

[The Wulfman's Fur Gets Wet](http://bigskymiles.blogspot.com) Sunday, June 21, 2009 (<http://bigskymiles.blogspot.com>)  
 Blogged by Tony Banovich, "The Muddy Buzzard, Musings of the Trials of Miles in Big Sky Country"

Sunshine - We Don't Need No Stinkin' Sunshine.



The post-race BBQ and Awards Area at Homestake Lodge



Jeff Thomas Announcing @ Awards Ceremony



The Top Women, L to R: Debbie Gidson, Nicole Hunt with Eon, Michele Bazzanella, Kristina Trygstad-Saari.



For the math geeks among us - The Prime Men (1st, 3rd and 5th): Thomas Jodoin, Alan King with baby, Matt Winter.



Wulfman CDT 14K Awards, "Rustic keepsakes" created by John Babcock and Stacy Wilcox.

The only thing hot about yesterdays Wulfman's CDT 14K in Butte was the racing. The day started out cool and misty.....and things deteriorated from there. When I got to the bus pick up point at Homestake Pass off I-90, the car thermometer read 49 degrees. Then, the steady, drizzling rain got started in earnest and the temp began to drop. On the up side, once it hit 45 degrees or so it pretty much held steady and we didn't see any snow. (Hey, don't laugh - snow on the first day of summer isn't such a rare thing in Butte or the surrounding mountains!!!) The race's namesake (I think that John "The Wulfman" Wulf would have loved the conditions - cause all of us that grew up running in Butte know that weather like this makes you "Strong Like Bull") (BTW - the ghost of Wulfman was present on the course as evidenced by the empty Miller Lite can sitting trail side at about 3K - he must have been out keeping an eye on his people :-)

The organizers (The Butte Piss and Moan Runners) did a great job of pulling off the race. And, when you consider the conditions, their efforts were monumental. Some of the people that I saw working hard on race day included Ray and Nicole Hunt (man, they looked tired at the end of the day), Ray Matteson, Don Sundberg, Jim Ryan, Bruce Robinson and Eddie Walker. And, my old friend Jeff Thomas did a great job getting running out of the gate and doing the announcing at the awards. I know that there had to be others; but, wanted to give you an idea of how much the local running community came together to put on a great event for the rest of us.

And, I would be remiss if I didn't thank the Homestake Lodge for opening up their facilities to a bunch of cold, wet running freaks. They have a great facility located in a wonderful setting. Make sure you think of them the next time you're looking for a place to XC ski or snowshoe in southwest Montana (find out more about them at [www.homestakelodge.com](http://www.homestakelodge.com)). And, as several of us discussed, it would be an outstanding location for a summer XC or running camp.

And now, on to the racing. The course was run (as it will be in all odd number years) from Pipestone Pass to Homestake pass along 14 Kilometers (8.70 miles) of the Continental Divide Trail. The first several kilometers are primarily uphill; but, then you get into some serious downhill sections in the middle part of the course. With the race being along the top of the Continental Divide, elevation is an issue (6,300' +/-) and the thin air made it's presence felt on the more serious inclines.

The wet weather made the course conditions a bit treacherous in spots. Even the decomposed granite of the Boulder Batholith (the geology geeks among us will know what I'm talking about) couldn't quite keep up with the persistent rain. And, in some of the low spots, the mud was a bit slimy. And, the cool (but not quite cold temps) made it a challenge to choose the right clothing. (The Buzzard himself was wishing that he had gone to heavier gloves and a long sleeve jersey.) And, it was interesting to see the footwear choices. There were trail specific racing shoes, trail trainers, XC spikes, road flats and road trainers. You name it, somebody was probably wearing it. All thing being equal - if I had a good pair of trail racing shoes, that's what I would have worn on this course.

Due to the narrow trail conditions, it's necessary that this race be held in a staged, time trial type of format. With runners going out every 10 seconds starting at 9:00, it's not quite as clear cut as who is actually running the fastest. The only thing for certain is that you're always trying to stay ahead of the folks who started behind you and trying to catch the runners who started ahead of you. (And, an interesting note on the tight switchbacks. Several times I found myself thinking that "that runner's not too far ahead, there they are right below/above me. But, by the time that you hit the corner and turn the opposite direction, it turns out that they have more distance on you than you thought.)

There were very few places on the course where you could really keep and maintain a good rhythm. All the terrain changes were one thing; but, the tight corners and switchbacks were crazy. At times, it felt like kamikaze running as you tried to maintain some semblance of speed and momentum as you cranked the turns. But, it was a quintessential trail race. And, when you have people who know the sport putting on a top quality race on a fantastic venue, the runners will show.

