

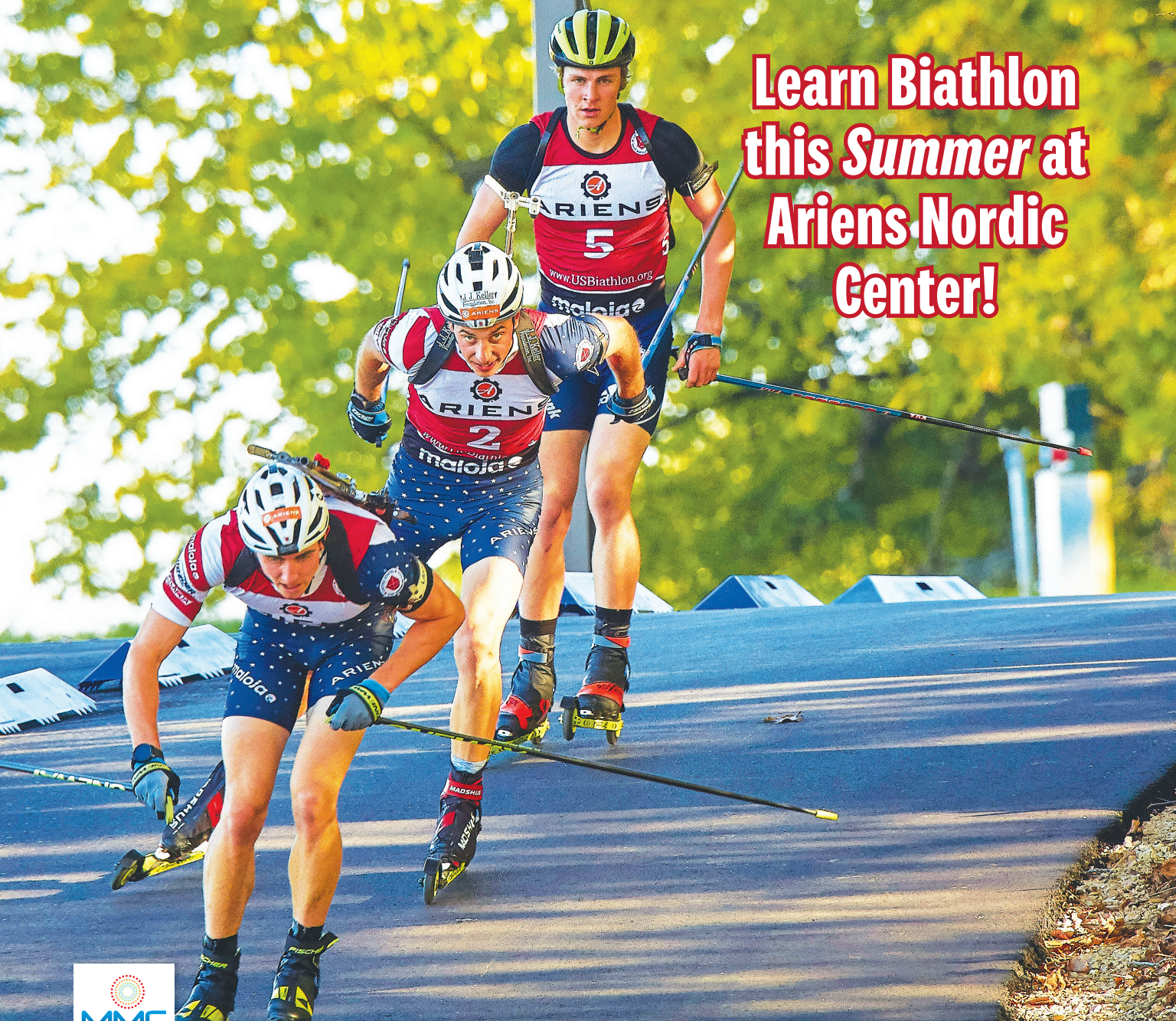
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May 2025

