

26th Annual American Legion Veterans' Day Race

Monday, 11 Nov 1963 at Legion Hall in Uptown Butte – Purple Dogs Cinch Smithers' Plaque.



Butte Central High School runners shown at left, during the week prior to the Vets' Day Race, frolicking during an uptown training run.

Below left. Butte High sophomore Bob Davis receives congratulations from his father for winning the race and for chopping 30 seconds off the 11-year old course record that was set by the Maroon's Leonard "Chuck" Smith. Davis' time was 15:21 for the course which the Montana Standard characterized as "nearly 3 miles."



Davis led by more than a block when he finished, but he did not go to front until the lead pack crossed Main on Gold St. Up to that point there had been some trading of the lead, mostly by Don Brunell who was the defending champion, and who had been undefeated throughout this season. Brunell, who had experienced a hurt arch in his foot in the week prior to the race, faltered on the Idaho St. hill and came through the finish fifth.

The course started and finished just east of Main St. on East Broadway in front of the Legion Club, where race co-founder C. Owen Smithers, a veteran of both world wars, had once presided as commander. Smithers had been instrumental in creating the race in 1934 with an effort to add even more interest to what was already an involved set of celebrations for what was then called Armistice Day.

Smithers, who originally hailed from Flathead County, ran the mile for Flathead HS at a time when that distance was the longest race contested in Montana high schools, and he later ran for Montana State University in Missoula [a school later renamed The University of Montana in 1965]. With tongue in cheek, Smithers told the Standard reporter that he trained in high school and college by running around the perimeter of Flathead Lake.

The team award, named in Smithers' honor, went again to Butte High with a high score of 15 out of the possible 21 points. The Purples now have amassed 73 points in five years of the 7-year completion to retire the Smithers Plaque. Anaconda has a five-year total of 19 and Boys Central has 13, making it mathematically impossible for either school to overtake Butte High's lead in the remaining two years of the contest. Butte High also retired the event's previous multi-year trophy, the Jack Pachico Cup in 1958.

Awards Ceremony from left :

- C. Owen Smithers, Sr., Race Chairman;
- 1st, Bob Davis, BH, 15:25;
- 2, Chet Stodden, Anaconda;
- 3, Bob Chamberlin, BH;
- 4, Frank Koskimaki, BH;
- 5, Don Brunell, BH;
- 6, Ray Ueland, BC;
- and Martin Kearney, Co-Chairman for the race.



HS Boys' Team Scores: 1, Butte High, 15; Anaconda, 5; Boys Central, 1.

Additional runners: BH: Bob Leipheimer, John Kirby, Dave Keltz, Gerry Martin, Bill Polich, Ron Lowney, Mike Zora, Pete Droubay, John Newman, Joe Broudy, Tom Daniel, Ron Verbeck, Steve Johnson, John Kautzman.

Anaconda: Jim Goforth, Dale Bock, Jim Moses, Pat Furshong, Jim Beattie, Greg Barclay.

BC: Dan Foley, Bill Colenso, Joseph McManus, Rick Klaboe, Mike O'Keefe, Russ Belanger, Kiely Parker.

Each of the 33 runners who started today's race also finished.