

## Race report

(Photos courtesy of Mike Chapman)

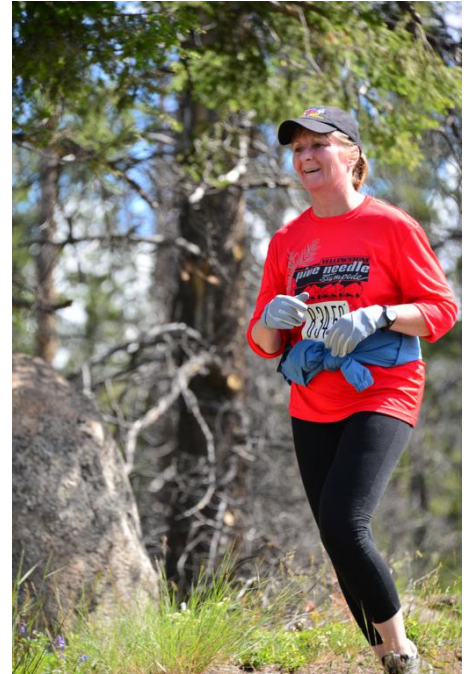
### **Wulfman's Continental Divide Trail-14K, Saturday 21 June 2014**

This year's Homestake-to-Pipestone version of Wulfman's CDT-14K was the fourth time the race has been contested in the north to south direction. It was previously run in that direction in each even numbered year starting in the inaugural year -- 2008. Again this year, the race's 240 regular registration slots filled up months before the race. Late cancelations plus race-day no-shows resulted in 205 finishers. The race also continued its tradition of starting runners one at a time, separated by 10 seconds each, with handicapping designed to send the fastest runners onto the path first, in an attempt to prevent trail congestion. Handicapping did not differentiate age or gender, more so it was based on self-predicted finish times and past performances.

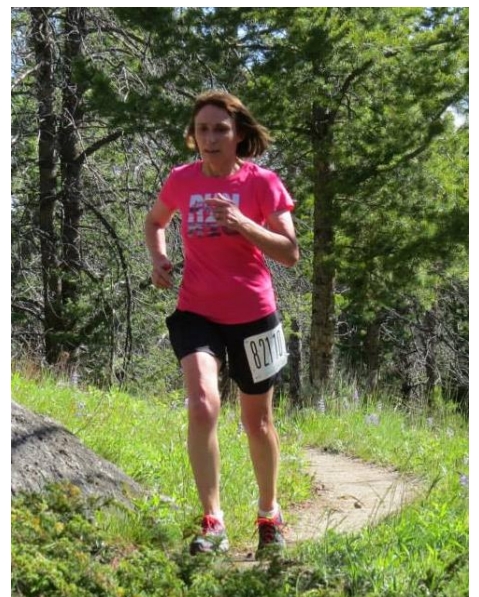
One last tradition worth mentioning is that the list of 'Streakers,' (those runners who have completed each version of Wulfman's race), fell from ten to nine members. Bozeman's Dee Metrick, although registered, did not make it to the starting line, leaving just the following "seven-timers:" Butte's Michele Bazzanella (40), Josh Panasuk (21), Cheryl Peterslie (55), & Bruce Robinson (73), plus Bozeman's Leonard Baluski (58), James Newhall (43) & Leon Shearman (70), and Helena's Thomas Jodoin (33) & Vernon Roberts (65).

This year's race produced the fastest women's finish time yet when Nicole Hunt of Warm Springs stopped the clock in 1:06:06, a time that eclipsed her own course record that she set in 2012 (1:07:59) in her initial try at the course. Second overall was Emily Allison (26) of Bozeman (1:09:56) who started way down in 42nd on the seeding chart and ended up setting a 20-29 age group record. Anaconda's Lisa Minnehan (1:13:13) was third. It should be noted that Hunt also holds the 'other direction' record for this race at 1:04:10 from 2009. Though Hunt had been involved as an event organizer in the race's earlier years, she did not run in the first two editions. She gave birth to her first son, Eon, 30 minutes before the start of the 2008 race. In 2010 she was again pulled away from Wulfman's race to attend the USA Mountain Running Championship that was held on the same day in New Hampshire, an event where she qualified to represent The USA in the World Championships later that year.

In this year's race, Hunt, who is 44 years old, rewrote several women's records. Her open division course record obviously also pushed her to the top of the all-time-best list in the women's 40 to 50 year age division. Perhaps the most impressive view of Hunt's race comes from the perspective of "40+ age grading," an award category supported by this event. Age grading (AG) is a method of comparing performance levels while factoring out differences due to post-prime aging. The World Masters Association (WMA) developed a set of mathematical adjustment factors that are essentially used to show how fast a runner would have performed if he or she were still enjoying "prime" performance years, and according to the WMA, 21 to 29 years is the prime period. The WMA factors offer a 0.9653 time adjustment to 40 year old runners, and that factor increases by a slightly larger percent with each successive year. Surely not everyone exhibits uniform properties of aging, but AG can still be fun to help imagine this type of "what if" scenario. Hunt's current AG factor of 0.9355 leads us to age grade her time down to 1:01:50. This year, Butte's Sherry Vogel (62) placed second in 40+ AG at 1:05:09, and her actual time (1:27:35) was also a new 60-69 age group record by 4+ minutes. Kathy Peterson (45) of Dillon was third in 1:11:23AG, a time that would have been very competitive in the open division.



**Cheryl "The Warden"  
Peterslie one of nine  
"Seven-Timers"**



**Sherry Vogel on her way  
to a stellar age-graded  
time of 1:05:09.**

*Butte's Piss & Moan Runners* emailed Hunt to inquire about her reactions to the race.

