

67th Annual Butte American Legion MERDI/MSE Veterans' Day Race

Thursday, 11 November 2004 - as recapped by Pat Kearney

The pre-race ceremony honored our nation's military veterans.



A pair of former race winners, Tony Banovich of Billings and Nicole Hunt from Deer Lodge, took top honors. There were 67 runners who completed one of two races under perfect weather conditions with sunny skies and temperatures in the low 40 °Fs. Banovich, a 1980 Butte Central graduate, won this year's event with a time of 28:44 over the 5.2-mile course. Banovich beat Ray Matteson, a former two-time winner of this event in 1990 and 1992, by over a minute. Matteson crossed the line in 30:15. Banovich became the first runner to ever capture Montana's oldest road race in three different decades. He won previously in 1983 and 1993. Banovich received the C. Owen Smithers trophy as the top male runner.

The perfect weather conditions proved to be ideal for Nicole Hunt. She sizzled through the course in a record time of 31:09. Hunt broke her own record of 31:46 set back in 2001. Hunt has won this event four times. She previous took top honors in 1996, 2001 and 2003. Hunt beat a nine-time former winner of this event, Susan Kaluza. She was second in the female division with a clocking of 35:57. Hunt received the Mary Whelan trophy as the best female runner.

Tim Dick and Keli Dennehy of Butte were the top runners in the 2.5-mile event for kids 14 and under. Dick was the boys' winner with a time of 17:46. He received the Marty Kearney trophy for being the first boy across the finish line; however, Dennehy was the overall winner. Her winning time was 17:20 just 14 seconds off the course record set by Wendy Lutgen of Helena back in 1987. For the third straight year Dennehy won the Liza Merrifield trophy for being the first female finisher. The trophy is named after her mother.

Finishers	2.5 M	5.2 M	Total
Female	5	14	19
Male	11	37	48
Total	16	51	67

This year's race marks 70 years since the event was first held back in 1934. It was also the 20th time the event was held on the Stodden Park course to the Legion Hall, making it the most continuous course in race history. The previous record of 19 times from 1948 to 1966 was set on a course that started and ended in front of the Old City Hall on Broadway Street.

2.5 Mile Females:

0-14: 1, Keli Dennehy, Butte, 17:20; 2, Valorie Kilmer, Butte, 20:26.

19-29: 1, Betsy Bruner, 29:22. **3**

0-39: 1, Patti Bruner, 29:21. **60⁺:** 1, Virginia Sutphin, Great Falls, 29:05

2.5 Mile Males:

0-14: 1, Tim Dick, 17:46; 2, Greg Noctor, 18:32; 3, Jacob Kearney, 19:05; 4, Cole Noctor, 28:43.

19-29: 1, Charlie Bruner, 29:21; Sam Bruner, 29:22.

30-39: 1, John Coulthard, 17:47; 2, Earl Sholey, Butte, 18:45.

50-59: 1, Gary Dietrich, 17:52; 2, David Bruner, 29:22.

60⁺: 1, Russ Meech, 19:48.

5.2 Mile Females Overall: 1, Nicole Hunt, 31:09; 2, Susan Kaluza, 35:57; 3, Kris Harrington, 40:23.

15-18: 1, Alexis DiGiovine, Butte, 41:35.

19-29: 1, Amanda Eide, Clancy, 41:18.

30-39: 1, Nicole Hunt, Deer Lodge, 31:09; 2, Karen Brynes, 45:13.

40-49: 1, Susan Kaluza, Butte, 35:57; 2, Kris Harrington, Butte, 40:23; 3, Georgia Cunningham, Whitehall, 41:18; 4, Jennifer Griggs, 46:29.

50-59: 1, Eddi Walker, Butte, 41:14; 2, Sheila Franey, Butte, 45:09; 3, Joanne Eide, Clancy, 46:52; 4, Nancy Tuber, 58:29.

60⁺: 1, Donna Simms, Great Falls, 50:48; 2, Louise Mitchell, Great Falls, 53:09.

5.2 Mile Males Overall: 1, Tony Banovich, 28:44; 2, Ray Matteson, 30:15; 3, Don Sundberg, 33:56.

19-29: 1, Kelly Ferriter, 37:13; 2, Mat Schrowe, 38:04.