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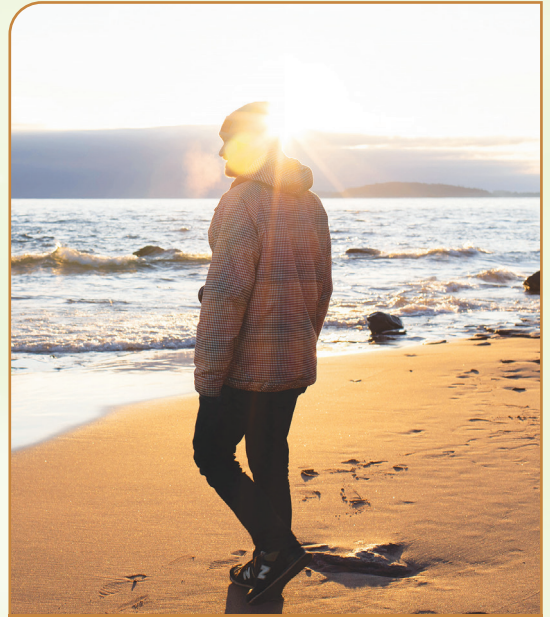
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ON THE COVER: US Biathlon National Team athlete Sean Doherty is in the lead, closely followed by Paul Schommer and Campbell Wright. In May 2024, Schommer would take 1st in the Series 1, 7.5K Male Open Roller Ski Biathlon in 22:04.7 with only two shooting misses. In the Series 2 June 11K Men's Overall Biathlon, Alexander Vantias (Blackhawk) grabbed 1st in 36:10.9 with the impressive 69-years-young Gregg Pattison (Arians) only 3 mins., 20 secs. behind. In the Women's Overall 11K, 17-year-old Sophia Jedlewska took 1st in 41:08.9 with only 4 shooting misses and para athlete Adelaide Bielke (Bluff County Biathlon) finished in 47:50.8, with a clean shoot in her final round. With so much going on in 2025 for beginner to elite roller skiers/biathlons, runners, walkers, spectators, and families, check out Tara's story for the fun and exciting details.

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The Front Page Parts 1 & 2

Out With the Old, In With the New

Part 1: A Record Fiscal Year

In every June issue, as Managing Editor of Founder Greg Marr's outstanding publication, I have used *The Front Page* to list the *Silent Sports Magazine* contributors over the preceding twelve months. For reasons set forth in Part 2, I'm doing this in the May issue. Foremost, June 2024 through May 2025 produced our record year — **108 Contributors**.

You can glance at the list that follows as though looking at a photograph. But if you read the names, you'll see why Greg Marr's dream excels as a publication, from a Who's-Who of the Silent Sports world to the lesser-known but no-less-great people, all with the knowledge, passion, and unique insights to provide well-told stories you cannot find anywhere else. So, in order of their bylines' first appearances, which means (with my apologies) that I start with myself, I am pleased to announce the **Story Contributing Class of Bruce's Fifth Full Year at the Greg Marr Helm**, and the number of stories by repeat contributors:

Bruce Steinberg (9); Mike McFadzen (15); Renee Griswold (2); Brian Day; Andrea Larson (6); Bradley Bart, MD; MJ Hessert, MD & Navy Captain (7); Dr. (Ret.) Peter Dorsen; Jody Henseler; Jessica Lisbeth; Kierstin Kloeckner (10); Pamela Christensen (10); Dave Foley (12); Mike Ivey (3); Chad Salmela; Ralph Bovard, MD (3); Peter Nordgren; Deb Nordgren; Eric Nordgren; Katya Gordon; Adam Bodensteiner; Ben Jones (3); Pam Wright; Lindsay Wood Davis; Ralph Banasiak; Joe Bainbridge (3); Hannah RayJ (3); Corey Coogan Cisek (3); Eric Knight; George Pastorino; Michele Hartwig; Micki Colson; Ben Grubisich; James Kuhn; Naomi Copland; Katie O'Connor; Kyle Miller; Michael Kasper; Natalie Brunson; Jill Geromini; Joe Malloy; Joel Malloy; Cindy Dillenschneider (2); Jason Maloney (2); Luke Bodensteiner (5); Susie Chan (2); Austin Gongos (3); David Chamberlain (5); Jon Oestreich (3); Scott Cole (3); Elizabeth Jorgensen (2); Nancy Jorgensen (2); Clay Diggins; Frida Waara (2); Jim Force; Arthur Malm; Kim Fairley; Mike Gibbs (2); Charles Zinsmaster; Dan Clausen; Wenonah Canoe; Gear West; New Moon Ski & Bike; Carolyn Spiewak; Amanda McGrory (3); Charlie Dee;



Work began in late February 2020 on Bruce Steinberg's first issue as managing editor: June 2020. Already up to 44 pages, the magazine's consistent page count would soon rise to 52. Contributors included Chris Schotz, Kierstin Kloeckner, Tara Perre (who also has contributed to this issue, Bruce's last as managing editor), Dave Foley, and paddling star Rebecca Davis, who interviewed Kikkan Randall. Not a bad start.