**BP&MR:** Your finish time today broke your 2012 course record by almost 2 minutes. That's a pretty astounding improvement for a 44-year old. How do you account for that, and do you anticipate breaking this record again in 2016, the next time the course will be run in the same direction?

**NH:** Thank you. I feel so happy and fortunate to be running strong. I expected to run this race faster than my previous attempt two years ago. After the birth of my twins in November 2011, my running times were getting slower and I felt increasingly fatigued. I was very frustrated with my fitness and was told I was getting slower due to my age. I knew in my heart that age was not the primary reason. I was losing too much speed too quickly. In July 2013, I found out that I had autoimmune thyroiditis and adrenal fatigue. After making lifestyle changes, I started feeling increased energy and leg power. In January 2014 and I could feel my leg speed returning. Now, I am so appreciative of every race that I can run strong and just for every day that I can run in general. I will never take my running for granted again. My goal is to break my record again in 2016. I think this is possible because I ran alone for most of this race, and having another female around me would push me to a faster time.



**Nicole Hunt enjoying her record shattering run.**

**BP&MR:** Does your performance today change your previous plans for the rest of this running season?

**NH:** This race has given me confidence that I am on the right track to take care of health with nutrition and lifestyle choices so I can run strong and fast for future races. I am excited to test my fitness at Big Sky's Skyrunner Vertical Hill Climb and Rut 12k in Sept and then to try breaking my course record at the Mt Sentinel Hill Climb and to race my first 30k on trails in October.

**Recent Anaconda High Grad Aiden Theard heeded his coach's sage advice for starting the race conservatively and then Theard came on to pass everyone. His coach was Tom Wood, who has made a habit of coaching young runners to stunning victories in this race. Last year Wood coached his daughter Olivia, who was also fresh out of high school, to victory in the women's race.**



In the men's competition at Wulfman's race, there were no sub-hour times recorded for the first time in the event's history, but there was the exciting continuation of an old rivalry. Recent Anaconda High School graduate Aiden Theard (18) surprised just about everyone when he upset the seeding chart to get the better of Josh Panasuk (21), his old high school rival from Butte High. Before the race, Panasuk was seeded as the first to start, based on several considerations. Panasuk had the fastest self-predicted finish time, with a prognostication congruent with

his 2013 performance when he placed second in 59:14. That 59:14 also made Panasuk the fastest returning runner in this year's race. Panasuk's final seeding qualification was that he was enjoying the afterglow of his recent successful sophomore track season competing in the steeple chase for MSU-Billings. Theard, who has accepted a running scholarship from Dickinson State University for next fall, had also run last year's CDT race, but in that race, his first on trails, he vigorously attacked the first major climb only to suffer a vomiting episode just 4K into the race ... the rest of that race was just about surviving for Theard, and a valuable lesson was learned. In this year's race Theard was seeded fifth out the gate, 40 seconds after Panasuk went off. At the race's end, practically everyone anticipated Panasuk to emerge first, and victoriously, from the forest.

Spectators at the finish line, including Panasuk's parents, experienced a pronounced paradigm shift as they, one-by-one, realized that they were cheering for someone other than Panasuk as that mystery runner crossed the finish line first. It was Theard who had stunned the crowd. Immediately after finishing, Theard recalled his high school running coach, Tom Wood (himself a veteran of Wulfman's CDT race), warning him not to start out too aggressively again. Theard's improved strategy plus another year of training and maturity resulted in him chopping nearly 6 minutes off his 2013 time. Theard later told his home town newspaper "I made sure training up to it, that's all I ran was hills, so I was ready for it. Definitely training for it and having a little better idea of what to expect [helped]. It's a long course. You can't really walk the trail and get a feel for it." Theard chewed up the 40-second stagger between himself and Panasuk, and then he continued into the lead position, ending with a time of 1:00:55, 2+ minutes faster than Panasuk's finish time (1:03:09). After crossing the finish line, Panasuk looked at Theard and stated the obvious "Somebody's been running a lot!" in reference to Theard's training.

Missoula's Tyler Johnson (29), the third-place male placer, said he ran the uphill looking over his shoulder in danger of being passed by Nicole Hunt, but then he escaped her on the downhill for an on-course time of 1:05:38. Theard further recounted his race experience in the Anaconda paper "It was more of a training run I guess. I was really surprised I ended up winning it. I was not expecting that at all ... I love running trails. With all the winds and bends in it, it's really easy for me to zone out and not pay attention to if my legs hurt. It's more of a relaxing experience I guess." Theard's time also knocked Panasuk down to position number two on the race's all-time teenage record list, were Panasuk's 2012 record had been 1:03:51.



In the men's 40+ age graded division the top three finishers all came from the 50-59 age group, and they all crossed the finish line within a few seconds of each other before letting the mathematicians take over. **Pictured with gnarly beard is Philipsburg's Kyle Klickir** (57) who came out on top of the age-grading. His actual finish time (1:09:54) adjusted down to 57:51. Klickir's perennial counterpart, Kirk Keller (55) of Three Forks, took second in 58:05 (converted from 1:08:58), with Sheridan's Eric Huff (53) third in 1:01:16AG.



In the 70-79 age group, new all-time records were set for both genders. **Shown at left in cap is Bozeman's Charles Day** (72) who moved to the top of the men's 70-79 division by knocking 3.5 minutes off the old record with his 1:37:26. Marilyn Pearson (71) of Helena established the first ever record in women's field at 2:17:45.