30-39: 1, Don Foley, Butte, 38:32; 2, Randy Simkins, 38:57; 3, Bob Whelan, Butte, 39:19; 4, Dave Cashell, 46:07; 5, Tim Dick, 1:04:37.

40-49: 1, Tony Banovich, Billings, 28:44; 2, Ray Matteson, Butte, 30:15; 3, Jeff Braun, Butte, 35:02; 4, Steve Engebrecht, 35:40; 5, Chris Tippett, Butte, 36:58; 6, Jim Ryan, Butte, 39:32; 7, Pat Kearney, Butte, 40:32; 8, Paul Riley, 40:51; 9, Bill Kearney, Helena, 41:48; 10, Dana Bauer, 49:31; 11, Bill O'Leary, 52:03; 12, Marshall Mickelson, 56:17; 13, Paul Blumenhall, 1:04:20.

50-59: 1, Don Sundberg, Butte, 33:56; 2, Rande Farrow, Butte, 35:06; 3, Mike Robinson, 35:20; 4, Bob Eide, Clancy, 35:28; 5, Chris Wareham, Butte, 35:57; 6, David Mueller, Butte, 38:20; 7, Daniel Carty, 38:29; 8, Stu White, Great Falls, 40:01; 9, Joe Griffin, Butte, 41:02; 10, Gary Rillema, Butte, 46:58; 11, Mike Patterson, Butte, 48:58.

60⁺: 1, Ed Foley, Butte, 42:46; 2, Bruce Robinson, Butte, 43:09; 3, Bob Simms, Great Falls, 44:42; 4, Carl Clark, Great Falls, 48:51; 5, Alan Jackson, 52:17; 6, John Wulf, Butte, 53:08.

21 November 2003 Montana Standard Readers' Forum Letters to the editor: Vets Day race first-rate

Helena runner Bob Eide said to me recently: "The Veterans Day Run is the only place on earth I'd even think about eating a hot dog, especially after a race." I agreed with him and added that it's the only time I'm willing to eat white bread. However, in the bigger scheme of things, it's the kindness of the people serving the post-race lunch that sets the food apart. Otherwise, it would be like gorging on pepperoni sticks at the Seven-Eleven after a marathon.

Also unique to the Veterans Day race are the trophies, which are all named after people you run into at Wal-Mart. What makes them more coveted than Governor's Cup awards is that there are more of them to go around. Exactly like Pat Kearney's family. Every year there's a new fledgling runner from the clan emerging to capture great grandpa's namesake trophy. It's amazing.

All kidding aside, the post-race ceremony, as well as the event itself, is special because of Pat's love of running and his dedication to race history that is unmatched by any other running event in the state. Race directors should take a cue from the timely and detailed manner that Pat delivers race information.

Very nicely noted by Pat at the awards ceremony, for example, was the fact that the 2003 race had the most competitive women's field in the history of the event with all four of the top women being past champions and all running closely. That is, with the exception of Nicole Hunt, who readers might have noted was three minutes ahead of the women's field. As an admiring competitor, I'd like to add that Nicole, who ran for the MSU and then for U of M, has been, in the last few years, ranked as high at 17th among the nation's fastest women in road racing. In October of this year, she also qualified for the U.S. Olympic Trials in the marathon. Last June, she competed in the USATF (United States Amateur Track Federation) outdoor track championships in the 10,000 meters and missed the Olympic qualifying standard by a mere four seconds. She placed second overall among American women at Bloomsday this year. There is no woman in Montana who can beat Nicole Hunt. When she shows up at the starting line of a race, any one of Montana's fastest women knows she will be running for second place. A very distant second. To have Nicole in a race is both an honor and a humbling experience. Yes, even for Zoe Nelson, with all due respect.

The only thing that would have added more flair, intensity and wind velocity to the 2003 Vets Day Run would've been the addition of another award to the already generous array of trophies that were given. I think this should become an annual award as well: The "Bud Light Old Bar Guy From Maloney's Trophy," awarded to the first runner who crosses the finish line in basketball and/or bowling shoes. Of course, we know that, hands down, one of both of the Rat Chat boys would win.

Thanks again, Butte Vets, organizers Pat Kearney and John Wulf, and all the rest of the helping hands for putting on a first-rate event to celebrate our country's hard-won freedoms. And especially thanks for the hot dogs served lovingly on white bread.

Susan Kaluza, 3400 Vista Lane, Butte