



The Wild Katahdin Trust Snow Run

"The Best Race of the Summer"??!!

SHERMAN - The beautiful, snowy expanse of forest terrain is silent and serene and in markedly direct contrast to the butt-kicking rock 'n roll sound of Bob Seger on my tape player.

Seger is needed. Not to get my adrenalin up for the 3rd Annual Wild Katahdin Trust Snow Run...but to provide a little security company. You see I've been driving north on Interstate 95 for over an hour and I've seen, by conservative

estimate, maybe eight to ten cars ever since I passed Howland.

It made me think of that research scientist abandoned alone for six months in the Arctic wilderness to study the habits of wolves, in the hit movie "Never Cry Wolf", and the remark he made about how completely "insignificant" he felt as the lone human being seemingly set adrift in the midst of a much bigger and yet much simpler scheme of life.

I'm early arriving at Katahdin High School. There's only a few cars in the lot. Suddenly two elfish-looking characters in running attire, with the trademark mischievous grin of the Woods Runners contingent, appear. Can these two be the legendary "Nurdlie" and "Duane" -- the patron spirits of the Snow Run?

Both are busy marking up the finish line to the course. They whip around with frantic zaniness, joking with one another the whole time.

I approached Nurdlie (or was it Duane?) and asked: "How's it going?"

He broke into a broad grin and replied: "Pretty good. There's not that much bad that can happen when you're this far from civilization."

And in a twinkling he was off, with his partner, to add the last sprightly dashes to the upcoming event.

Inside the warmly intimate Katahdin High gymnasium, replete with banners of championship seasons past, race directors Loren Ritchie, Katahdin High principal, and Barry McLaughlin, a science teacher and adult education director at the high school, were doing more than just relying on "spirit-ual" guidance.

Coffee welcomed the early arrivals. Race applications and free running logs were available. Results from the previous two years of the run were posted. There were helpers galore at the registration table, while other workers set up several long tables, end to end, and began positioning post-race refreshment. A wealth of trophies were decorously laid out on another table...and then there were the potatoes. Bag upon bag of potatoes. Each a 50-pound bag of potatoes.

This one was gonna be memorable. You could tell. And talking with a number of different people who participated in years previous you heard things like "my favorite race" and "wouldn't miss this" and, my favorite one, from a person snuggling into total winter gear, "...this is the best race of the summer."

After some brief instructions from Loren, it was time to board the three buses to be taken to the starting line, some 4.8 miles from the finish line at the school.

Suddenly Duane (or was it Nurdlie?) popped up on my bus.

"There's the 4-mile marker," he helpfully pointed out and then added with a devilish grin, "...give or take a couple hundred yards."

When we passed the 2-mile marker he piped up again. "Here's your 2-mile marker... but don't worry if you miss it. There's a 200-pound dog right across the street who I'm sure will be happy to remind you."

Great sense of humor, these woods Runners.

At the start, many runners opt to send some outer layers back on the bus. Temperatures weren't nearly so frigid as last year's single-digit outing.

The run was conducted on largely wide-open, straight country road--ideal for watching, for a time, the race up-front unfold. Like any good race, this one had runners of all diverse abilities and ideals and spread out comfortably from the very beginning. The course had some taxing uphill but also offered a downhill-into-a-flat portion that encouraged even or faster pacing for many. At the end, a short stretch of circling around the school was required to make for "an exact...or approximately exact" 4.8 course. Regretably, that stretch was icy and forced just about everyone to go on tippy-toes with worries about abrupt changes from vertical to horizontal positioning.

Yet, no one really complained about lost time or lost positions. Most just held their spots and cruised across the finish line.

The race was a competitive one. Bare-legged and hearty Machias man Phil Stuart captured the open title, posting a 24:48. He was followed in by Roly McSorley of Fredericton, N.B., Rusty Taylor of Hodgdon, and 'The County' duo of Greg Wardwell and Marlin Conrad. Glen Holyoke's 24:01 course record held up...and this year Glen ran the entire course a little easier, running with his dad (Vaughn, alias "The Grey Fox").

The women's title was captured by Darlene Higgins of Presque Isle, in 30:49. Taking second and third, respectively, were Paula Stone of Bangor and Carol McElwee of Presque Isle.

Those ornery Musterd's from The County took both the men's and women's team competitions.

But, by design, the Wild Katahdin Trust Snow Run was a lot more than just another competitive road race. You can ask 143 participants and two wood sprites if you don't believe me.

To begin the Snow Run, a benefit event, raised nearly \$2,800 (from runners' entries and pledges) for the Pine Tree Crippled Children's Camp. Hodgdon teacher Rusty Taylor, upon learning from a student in a wheelchair that he had, that the camp



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