

# W.M.A.C. SNOSHU-NEWS

## 2008 BARNYARD AWARDS – GUEST FARMER JAY KOLODZINSKI

**The DRAGON Award:** Overall Male Champion for 2008 is **Dave Dunham**, with his second consecutive WMAC Snowshoe Title. Dave has now won seventeen races over 10-years of racing with us. He only trails Kelli Lusk (18-wins) for the all-time win record. Dave set course records at North Pond and Cobble Mountain during a fine season where he placed 1<sup>st</sup> four times, 2<sup>nd</sup> three times and 3<sup>rd</sup> once for eight total events. In addition, Dave contributes regularly to SnoNews and Directs the two Northfield events annually.

**The LAUREL Award:** WMAC Snowshoe Series Female Champion is **Abby Woods**. Abby dominated the circuit and won all five events she entered, setting new course records at four of the five (North Pond, South Pond, Curly's and Hawley Kiln Notch 5-miler). There is a bright future for this one on the snowshoe circuit.

### Our list of WMAC Snowshoe Champions is as follows:

1998	Bryan Dragon	Laurel Rollins
1999	Ken Clark	Beth Herder
2000	Ken Clark	Beth Herder
2001	Leigh Schmitt	Carol Kane
2002	Leigh Schmitt	Deb Livingston
2003	Richard Bolt	Sheryl Wheeler
2004	Ben Nephew	Kelli Lusk
2005	Paul Low	Kelli Lusk
2006	Rich Bolt/ Paul Low	Kelli Lusk
2007	Dave Dunham	Chelynn Tetreault
2008	Dave Dunham	Abby Woods

**MEN'S SNOWSHOER OF YEAR:** Dave Dunham: Top point scorer and won four races, also directs the two Northfield Races.

**WOMEN'S SOY:** Abby Woods: Top Point Scorer and won all five races she entered.

### **POY (PERFORMANCE OF YEAR):**

1. Ken Clark winning the Hawley Kiln in difficult snow conditions
2. Jay Kolodzinski, Josh Merlis, Jessica Hageman, Tom Ryan, and Jamie Howard racing in 3 snowshoe races in 2 days in 2 states for a combined distance of 13.1 miles.
3. Abby Woods Coming within 25 seconds of winning the South Pond race outright.

**MEN'S ROY (ROOKIE OF YEAR):** Tim Mahoney crossed over from the Trail and Mountain Races and was a force in the series. Honorable Mention: Tim Van Orden and Mike Townsley, who both had top five finishes.

**WOMEN'S ROY:** Abby Woods. In her first season snowshoe she almost won a race outright.

**K2 Award:** The most improved snowshoer for 2008.

1. Chelynn Tetreault continues to improve and be a force as she won 3 races in 2008.
2. Laurel Shortel's improvement came out of nowhere as she knocked many minutes of her race times from previous years. After races many of the folks that would usually be around her time were commenting on how she was nowhere in sight!

**The ERIN WORSHAM Award:** "Most Lost" is the half of the pack at Covered Bridge 4 miler changing the last ¾ mile of the course. Not really lost but more like off course, Jay K, Ed A., Abby Woods, and a few others got side tracked at the Woodford kickoff to the season.

\*\*No one got actually lost where they went a mile in the wrong direction -- That means our race directors are doing excellent jobs marking the course! Thank You!

**HANNON Award:** Laura Clark has dominated this category we thought of re-naming it in her honor; we'll figure out something else to recognize her with. That being said, here is Jay's choice: Jay Kolodzinski. I thought I'd write one story for Sno-News about the state parks we race in, and before you know it I was hooked and found writing to be very fun and exciting and wrote about every race! I plan on continuing the stories for years to come!

**BEVERLY Award:** Top 60 - 64 goes to Laura Clark! This woman does it all: volunteer, direct two excellent snowshoe races, and run in them all! She hasn't let age slow her down as she continues to excel at the sport.

**WOODFORD Award:** John Pelton again! He added another Gold Medal at the United States Snowshoe Association Nationals.

**SILVERBACK:** **Richard Busa** is still the Silverback.

**The STREAK:** **Laurel Shortell** has 7-years without missing a WMAC race day, 80 straight WMAC Snowshoe Races! Everything from Prospect Mountain 2002 through Massachusetts State Championship at Northfield 2008.

### **COMEBACK (S) OF YEAR:**

- Jack Casey; after being absent in 2007 he was back in 2008 and a force on the circuit!

## BARYARD AWARDS 2008 (CONT)

**CURLY Award:** With certain individuals in the Hall of Fame for this category, my vote goes to Ole Walt Kolodzinski. After blowing out his knee at Hallockville Apple Orchard he still came and shouted/cheered everyone on and helped time at Covered Bridge and Moody Springs. He also almost clothes-lined a snowmobiler at Moody Springs after a nice exchange of words about not slowing down! Walt has got our back.

The following people have been removed from eligibility, as they have been winners of the Curly award previously and continue to do so much that we have decided to place them into the Curly Top Shelf category.

