another trailing just slightly.

I continued to push as hard as I could while simultaneously trying to keep something in reserve. I kept thinking "you'll need something when you get to the snowman". I figured the snowman at the final turn was about ½ mile from the finish and was hoping to hold on until that spot then throw down whatever I had left. When we got back to the power-line I surreptitiously glanced down at my watch and was very surprised that we were at 20 minutes. I had figured the 5K would take about 20 minutes and I knew we had at least a mile to go, that was the point I realized it was not a 5k!

After we got off of the power-line I heard a voice (Josh) call out "on your right" as he moved past Tim. I tried to up the tempo, feeling the pressure as Josh closed ranks. With about ¾ mile to go Josh pulled up along side but I went into a sprint to hold him off. I wasn't going to just hand him the lead, but if he had kept the pace up just a bit longer he would have broken me. He tucked back in and at a wider part of the trail he went around me like I was standing still. I wasn't surprised that he came back but was surprised at how quickly he got around and then dropped me. I used his surge to pull me away from Tim.

Josh had a terrific race, doubly so as pressures of race directing make it hard get a proper warmup and energy is expended toward directing that could be better saved to race. Kudos to him and to the A.R.E. for putting on a fine event. I finished the day with a nice easy three mile run with Tim on some of the other trails. Tim is an interesting character whose main event is Tower (or stair) climbs. He has an excellent website www.runningraw.com with a great deal of motivating content. Tim has caught the snowshoe racing bug and will be a force on the WMAC racing scene this winter. Congratulations to all the first-timers this weekend! Hopefully many of them will return for more WMAC races.

Dave Dunham

WOODFORD: THE SEQUEL

Laura Clark -- Nowadays, every story worth its salt has a sequel, so here's mine: I soon discovered why my race felt slightly off: I was only hours away from a medically interesting case of bronchitis combined with laryngitis, helped along with a hefty dose of asthma. New Year's Eve found me hooked up to a nebulizer, but released in time to view the "kiddie" fireworks at 5:45. I learned several things this week:

It really is fun to hike in the snow, especially when there is 2 feet of it, one for each snowshoe. Hopefully, my quads are at least in good shape.

The retirees who complain that they never have any time any more (and you know who you are) may, in fact be not too far from the truth. I took three days sick leave and between sleeping in, taking a walk, visiting doctors, going grocery shopping (no handy vending machines on the home front) and taking naps, the day progressed quite rapidly. I could live like this!

YES, VIRGINIA, BLIZZARDS DO BRING SNOW!

The Never-Say-Die Barnyard Award for the most persistent snow dance goes flake down to Josh Merlis and the high-energy Albany Running Exchange. After three years of parading costumed Frosty Blizzard characters on brown grass, the crew at ARE finally got to make a snowman made of Real Snow! And they even remembered how. Well, actually, they had a dress rehearsal of sorts at their 2007 April Dodge the Deer, where Dodge and his love, Chase the Chipmunk got to throw snowballs at each other in a “Christmas in April” replay. There was even one optimistic participant, who brought her snowshoes and actually got to race in them!

This winter 115 runners kept the faith, curious no doubt to see what the Guilderland course looked like covered in genuine white stuff which did not happen to be cotton balls or white rice. Amazingly, a full third of them were folks who had never owned a pair of snowshoes and were just waiting for the opportunity to give them a try. Billed as a low-key event on a fairly easy rolling course, Brave the Blizzard serves as a perfect introduction to snowshoeing. A sound-surround system featuring peppy running tunes was jerry-rigged by enterprising University of Albany students to set the beat whether you were walking in from the parking lot, registering, doing your warmup or tossing a few preparatory snowballs. Who could be nervous with all that going on?

There were also a few surprise challenges planned for the more experienced snowshoers who were seriously into accumulating WMAC finishing order points. The most immediate was guessing the length of the course so as to gauge proper energy expenditure and power bar intake. The first non-Blizzard BTB, run on ice was 1.8 miles, the second and third, run on bare ground, were both 3.5 miles. The new, improved 2008 snow version was either 5K as proclaimed by the race application, 3.5 miles, as promulgated at the registration table, or 3.75 miles according to the folks working the finish line. To make things even more interesting, not everyone was aware of all the different versions waiting in the wings, so there was no firm race strategy. You could be behind someone you normally follow and discover yourself going out way too fast because that person was running the 5K version. You just never knew!