On the overall side, they almost met their 240 runner quota - I believe that they had 235 register and there were 217 actual finishers. To only have 18 runners not show up on a day like this is a testament to the depths of our obsession of outdoing the postal service. 92% of the runners duly made their rounds today.

On the front end racing side, it was sort of like a mini Montana Cup. The open men's and women's races had some of the top competitors in the sport as did the master's men.

Let's start with the open men. Matt Winter, Lynn Reynolds, Thomas Jodoin, Alan King, Kiefer Hahn, Quint Gidley, Austin Chapin, Brian Weick, Mike Asay and Jeremy Franks. Those were the top 10 guys line up in the starting chute. If we could have added a few more guys like Jimmy Grant, Dewey Peacock and the Neil and Wirth brothers, we would have pretty much filled out the who's who of 2009 Montana racing. The studs took it out hard. They were in search of the \$100 prize for a sub 56:00 time (4:00 per K). Matt Winter had the pole position; but, he indicated that after the first 8 or 9K his legs were empty and he just didn't have it in him to close out the race. Alan King has had a solid year; but, he's a roadie and hasn't done much trail racing. And, in spite of his prowess over the steeple barriers, Lynn Reynold's youth had to give way to the experience of the post-collegians.

In the end, it came down to a battle between Jodoin (who has been on fire this year) and Hahn. And, Thomas was pretty much able to keep the gap consistent between he and Kiefer (TJ was out 20 seconds ahead of KH) and got the win - 56:29 to 56:54. Next up were King (57:37), Reynolds (58:22) and Winter (58:38). (Quint Gidley joined them in the sub-60:00 club with his 59:47 6th place finish.)

For the women, Nicole Hunt was on a Mission. Run fast and get the sub-66:00 bonus of \$100. She went out hard and fast and wasn't to be denied. She had recently time trialed the course and knew exactly how long it was going to take to get up and over the high point of the course. And, when she hit her time goal, she knew that she could crank it on the 2nd half and get the \$\$'s. Her 64:10 got her the bonus, an 11th place overall finish and a 3:00 + win over Kristina Trygstad-Saari (67:25). They were followed in by Michelle Bazzanella (69:27), Marta Fisher (75:05) and Debbie Gibson (first master woman) in 75:27.

The master's men's field was also loaded. New master Mike Telling, ageless Kirk Keller, John Herring, Ray Hunt, Marvin Speece, Mark Slater, Mike Roberts, Tim Dumas and Tony Banovich. In the end, there were really 2 races. Mike running against the open guys and then there was the rest of us. (Now, we do have to give some leeway to Ray who was really busy with the race coordination and Marv who had to take his wife to the ED for kidney stones.) Telling was well clear of the next master (+ 3:22) as he finished 7th overall in 60:36.

Then, things tightened up a bit. Kirk Keller (at 50) was 9th overall and 2nd Master at 63:58 and was followed by Herring (64:43), Speece (65:10), Hunt (67:17), Banovich (67:45), Slater (69:26) and Roberts (70:04). Not a bad showing for the old guys.

My only regrets for the day are that it's such a fantastic course and you can't really appreciate the setting or some of Ray's course quirks when you're in racing mode. But, I did notice the aforementioned Miller Lite can/ghost of Wulman past marker at 3K, Diamond Jim said howdy from the warming hut just around 12K and Suzie Kaluza in a Tech cheer leading outfit with a mile to go was Classic. And, although I missed it, Alan King said he received a scare from the trail monster.

All in all, it was a great day to be a runner. You won't get any pissing and moaning from this old buzzard.

#### **Nicole Hunt Wulman Post Race, Thursday, June 25, 2009**

I had the chance to catch up with Nicole Hunt after her dominating win at the Wulman CDT 14K Trail Race last weekend (6/20/09) in Butte.

Muddy Buzzard (MB): So, how did you feel about your performance?

Nicole (NH): I was really quite happy with the race. I had time trialed the course over the Memorial Day weekend (one of the advantages of the course being in your (almost) "backyard"). I ran 68:40 - so to run 4:30 faster in the race (finish time of 64:10) was a bit of a surprise. The performance really gives me a confidence boost as I get ready to compete for a spot on the US Mountain Running Team.

MB: Tell us some more about the Mountain Running Team.

NH: In 2006 I was 2nd overall and first American at the Mt. Washington race in New Hampshire. As a result of that performance I was selected for the US Team that competed in the World Championships in Bursa, Turkey. In that race I was 9th overall and 1st American, Leading the US to the team championships. It was all such a great experience that I want to make another attempt at making the US team. The qualifying race will be July 26th in Colorado Springs.

MB: What were your primary goals for the race today?