- **Beth & Brad Herder**
- **Dave Dunham**
- **Bob & Denise Dion / Dion Snowshoe Company**
- **Edward Alibozek, Paul Hartwig and Ed Alibozek Jr**
- **Tom McCrumm**

**BEST LOCATION:** Hallockville Pond! With 2 races there in 2008 it beats out Savoy (2 races) due to the fire accommodations. Savoy has a woodstove vs. the huge fireplace at Hallockville. Even though parking stinks at Hallockville, the huge fireplace more than makes up for it! Also has a port-a-pot and large semi-indoor facility.

### RACE OF THE YEAR:

1996	Moby Dick
1997	Spruce Hill Climb
1998	South Pond Shuffle
1999	Hawley Kiln
2000	Saratoga Spa Winterfest
2001	Greylock Glen
2002	Mt Prospect at Woodford
2003	Curly's Record Run
2004	Covered Bridge
2005	Northfield Mountain
2006	I Love Woodford
2007	Camp Saratoga
2008	North Pond

**FASTEST:** Brave the Blizzard; after 2 years of being hammered by global warming it deserves the award. However, Camp Saratoga is only a few degrees behind it in this category.

**SLOWEST:** The entire Hawley Kiln course; the snow conditions were the toughest all year. It had a composition comparable to quicksand.

**TOUGHEST SECTION:** The Moody Springs climb.

**TOUGHEST RACE:** Hawley Kiln; between the wind and snow conditions it made this one Difficult with a capital "D".

**LONGEST MILE:** Northfield Mountain; I missed Curly's this year but regardless Dave Dunham always manages to find the best uphill climbs at Northfield.

## BARYARD AWARDS 2008 (CONT)

**COOKOUT OF THE YEAR:** Woodford.

**BEST INSIDE COOKOUT:** Braze the Blizzards  
"All you can eat pancake buffet".

**BEST SURPRISE APPEARANCE:** Pete Lipka at  
Hallockville Pond "Apple Orchard".

**WORST SMELLING PORT-A-JON:** The restroom at  
Camp Saratoga.

**SHINIEST OUTFIT:** Dave Dunham's Atlas Jumpsuit

**BEST SOUP:** Venison Stew at Camp Saratoga

**WHERE IS HE?** Johnny Scalise.

**MOST MILES DRIVEN IN ONE WEEKEND:** ARE van

**BEST DOUBLE HEADER:** Camp Saratoga and  
Hallockville "Apple Orchard".

**BEST TRIPLE HEADER:** Covered Bridge 4 miler,  
Kingham Farm 5K, and Moody Springs 10km.

**AWARD FOR REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSION:** Carpooling gang to Savoy in the ARE van.

**BEST PRE-RACE STOP:** The McDonalds in Adams.

**MOST MISSED:** Paul Low, Kelly Lusk & Carol Kane.

**WORST SNOW SQUAL:** North Pond - Day II,  
Blinding snow that day made everyone wish they had a pair of Rich Busa's goggles.

**BEST NEW WMAC SNOWSHOE RACE:** Brave the  
Blizzard (because past years it was a trail race).

**BEST NON-WMAC RACE:** Kingman Farm Night 5K  
Race in NH

**BEST FOR A GOOD LAUGH:** Nick Jubok

**BEST COSTUMES DURING A RACE:** The SCA gang at  
Hallockville wearing the funky hats during the race

**WORST PARKING AREA:** The upper lot at  
Hallockville, we almost lost the ARE van

**BEST FINISH KICK:** Konrad Karoculak and Rich Busa's  
finish line kicks at the Camp Saratoga race.

**BEST PRIZE AT A SNOWSHOE RACE:** Harpoon  
Beer at Cobble Mountain

**BEST AWARDS CEREMONY:** Camp Saratoga,  
almost everyone walked away with something.

**WORST MISHAP ON A WAY TO A RACE:** Sheila Osgood  
and Jay Kolodzinski getting stuck on a road in Plainfield on the  
way to Hallockville. Sheila coined it "Laurel Shortell's worst  
nightmare."

## **BARYARD AWARDS 2008 (CONT)**

**MOST DIFFERENT WINNERS IN 1 SEASON:** 11 different Men's Champs and 7 Different Women's Champs

**BEST SNOWSHOE DUO:** Konrad and Bill Glendon

**BEST SNOWSHOE 3-SOME:** Konrad, Bill, and Jeff Clark

### **KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY! RELATIVES!**

**Father/Son:** Ed and Ed Jr. Alibozek  
Jay And Walt Kolodzinski

**Father/Sons:** Ed Buckley & Taidgh and Gareth

**Cousins:** Marty and Bill Glendon  
Pete Lipka & the Alibozeks

**Father/Daughter:** Ken and Erin Clark  
Pat and Chloe McGrath  
Marty and Sarah Glendon

**Mother/Son:** Darlene & Justin McCarthey

**Husband/Wife:** Bob & Denise Dion  
Beth & Brad Herder  
Laura & Jeff Clark  
Tom & Judy McCrumm  
Dan & Stephanie Cooper  
Mike & Diane Pytko

**Grandfather-Granddaughter:**  
Ed Jr. and Chloe McGrath

**Couples:** Tim Mahoney and Abby Woods  
Scott Hunter and Kate Hayes

**Engaged:** Jay Kolodzinski & Sheila Osgood

### **SAVE THE PLANET AWARDS:**

#### **Award for reducing Greenhouse Gas emission in one day:**

The gang for carpooling to Savoy in the ARE van.