The final challenge, however, was revealed at the start line when Josh merrily announced that Blizzard the Snowperson thought it would be a good idea to celebrate our good fortune by altering the course so we could wade through a foot of prime, previously untrammelled real estate. Significant looks were exchanged as snowshoes shuffled into new starting line positions. The dilemma was two-fold: Do you burst forth full-throttle and tire yourself out attacking the deep stuff to secure prize positions on the single-track, or do you let the eager beavers do the work but risk getting caught in the conga line? There are many reasons I don't live in New York City anymore, congestion being one of them, so I quietly traded some prime real estate for a more countrified pace.

After a mile or so the conga line miraculously melted away as we all found our own pace and we were all able to marvel at the beautiful woods available to us in an otherwise urban area. I struggled, dealing with residual bronchitis, but at least despite my day-glo jacket, Martin Glendon politely informed me I had

lost that greenish color I was sporting at Woodford. And speaking of Martin he threw in a fine performance, outpacing our group and winning the right to wear the invisible yellow jersey at North Pond, unless of course Bob Massaro finally discovers the box where he tossed his last year's yellow windbreaker. He was followed a minute and a half later by Jim Carlson, who apparently also thought he was running the mythical 5K version of the course. Laurel Shortell, me, (or is it I?) and Bob Massaro finished slightly spread out but carefully maintaining our 1-2-3 cross country order, with Pete Finley following shortly afterwards.

But the real hero of the day, no matter where you placed, was Walter Kolodzinski who had the foresight to wear his GPS unit, which indicated that Blizzard had led us on a merry 4.1 mile chase. This prompted Josh to concede that “The 2008 race was ‘approximately’ 4 miles depending on what size snowshoes you were wearing.” We all breathed a sigh of relief to learn that our slower times weren't really that slow after all! And even Josh was vindicated for winning his own race since he could claim no prior knowledge of the actual course length.

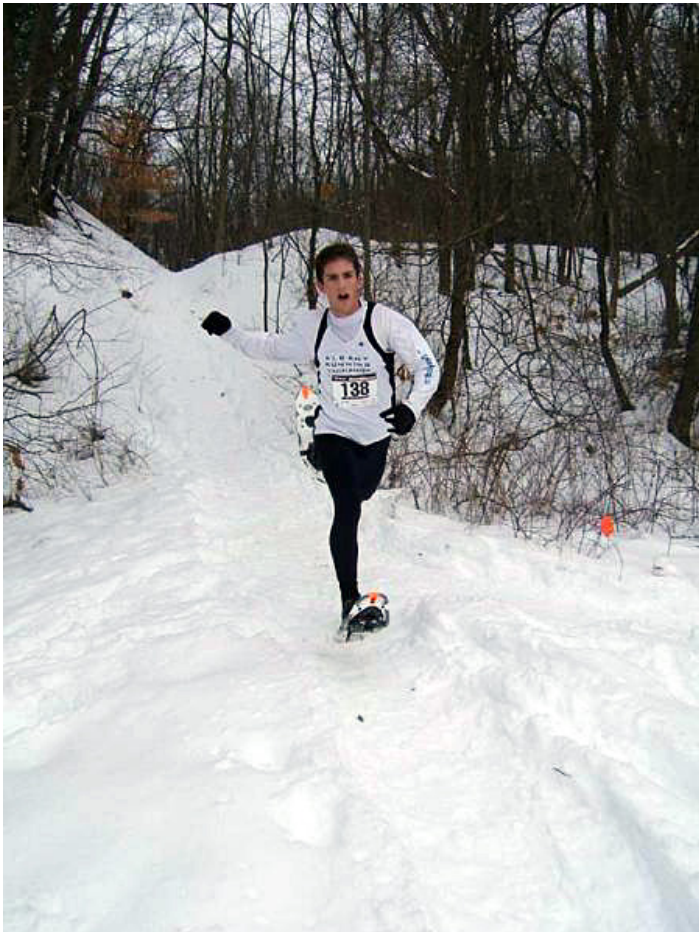
Laura Clark



Peter Finley on his way to breaking 50:00 at Brave the Blizzard!