NH: I wanted to run faster than the race's bonus time of 66:00 and to beat certain local male runners (she so politely refused to name the names of us unfortunate souls who were in her crosshairs :-))

MB: Which was a bigger incentive for you - the sub-66:00 time or chasing the guys who started ahead of you? And, how many guys did you catch on the course?

NH: The bigger incentive was the time goal. But, I was motivated by running after the guys ahead of me on the trail. I think I got 6 to 8 men on the trail.

MB: What kind of advantage was it to be able to train on the trail prior to the event?

NH: The biggest advantage was knowing how long the initial climb should take. I knew that once I got to the top of the climb, I could then settle into my race and push for time.

MB: It's been about a year since Eon's birth. How close are you to your pre-maternity fitness?

NH: Well, I'm happy with my racing and I'm getting closer all the time; but, I still feel like I'm 15-20 seconds per mile slower than 2006. [MB editorial note - guys, when she really gets fit, you better watch out!!!!]

Thanks to Nicole for taking the time out to answer our questions today.

#### **Thomas Jodoin - Wulman Post Race, Sunday, June 28, 2009**

As with Nicole Hunt, I had the opportunity to get some comments from Thomas Jodoin after his Wulman CDT 14K victory last weekend. Thomas gives some great insight into how the race unfolded and how he was able to get his long legs to turn over so quick on the trails.

Muddy Buzzard (MB): So, as the defending champion, how did it feel to be only seeded 3rd for this year's event? And, on a related note, do you think starting 3rd was an advantage or a disadvantage?

Thomas Jodoin (TJ): In the end, it was just exciting to see so many of the top runners from the state gathering in one place to race head to head; and, the inner kicker in me really enjoys starting from behind and being the hunter. I really saw the 3rd seed as an advantage. If you caught the guys ahead of you, it's then on their back to make a move to get the time back.

MB: How far up the trail were you when you made up the stagger on the second seed (Reynolds) and the first seed (Winter), respectively?

TJ: After about the first 2 minutes I could tell I had made up a few seconds on Lynn. I told myself to keep it steady as there was no need to really push before the real climbing. At about 2k Lynn and I caught up to Matt and ran single file over the ups and downs before the big climb starting at the Beaver Ponds trail junction.

My plan was to really push the switchbacks after the Beaver Ponds trail. Lynn and I both passed Matt as the climbing started. After that I ran behind Lynn all the way up to the top. I was able to catch a glimpse of Kiefer 2 switch backs down and he was really flying uphill. When you are running behind someone that is over 2 minutes faster than you over 8k (and Kiefer hunting you down) and its only 5k into the race you get timid and wonder if you are in over your head. I was really in a bind because I am not a great downhill runner so I should have been trying to get as much gap as I could but didn't want to blow myself up (14k is the 3rd longest race I've ever done). At that point I was very happy to have maintained contact with someone of Lynn's caliber.

Lynn and I ran together on the blazing downhill. In fact a couple time he put a few second gap on me through the tight switchbacks. However I was able to get back in contact on any flat or uphill portion of trail. At about 7k I started to think about making a move and finally went by on the flat right before 8k.

MB: How much incentive did you feel to chase after the \$100 winner's bonus for the sub-4 min/km pace and how did you balance that pursuit with your racing tactics among such a talented field of runners?

TJ: I figured the winner would be under 56 so it was just a matter of trying to stay with the leaders. I didn't start thinking of sub 56 until 2k to go when I saw that I was at roughly 50:00. I thought it would be pretty tough to run 3 min kilometers at that point but I kept thinking that someone would be flying downhill and catch me at any moment. So I tried to keep pushing. Someday I might be able to shake the sit and kick mentality!

MB: Will you be back again next year to go for the "three-peat," and if so, what are your ideas about eclipsing your standing course record for the N-S course?

TB: It's hard to predict for next year. I keep telling myself I want to do one last track season and improve some of my times from college. It's a great course with great people involved. I can't imagine I'd really be able to resist. Can't predict any specific result but I think the 58:51 can be taken down easily. I'd imagine this race will start to attract some regional and national caliber trail running specialists and that would be great for some fast times.

MB: Do you prefer the Homestake to Pipestone route or the Pipestone - Homestake direction?

TJ: Leaning towards the Homestake to Pipestone route purely for the view of the Tobacco Roots, Highlands, and Pintlers.

MB: Your height doesn't fit the typical build of a top end trail racer. What's your secret to running so well on the trails in spite of the long legs?

TJ: Anyone can be a trail runner provided you have the endurance to handle the distance. Plyometrics and agility drills to develop coordination and foot strength. Training day in and day out on the Helena South Hills trails doesn't hurt. I also just tell myself that Peter Dan Sullivan is chasing me downhill. Trust me its horrifying how he just barrels down with no concern of disaster.

See you on the roads, tracks and trails. The Muddy Buzzard