**Diving to races in a Hybrid:** Laurel Shortell.

#### **Carpooling Groups from Eastern MA:**

Rich Busa & Rich Godin.  
Bill Morse, Jay Curry & The Coopers.

#### **Best Carpooling Groups from Western MA:**

Walt Kolodzinski, Wally Lempart, and Bill Milkiewicz.  
Bob Massaro and Patty Duffy.  
Ed Jr., Mike Lahey, Paul Hartwig & Pete Lipka.

#### **Best Carpooling group from Northern CT:**

Ed Alibozek, Ken Clark, and Konrad Karoculak.

#### **Best Carpooling group form Eastern NY:**

The ARE folks & Jim Carlson and Pete Finley.

## **BARYARD AWARDS 2008 (CONT)**

**BRING IT BACK:** Running around the Kiln at Hawley Kiln.

**MVP'S:** Laurel Shortell excelled all season & Mike Lahey who came back strong to run almost every race..

### **THE SUCK IT UP AND "JUST DO IT!" AWARD:**

Everyone who raced in the Pittsfield Marathon, ½ Marathon and other races that day. The conditions that day could have killed someone and still the diehards did it! Way to Go!

**FAVORITE DOGS!** This one gets a three way tie: Jan Rancatti's Dog Chloe, Ed's dog Tippi, and the Herder's dogs Summit and Sierra.

**BEST CHEF:** Paul Hartwig, even though he was sidelined, he was at most events getting the Chili, Dogs, and Hot Chocolate ready for all us!

**BEST SPONSOR:** Dion Snowshoes

### **BEST SPONSOR RUNNER UP:**

South Face Farm Sugar Shack

**SCENIC WONDERS:** In no particular order:

- Running Around the Orchard at Hallockville.
- The view atop Cobble Mountain.
- The snow squall at South Pond Savoy Day II.
- Seeing Mt Greylock again, she is always so beautiful!

### **WHAT WE REALLY DO WELL:**

- Keeping entries cheap.
- Providing simple but good food after events.
- Email updates.
- Photos from the Herders.
- A revamped website.
- Starting the Snowshoe message board, wish more people would use it.
- Mile Markers brought in! Cobble Mnt, Northfield, and Hawley Kiln all used mile markers and it was a great addition!
- Supporting DION snowshoe by wearing the snowshoes, vests, and hats.
- Having the DION logo on the back on our Tee-shirts!

### **NO BRAINER CRYSTAL BALL PREDICTIONS FROM BEGINNING OF SEASON? How well did Laura Clark do?**

<b>K2 Award?</b>	Chris Johnson	0%	Chris only ran 1 race
<b>Silverback:</b>	Rich Busa	100%	
<b>The Streak:</b>	Laurel Shortell	100%	
<b>Most Shoes:</b>	The Dions	100%	
<b>Top Dog:</b>	Tippi	33%	
	Share with Jan Rancatti and the Herders Dogs		
<b>Windiest:</b>	Mt Greylock	0%	
	Hawley Kiln grabs the honor		

**Fianl Score:** 55%

## BARYARD AWARDS 2008 (CONT)

### IMPROVEMENTS TO MAKE:

- A western MA nighttime snowshoe race.
- More youth! Scan the results and we have more people in the 40's, 50's, and 60's racing than in the 20's and 30's. Not that we don't like that but we need more youth!
- More updates on point standings throughout the winter.
- Starting earlier in December if the weather allows us to.
- Get New England Runner to do an article on Snowshoe Racing, Maybe Runners World.
- A Snowshoe Marathon at Mt Greylock (The Moby Dick Marathon) or Pittsfield State Forest (Curly Snowshoe Marathon).
- An Orienteering Snowshoe Race, contact Phil Bricker or Peter Gagarian.
- A snowshoe blog for racers.
- Races at other Western MA state parks? DAR, Mt Tom, Holyoke Reservation, Windsor Jams?
- A summer race on the beach wearing snowshoes, It could be called Sandshoeing.
- Create a NH Race Series and then still keep the WMAC snowshoe series. The NH series could have the 3 Aciditic Races, plus Sidehiller, Frosty's, and Merrimack. (Check Granite State Snowshoe Series on the web!)
- Put all race results on Coolrunning.
- Get RedBull to show up at Races!
- Provide course maps online after the race if someone is generous to do so. Or elevation profiles if someone uses a Garmin.

### SUGGESTED FUTURE AWARDS VIA LAURA CLARK:

- Most miles driven
- Scariest ride
- Biggest Bonk
- St Bernard award
- Snowshoe Couple of the Year
- Family Act--like Father/Daughter, etc
- Most miles driven in a single weekend
- Most changes of clothes at a single event  
**(Dunham Award)**
- Best Dressed  
**(The Sweep Voll Award)**
- Worst Dressed
- Red Lantern
- Most enthusiastic cheerleader:  
**(The Miss Ellen Award)**
- Most stuck vehicle
- Next Generation Award

Thanks to Jay Kolodzinski for being the Guest Farmer and awarding the 2008 Barnyard Awards! Will we have another Future Farmer of America rise up and score the Barnyard Awards for this season? I sure hope so.