THE BLIZZARD WAS NO BUMMER! BY JAY KOLODZINSKI

“If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again!” If that wasn’t the motto for the Albany Running Exchange (ARE) the past three years, I don’t know what it could have been. For the last three years the ARE has been trying to get its Brave the Blizzard Snowshoe Race off the ground and I really mean off the ground. Having joined the WMAC snowshoe series in 2005, their inaugural event, which was in February, was held as a trail race due to the lack of snow. With one strike against them for their inaugural event, they tried again. The next year, I attended the event, hoping for a real blizzard of a day. When I arrived at the Guilderland Elementary School, the name of the event was, I think unofficially changed to, Bummer, No Blizzard 3.5 Mile Trail run. That was definitely a bummer! Now with two strikes, they tried again! The third time they changed months and instead of being held in February, they shifted the event calendar and locked in on an early January date. Now as much as I love to support the ARE I did not attend the third event because as like the first two years, it was again a trail race. Now they had three strikes! Normally when you have three strikes, you are out! Well this is not the overpaid sport of baseball; it is the joyous sport of snowshoeing racing. And if one thing is certain, when you live in New England you are going to have snow sooner or later. Well in the case of ARE, it was later than sooner, but “Good things come to those who wait, and Ah, we have waited so very long!” It was now 2008 and judging by the snow on the ground, this was Brave the Blizzards year to shine!



BTB Race Director Josh “Never Say Die” Merlis on his way to victory!

Well in true ARE fashion, my companions and I were greeted to one of their friendly mascots as we entered the parking lot of the elementary school. Sometimes it could be an animal (gorilla or squirrel), a fruit (a banana with arms and legs), or in this wintertime event, Frosty the snowman was the honored guest! However, he did look slightly lonely, as he had no gorilla, squirrel, and banana to keep him company. Even so, with the warmth of the day, Frosty was showing no signs of melt as he waved us in with a huge welcome and told us to go run along and snowshoe. With an early arrival of 9 am, we had an hour to conduct our pre-race business. We were also being treated to luxury, with the amenities of a school, restrooms, locker rooms, showers, and most of all; the all you can eat pancakes!

On the drive to Guilderland, I was joined by my fellow EORC teammates. I had the company of Bob Massaro, My father Walter, and in her first snowshoe race appearance, my mother Kathy Furlani! My mother, who is now 59, was always a road and trail runner, but never a snowshoe runner. She had recently taken up spinning at the gym in the wintertime as a way to cross train through those months. She always was inquisitive about the snowshoeing, asking me how it went after different races. For the last 4 years I tried to get her to participate in one. She always said next year. However, this year was different. She started asking me what would be the best and easiest race to start with. Being early in the year, I told her Brave the Blizzard. Also not knowing what old man winter could throw at us during the year, I told her this event had indoor facilities and that in itself should be the main reason you would want to start off with this race. Not knowing what it would be like to run on snowshoes, she told me she put on her big puffy snow boots the day before and ran around her back yard for 20 minutes to try to get the feel of it. I chuckled because I couldn’t imagine what that would feel like, better yet look like.

Well in true ARE fashion, we had the sounds of loud music blaring in the field where the race would begin. They set up a nice sound system outside to keep the snowshoers entertained! In what was a large crowd for this snowshoe race, everyone piled out of the school gymnasium as Josh Merlis yelled, “race starts in 10 minutes.”

Prior to the start I had to get my mother equipped with her snowshoes as she didn’t know how to put them on. After I did that, I went out for a slow warm-up around the field. It was announced that trails were all packed except for the first half mile around the field. Seeing that first hand while I did my warm-up, I decided to start the race a little slower than normal, so I wouldn’t burn out as quick.