## 2008 WMAC SEASON WRAP

Wow! What another great year of snowshoe racing. We were able to race from December right through to mid-March. There were no cancellations and none of the races were held as XC instead of snowshoe. I was fortunate enough to win my second overall title. I was also lucky that I raced early and often as I strained a calf muscle in mid-February so my last race of the year was Frosty's. There was some great competition across the board this year with 11 different men and seven different women winning races. Laurel Shortell was (again) the only competitor to run all 16 races. She capped her season with a bronze medal at the National championships.

### Top Double Digit Racers by attendance:

- #01. Laurell Shortell did all 16 Events.
- #02 Rich Busa and Mike Lahey did 14 Events.
- #03 Ken Clark, Denise Dion, Konrad Karolczuk, Bob Massaro and Farmer Ed did 13 Events.
- #04 Bob Dion did 12 Events.
- #05 L. Clark, H. Bassett and J. Kolodzinski did 11 Events
- #06 B. Glendon, V. Kirby and Ed Jr. did 10 Events

Additionally, no one did 9-Events; 7 people did 8-Events; 5 people did 7-Events; 6 people did 6-Events; 10 people did 5-Events; 16 people did 4-Events; 29 people did 3-Events; 65 people did 2-Events and 358 people got in 1-Event. **A total of 511 Unique finishers in 2008.** The 16 races were the most ever in a season, beating 2005 which had 15 (2 of which were XC). To date 5,888 finishers have been recorded in 98 events (105 total races scored - some had two distances) or an average of 60 runners per race.

Most wins all-time – Dave Dunham moved into first place on the men's side with 17 wins and now trails only Kelli Lusk overall who has 18. Josh Merlis moved up to fifth place with six wins and Ben Nephew and Ken Clark both moved up, now tied with four wins. Abby Woods moved into third place on the women's list and Chelynn Tetrault moved into a tie for fourth with four others with four wins respectively.

#	Name	Wins	Name	Wins
1.	Dave Dunham	17	1. Kelli Lusk	18
2	Leigh Schmitt	14	2 tie Sheryl Wheeler	6
3	Richard Bolt	13	2 tie Beth Herder	6
4.	Paul Low	11	3 tie Abby Woods	5
5.	Josh Merlis	6	4 tie Laurel Shortell	4
6 tie	Ben Nephew	4	4 tie Chelynn Tetrault	4
6 tie	Ken Clark	4	4 tie Michelle Tetrault	4
			5 tie Tracey Van Dyke	4

Consecutive wins (in races run) – Abby Woods won all five races she entered. Her streak ties Dave Dunham's five in 2001 and only trails Kelli Lusk's 6 consecutive in 2005. Lusk has the most consecutive wins in races run over multiple seasons with an incredible 13 in a row from 2004-2007.

Depth of field – North Pond had five guys in the top ten who would go on to win another race in the series in the same season. The most "winners" in a race is the 2004 Northfield race with six.

*Dave Dunham*

## DAVE DUNHAM'S BEGINNERS GUIDE TO SNOWSHOE RACING

Running on snowshoes has been around as long as people have been strapping on the big "tennis racket"-style snowshoes. Racing has changed over the last few years as lighter and smaller racing snowshoes have been developed.

The first step is to find a pair of snowshoes that work for you. I've tried many pair (20 or more different kinds) and some are better than others. For fast road runners, the best bet is to get the lightest pair available. I like the Dion racing snowshoes and the Atlas Dual tracs. I also race quite a bit in an old pair of Tubbs 10K's. I like the Tubbs because I direct mounted a racing flat to the snowshoe. That way I never have to worry about the straps coming loose during the race. Dion has loaners at the WMAC races and you can test out a few different pair before deciding on what you want to buy. Make sure you contact him in advance so that you have a pair reserved.

What should you expect in at your first snowshoe race? Expect a range of runners from expert racers to others just out for a hike in the woods. Snowshoe races attract a full assortment of ability levels. You should seed yourself accordingly on the starting line; if you aren't going to place in the top ten, don't get on the front of the starting line. The start areas tend to be narrow and the courses themselves are typically single-track trails. Poor self-seeding could have dire consequences for you - you'd be forced to start too quickly and others would have to run around you. Usually during a race if you need to pass you can just say "on your left" and slip by. Other times the runner in front may just step off to the side to let you by, but there are some times when your only choice would be to go into the deeper/less packed snow to the side of the trail if you really want to pass. There is no rule that you are required to slow up or move over to let someone by, but my personal philosophy is to let anyone by who is faster than me. Having said that, there are occasions when I haven't yielded the trail. Last year at the Brave the Blizzard I lead the race until about ½ mile to go. I did not give up the lead without a fight, forcing (the eventual winner) the runner to go into deeper snow and speed up to get by me. If he had tried to pass at a mile into the race it would have been a different story.

The next thing to consider is what to wear. It's very easy to overdress for snowshoe racing. I've seen runners in all assortment of gear, from shorts and a t-shirt (really!) to a parka and a balaclava. Usually, something in between is suitable. You should consider the wind, sun, and air temperature when choosing your racing outfit. Also keep in mind that racing in snowshoes is a very hard effort, you will work hard at 10 minute miles! Tights, gloves, a hat, and long sleeved t-shirt are almost always enough to remain comfortable. It's a good idea to dress in layers for heat retention; at the first sign of overheating, you can remove a layer. Remember: It's better to be a little cold than too warm. I bought a pair of biking tights that are thick in the front and vented in the back. I wear them the other way around when using them in snowshoe races. You tend to kick a lot of snow up the back of the tights (and up the back of your shirt if you don't tuck in).

Training for your first race should include at least some time on snowshoes. Other than the obvious change in surface, snowshoe

running differs from trail running or road running in distinct ways. You'll find that you have to sustain a somewhat bowlegged stride in order to avoid thumping your shoes together. It also takes a few miles on snowshoes to learn how far back you can kick - if you kick to far back, you'll end up with a very sore butt! My first two seasons, I found that just doing a 1- or 2-mile warmup prior to the race was sufficient to get the proper feel for running in snowshoes. I usually do a mile or two on the road then switch into my racing gear and do another mile or two on the course. Typically I will go out/back over the last section of the course. This gives the added advantage of knowing something about the race surface, terrain, width of the trail for passing, and turns you might miss when tired. Sometimes I will put a stick out next to the trail to mark ½ mile to the finish line. This can be very helpful when I'm running out of steam and I'm not sure how far I have to go. Also warming up in the snowshoes gives you the opportunity to tighten the straps a few times. They should be tight to the point of being very uncomfortable, that is the only way to ensure that they don't come loose while racing.

Keep in mind that everything takes longer in the winter. It takes a lot longer to get to the races, especially in bad weather. Most of the races on the WMAC schedule are in somewhat remote areas. Some of the roads are dirt and the surface may be packed snow. Getting dressed for the race takes longer, changing damp layers takes longer. Also, don't put your snowshoes on until AFTER you have visited the porta-john. I found out the hard way how difficult it is to turn around in a confined space with big snowshoes on my feet. A folding camp chair is great to have so that you can sit down outside of your car and put your snowshoes on. Very few of the races have indoor facilities for changing. You definitely should bring dry clothes and a towel for after the race and plenty of extra layers just in case.

When racing, be careful to not get into trouble early. Snowshoe racing is similar to mountain racing in that respect. If you go into oxygen debt it can be very hard to recover. Courses can range from very fast to a slog. I've done 6's for 10km on ice with a dusting of snow on top and I've done 15 minute miles in 2' deep wet snow. You really have to adjust you pace for the conditions; don't worry about how fast you are going just worry about the effort. There will be times (like the climb up the mountain at Curly's Record Run) when you are barely making forward progress but you are maxed out. Don't be tempted to go faster than you are able to maintain. At Hallockville a couple of years ago, some of the guys blasted out on the very fast packed first mile. The course then went to unpacked single-track. Soon after, a couple of those guys were standing on the side of the trail. One swore to never snowshoe race again. I've found snowshoe racing to be a lot like mountain racing (especially on some of the mountainous courses). You have to have a good mental attitude going into the race and during the parts when it really hurts, which can be the entire race.

*Dave Dunham*

Dave organizes two Dion Series Snowshoe Races at Northfield Mountain each season. This year the dates are January 31<sup>st</sup> and March 14<sup>th</sup> for the Massachusetts State Championship.

## FIRST PLACE AND LAST PLACE & THE SERIES KICK OFF

When we got over a foot of snow last weekend I decided the time was right for a local snowshoe race. I've never raced on Christmas, so I figured I'd scratch that day off the list with an early morning race. Heck, I'd have to run that day anyway I might as well get in a fun snowshoe. The area around Winnekenni castle & Lake Kenoza are very popular by locals for walking, hiking, running and especially dog walking.

Dan Verrington and I previewed what I planned to use as a race course on Christmas Eve. We found some excellent rolling terrain that is not extensively used by the typical dog walker. The course started with a flat loop around the basin, which unfortunately had been partially plowed. We avoided the worst of the lack of snow in that area then headed out along the scenic shores of Lake Kenoza. After about 1.5 miles the course became hilly as we turned right and crossed over the hills to Lake Saltonstall. We then hit the deepest snow on the loop; some drifts more than 2' deep as we came up over the hill past the stone ruins. One final climb brought us to the Winnekenni castle and then we descended to the "springs" via the Castle trail. The loop would be very close to 3.5 miles. I was worried that the rain and warm temperatures would really eat away at the decent snow.

I returned to Winni the next morning and was met with wind & warm temps. The rain overnight had reduced the amount of snow. What was left was a slushy mess in most spots. I put out about 100 flags to mark the course, then checked to see if anyone had shown up to race me. No one had, so I took off trying to run the loop as hard as possible. I ended up taking the victory in 26:29, and also took last place. Oh well, you can only race the people who show up. I did the loop a 3<sup>rd</sup> time to pick up course markings and noted how little snow was left.