Well the moment was here. Brave the Blizzard was finally off the ground and about to begin. With many veterans of snowshoeing attending and many first timers, the day was sure to grab some possible barnyard votes for fastest race of the year. And with the announcement of, “on your marks, get set, snowshoe!”, the racers were off! I myself hung back a little bit for the first mile and soon got into a very comfortable pace. After rounding the field though the unbroken snow, I found the trail we soon joined and would running on would be a firmly packed trail.

NO BUMMER! continued

I ran approximately the first 1/2 mile of the race in a small group of fellow comrades. I had Ed Alibozek and some unknown racers with me for the very beginning and soon broke away only to be in Britt Brewer's footsteps. I followed Britt for the rest of race and learned that leg length does make a difference. Britt showed great stamina throughout the entire race, as with every step I took to catch him, but he only pulled away from me, with every step he took. And so it went for the entire race. We all know that feeling when there is someone in front of you and you want to catch them but just can't. So after realizing I would not catch Britt, I continued to keep my pace with the hopes I would not have Ken Clark come from behind me. I have raced against Ken many times and I didn't have to look back to know that if Ken could see me and was near, he would be chasing me down. I also knew that I didn't want to look back with the fear Ken would be right there. Well at the final left hand turn before the finish I knew I would be sprinting to the finish alone. As much as I hate competition and a sprint to the finish against a dueling racer, it's better than not having one because then I just trot in. So I knew I was nearing the end when I could hear some loud music. I couldn't quite make out the song but knew I would soon be coming into audio range. I was hoping for a little "Eye of the Tiger" but had to settle with the "Cats in the Cradle" song. A fair trade I suppose as I like that song! So without anyone to push me I trotted in to grab the 6th position! I was pleased.

I then ran in the school and grabbed my camera to get some photos of my parents as they finished. I knew my father would be fine as he was no virgin to snowshoeing. My mother on the other hand presented me with some worries. I always remembered her saying how she cried during the Savoy 20 mile trail run. Now this was no Savoy 20, but to someone who had never done it before it could be intimidating! So I ran to the edge of the wood-line to watch all the snowshoe guru's come down the final short hill to the finish. When I got there, I was just in time to see the much-improved Laurel Shortell, who just keeps getting better, come truckin' down the hill. She was all by herself as she must be making her nearest competition scared. Next I saw Laura Clark, who had Bob Massaro right on her heels. I gave some yells for both to push it to the finish, and Laura was able to finish 3 seconds ahead of Bob. A minute later my father, who has been battling bad knees came trudging down the hill. At this point I began to get a tad worried on how my mother was doing on the course. In road races she is usually ahead of Bob and my father. Well as I started to run up the hill, I could hear her breathing as she came into sight. As she ran down the hill she yelled, "Oh my god, I'm gonna fall!" I told her she wasn't and like I guessed she did not fall and ran steadily all the way to the finish. My obligations to reel in snowshoers on the course were now complete. Pancake breakfast, here I come!

Now came discussion time back in the gymnasium. While we all ate the excellent pancakes (kudos to whoever came up with the idea of putting butterscotch in them) we exchanged war stories about the race. My mother said that the downhill at the finish was the scariest part of the entire race. I told her if she thought that was bad wait till Curly's! My father's GPS gave a measurement of 4.1 miles. I like the snowshoe races for this

NO BUMMER! continued

reason; you show up for one distance and end up running a completely longer one! That's good though, better workout session! I think my mother is hooked on a new sport, which shows it's never to late to try something new! I enjoyed just about everything. The camaraderie of like-minded folks keeps me sane in a world that thinks people like us are nuts.



Barbara Sorrell Leading a pack to the finish.

Finally, great job to the ARE on putting on a stellar snowshoe event. I was able to see a real walking snowman, get a great workout in, and eat more pancakes than I ever ate before all in a couple hours!!! May the Barnyard votes treat you kind this spring!

Bill Morse leading a pack toward the finish at Woodford '08