A couple of warm days later and there is a lot of bare ground and ice from the passage of many feet (and a few snowshoes). I might have another race there later in the season, heck it looks like we may get 6 inches or more on New Year's Eve.

Sunday was the kick-off of the Dion snowshoe series. I've won the series the last 2-years, which is kind of weird as my times now are much slower than "back in the day". Sometimes it just pays to keep showing up! I checked with the RD to verify the race was on as temps & rain have done a number on the snow not to mention the ice storm damage (and left Dan without cable for 2 WHOLE DAYS!). I volunteered to add some markings to the course as Woodford has had a tendency to be way under-marked.

I met up with Dreamy Jim & Double-J (along with the lovely & talented Kristen) at the River to reduce our carbon footprint by carpooling. Jim (double-j, not dreamy) started in on me before he even got in the car and his non-stop harassment became the background noise for the entire ride. We made good time to Woodford (less than 3 hrs) and found the parking lot already occupied by a fair number of fellow snowshoers. The lot was an ice rink, solid ice with a nice layer of water on top to make it super slippery. Traversing the parking lot would be the most difficult part of the day. I didn't have much time to say "hi" to all of the familiar faces, I hope no one felt I snubbed them.

I headed out an hour before the start to make sure I had enough time to mark the course. At 3.5 miles I wasn't sure if it would take me 30 minutes or an hour, so much depends on snow depth and how much of the trail has been broken. The course was fairly well packed, although not marked in any manner whatsoever. I'd run Woodford three times previously and was pretty confident of the course. Basically you just follow the blue rectangle trail. There were plenty of markers on trees and you could almost make out where the trail had been broken. I was able to put out 100 flags and made it back to the starting line in 38 minutes. I predicted 25-30 minutes to race it (for me), I was feeling pretty tired already and my feet were freezing from running in a lot of slushy snow.

The skies cleared out just before the start and the temps were well into the 40's when we hit the trail at a sprint. Josh Ferenc took it out hard and had established his lead in the first 600m before we hit the single-track trail. Jim J was about ½ way between the lead and the chase group at that point, and I settled into 6th place with Jim P and another guy a couple of steps in front. I felt tired already, but was looking forward to the rolling hills and the twisting turns where I tend to run better (compared to the fast straight start). About a mile in Matt Cartier pulled ahead of the chase group and slowly closed on Jim J. I shot around Jim P and soon after Tim Mahoney went around Jim as well. I pushed really hard when I got into fourth and soon after worried that I pushed too hard and wouldn't have anything left.

On the final short climb with about ¾ mile to go I could see Jim J and Matt ahead and I also took a glance back to check out where Jim P and Tim were. It seemed like I was about as far behind Matt as they were behind me. I tried to push; I was worried that over the last 400m both Tim and Jim P would be able to close on me as they both have superior speed. I had just enough distance to hold them off, with numerous glimpses back to check where they were.

Josh won the race for the second year in a row, with Jim J maybe 30 seconds back in second place in his first snowshoe race. Matt took third just under 25 minutes and I came in at 25:15 for fourth place. Tim and Jim P were 5th and 6th respectively, only a few seconds back. We caught our breath at the finish line and watched Abby Woods zoom in for the win. That was her sixth WMAC snowshoe victory which ties her with Cheryl Wheeler for the second most.

We (the CMS crew) headed out for one more loop around Woodford State Park picking up the flagging. It was amazing how much the course had been packed down by the passage of 83 runners. Despite all of us being pretty beat, we made it around again in just over 33 minutes. Needless to say, we were all pretty tired and hungry when we got back to the parking lot. They had a nice spread including hot beverages that we all happily absorbed. The camaraderie was also present with circles of folks standing around sharing tales of the day. All in all an excellent start to what I hope will be a great snowshoe racing season!

*Dave Dunham*

## DAVE DUNHAM'S "THE 2009 WMAC DION SNOWSHOE RACING SERIES"

Here are my notes on the races in the 2009 series. **Who knows how many of the races will actually be held?** The snow God's could be fickle this year or we could have great snow from December right through to March. **It is even-money that at least one race will get moved to another location due to snow conditions.**

**Woodford (12-28-08)** – This is a favorite of mine. I've done it four times and won twice. One of the times I won was due to the top 4 or 5 guys going off course. It was funny watching them kick it in to try and beat Richard Busa. The course is one of the poorer marked in the series. Like trail racing you are required to pay attention in order to stay on course. At Woodford there just aren't quite enough course markings to make it clear which way to go. Generally you are looping around a lake, but there are side trails that look like they might go the right way. A bunch of people (myself included) stopped at a four-way junction unsure of which way to go. When in doubt go straight. I'm going to run the course for my warm-up and take 50 surveyor flags to help mark any tricky spots. There is always excellent food after the race. Note that the parking lot can be tricky as it is usually packed snow. There are always a lot of snowmobile riders around, try to be pleasant to them.

**Greylock Glen (01-17-09)** – This one has a spectacular view of Mt Greylock at the starting line. The race is a roller-coaster, & depending on how much snowmobile trail it can be a killer grind. I've done this one 5- times and won 3-times. The last time I did it I got past Al Bernier in the last ½ mile to win the race & get the series win over Ken Clark by less than a point. This one has a flying fast start with a good downhill. Two years ago the top 5-10 runners missed the turn and stayed on the road (packed snow). Ken Clark and I ended up in the lead as we yelled for them to come back. Lesson: **Never blindly follow anyone!** Keep your eyes open for trail markings & don't assume that it will be obvious. Keep your head on a swivel looking left and right. The single track sections of this course are really nice, with some tough climb and lots of twists and turns. The last ¾ mile is very fast. There are no indoor facilities and it is always windy in the glen. Bring lots of warm clothes & hang out at the fire-barrel after racing. Remember that there is a fine line between staying warm & melting your clothes!

**Brave the Blizzard (01-18-09)** – A rare treat, indoor facilities. The school abuts some great conservation land (and a nice quiet cemetery for warming up on your own away from the masses). The course is a lot of un; the start has a section of unpacked snow so leading early may not be an advantage. The trails are narrow but passing is possible. I led for about 2.5 miles last year but couldn't hold off (the Race Director) Josh Merlis who eventually was able to blow by me. He nicely called out which way we'd be turning before we got to each turn, even without a tour guide the course was very well marked and had people at major intersections. The distance this year was "about 4 miles", it is advertised as a 5 Km and was a very long 4 mile. There are some great trails for exploring after the race.

**Curly's record run (01-25-09)** – You'll wish you had skis for the crazy downhill that is the aforementioned record run. One year it was single digits at this race. I think Busa still stripped down and took a snow shower. This course is a classic, I love

this race. If you are a strong climber you will like it, if you hate to climb this will be brutal. I've only run it twice finishing 13<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup>. The first time I went off course at the bottom of the hill, last year I was specifically warned about this turn (in front of everyone while we were on the line). You should have seen me the year I went off course, I was in a complete full-blown rant. Not at the race directors or course markers, but at myself for being so stupid that I missed the turn which was marked. I believe that this year it was marked & also taped off AND they had someone standing there. This one starts in a big open field and there is a little (very little) time to sort things out before it becomes single-track. No need to blast out, once the climbing really starts you can WALK by some of the early speedsters. This thing is unrelenting, you keep climbing and climbing. Then the fun (?) starts and you come down an incredible ski slope, just try to stay in some semblance of control. When you hit the bottom you still have nearly a mile of twisting and turning to go, you better have something left in the tank!

**Northfield Mountain (01-31-09)** – This one has great indoor facilities as they are an XC ski area & have dedicated Snowshoe trails. I've come up with a few different versions of this race depending on snow conditions, one year we had to have the race at Hallockville. If conditions are good we'll use the same course as the summer race. This is all groomed trail, so the footing is generally good & usually fast. The first mile has very little climb, the next 2 miles climbs nearly 1,000' including the "chute" where you have a 14% grade. Once you get to the summit & check out the view you can hammer the downhill, but keep something in reserve as there are a couple of short tough climbs in the last 2 miles of the course. I've only raced it twice as I'm the race director & never know if I'll have enough help. I've gotten 16<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup>, but neither race was the 10.3 km loop.

**Saratoga Winterfest (02-01-09)** – I've done this one three times, usually as a double-header on the same weekend as Northfield. I've won it once and run around 7's over the rolling XC course. This one always seems to be fast, I think the trails get so much use in winter that they are always packed. There is always a huge field and it is almost always the biggest race in the series. There are indoor facilities, which are always a bonus. The race starts with a loop around the quad which is always a mad dash to look good in front of the fans lining the course. Then you cross the roads and you are on your own. The course is typically well marked and has a little bit of single-track, mostly it is wide open for running and fast running is the way to go. There are only two hills of note and both are minor, nothing that will really shake things up. I think Rich Bolt has the course record in something like 18 minutes!

**Sidehiller (02-07-09)** – The only WMAC race in New Hampshire and it is also a USSSA (United States Snowshoe association) National qualifier. The entire town of Sandwich turns out for this race, including the police chief who directs traffic while the race goes across the main road into town. Did I mention that the town DPW comes out and puts down a layer of snow across the road? Wow! The race starts and finishes in a big field. There is plenty of time to sort out things prior to any single track, no need to sprint out in this one. We loop the field then cross the road, then the real race starts. There are some moderate climbs and some twisting and turning. There are great

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views from some of the fields that you pass through. The local snowmobile club helps put on the race and they come out and even put snow on top of stone walls that you have to run over. In most years the course is pretty much all groomed trail, but surprisingly slow running. You never can tell what the snow will be like until you get out there. I've run the race twice and finished 2<sup>nd</sup> both times to Kevin Tilton. Everyone gets a coupon for a free sandwich at the local store (Sandwich sandwich).

**Moody Springs (02-08-09)** – Who knows which version we'll get this year? I've run this race at any distance from 8m to 15 km. This one is always fun as Ed Alibozek sets an interesting course depending on the snow. Know that there will be a lot of single-track that could be deep and slow running. Stop at Moody Spring and drink the water which is purported to have restorative properties. I helped Ed set a Moody Spring course a couple of years ago and my injury which kept me from racing, healed quickly after drinking from the Spring.

**Camp Saratoga (02-14-09)** – I haven't gone to this one in a couple of years, it is a long way to go from the Eastern reaches of Mass. I recall one year the snow being so soft that it was brutal, I also remember a year skimming across the surface. I have no memory of the course other than the dang last loop. You actually pass the finish line with about 1 kilometer to go (I saw Rich Bolt win the race as I struggled into the last loop). It is brutal on the fragile psyche of the tired snowshoe racer to pass the finish and continue on.

**Covered Bridge/Hoxie Thunderbolt (02-21-09)** – This is a two-for-one deal. The first loop is 3.5 miles and that takes you back through the finish line then you can call it a day or continue on for 4.5 more miles. If you continue on you get scored in both races. At 1:25 this is the longest I've ever raced (time-wise) on snowshoes, of course the year I did it the first 3.5 was almost all un-packed and quite slow going. The race within a race is a great idea. You really need to have strategy to do well in both. The first loop is kind of tough, but the second loop which tends to have a bit more groomed is just down-right brutal. I recall one climb that just wouldn't end. There is a significant amount of climb on the slopes of Mt Greylock. This starts and finishes at the Greylock Glen so if it is a windy day you better have a lot of dry clothes for afterwards, gathering around the fire-barrel is a lot of fun.

**Hallockville pond (02-22-09)** – There have been a few versions of Hallockville. I like the one that stays on the side of the road with the camp. This version is mostly an out/back with a little loop on the end. The main path is wide and groomed, so it is typically very fast. Very small rolling hills will take a little of the oomph out of your legs. Not quite indoor facilities, but the camp has a nice building with a big fireplace which is a better location to change than the back seat of the car. Hallockville is where I nearly got trapped in the porta-john as I tried to maneuver with my snowshoes on.

**Hawley Kiln (02-28-09)** – This is where I did my first snowshoe race TEN years ago. Wow, the time has flown. The old 7 mile course was brutal with a staircase climb that would make you rethink what you were doing. I like the 5 mile "notch" version; you still get the flavor of Hawley Kiln without

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the sting. The start is excellent with a wide trail for the first ½ mile. No crazy sprints in this one. Once you get on single-track it is generally downhill for the first 2 miles. There are a lot of twists and turns which give great opportunities to see who is behind you (and ahead). The next mile or so is on wide snowmobile trail and there are a couple of brutal climbs. The newer notch version twists and turns in some beautiful woods before dropping you out with a half-mile sprint back to the finish. If this version doesn't loop around the Kiln at the beginning of the race, do yourself a favor and check it out prior to the race. It is a very cool structure and may have some mystical properties!

**Northfield Mass champs (03-14-09)** – This is a lower key race. Very low entry fee, but titles in all categories are at stake. I usually have everyone fill out the results board except for their time and then when you finish you record your time and I take that to figure out results. This means I can race and I don't need any help with timing/scoring the race. Who knows what the snow will be like in mid-March? We'll figure out a course if there is any snow anywhere near Northfield. Farmer Ed knows all of the secret places that hold snow when there isn't any in all the other places.

**Catamount (03-21-09)** – This is a new race. There was an unofficial race last year that Bob Dion won. The course has a moderate climb up a groomed ski slope with excellent views at the top. Then it travels along a ridge and has a long gentle down grade for the last mile. The race has a unique 4 p.m. start time.

**(Rescheduled) Tilda (01-03-09)** – I'm not sure about this new race, is it named after Ed Alibozek's dog? One year we were marking a course with Ed's dog and I looked back and saw that she was ripping out and "killing" all the flags after I put them out.

**(Rescheduled) North Pond shuffle (01-10-09)** – This is an excellent course. There is a little of everything. The race starts with a 100m dash to where the trail gets narrow, then single-track for a long way. Usually everyone takes it out like mad! There are some bridges to cross which are a bit narrow. The climbs while not super-long are draining. The downhill run to the finish seems to take forever. This one is very scenic and they seem to always have snow. If the building is open then there will be a cozy fire in the stove and a very cold room where you can get changed out of your wet racing gear. Last year the ARE (Albany Running Exchange) guys showed up in a team VAN! They may have also set up a tent, maybe to stay overnight? They are hardcore. I've only done this one once, but I think a few times we've modified the South Pond Shuffle and it was part or backwards on the North Pond shuffle course.

**(Rescheduled) South Pond shuffle (01-11-09)** - I've had good luck at this race, winning 3 of the 4 times I've raced it. The 1 loss was a battle with Ken Clark and Leigh Schmitt, who both kicked my butt. Again there is a fast start and then it gets narrow. This one is very similar if not the same course as North Pond. Anywhere from 3 to 4 miles depending on where we can go, a lot depends on the streams being frozen over. Every year courses are slightly different (on all of these races).