Erin Blow; Rodney Silvis; Mike Shouldice; North American VASA Team; Kris Hasen; Shawn Connelly; Ernie St. Germaine; Duncan McLean; Bruce Derauf; Bob Levin; Brad Skillicorn; Ben Popp; Judy Young; Julie Coppens; Lucas Rice; SISU Endurance Team; Mary Stuesser; Joe Hamel; Jeremy Hecker; Boulder Junction Park Board; Dr. Steve Weber; Dennis Duke; Laura Mandella; William Johnson; Dan Higginbotham (3); Gina Kenny; Sara Hudson; Nancy Wedemeyer; Dani Serra; Will Andresen; Annie Campbell; Polly Scotland; Abby Hoeschler Delany; Cara Battles (2); Michele Pettinger (2); Rick Holinger; Tara Perre; Eric Anderson; Bruce Manske; Allison Slavick.

To all, I say a heartfelt thank you for your outstanding stories and your friendship!

Part 2: Next at the Helm

— Lou Dzierzak

With this issue, I have completed a full five years at the helm of Founder Greg Marr's dream. It will also be my last.

General Manager **Mike Hollihan** and owner/publisher **Pat Wood** left me to my work with support and guidance. Page count increased and the story count and quality skyrocketed not only because of the 108 contributors listed in this issue's *The Front Page*, Part 1, but because, over

the last 5 years, over 300 separate silent sports voices focused on the Upper Midwest and overall Silent Sports wellness, health, and profiles have graced the 60 issues published since I started.

My role has been chiefly the **Finder & Official Organizer of Cats** — but what a terrific, already well-organized bunch of cats everyone turned out to be. Plus, the hundreds-upon-hundreds of photographers, advertisers, and organizations I got to work with, so many of whom have become my friends. My hope has always been this: To honor Founder Greg Marr and his vision of a magazine shining the light on the Upper Midwest's diverse, amazing, and welcoming world of the people, places, events, businesses, chambers, visitors' bureaus, and Friends-Of groups of our Silent Sports world.

I planned on four years but stuck around for five; with my wife's retirement as a highly respected court reporter official last July, it was time. And in this moment, I am also honored to

single out **Alison Garrigan**, an artist of the highest, most-creative kind and a steady guiding hand on all issues, who makes these covers and interior pages not only interesting but also beautiful. To Eagle-Eye **Tamara Mortensen** for her eagle eyes, and to **Terri Moericke** who should wear a super-suit for all she does. Then there are **Peggy Sue Behselich** and **Kevin Granquist** who guided our advertisers (advertisers who sent in beautiful imagery because, after all, they are all about the Silent Sports world), **Beth Patterson** who expertly took care of the financials and **Ernie Neuenfeldt** for your guidance with all things technical.

My next-to-last moment of thanks goes to **Lou Dzierzak**, the next Managing Editor of Greg Marr's dream, who has the skills and passion that will advance and grow this publication we all love. I've had many conversations with Lou, not only about the mechanics of running this publication but also about who he is, which includes decades of covering outdoor recreation. He has been published in *Scientific American*, *Outside*, *Backpacker*, *Adventure Journal*, *Cross Country Skier*, *Canoe & Kayak*, *Trail Runner*, and more. Although he's a back-of-the-pack-type finisher, he's raced in dozens of running, cycling, triathlons, and other outdoor pursuits. More so, Lou is a Greg Marr guy, having freelanced his first-ever published story under Greg's guidance, with heartfelt accolades and warmth for Greg and this magazine.

There will be a lot of great things coming to *Silent Sports Magazine* under Lou's guidance along with a continuation of traditions. To all contributors and readers, I ask you to give Lou the same chance that you gave me, for which I am grateful.

This will be my second retirement and once again I have no plans to spend my days yelling at kids to *Get off my lawn!* Among other new adventures, I will be with you as I plan to stick around as an assistant to Lou to the extent he may need my assistance, as well as a subscriber and contributor.

My last proclamation of thanks goes to you, the readers and contributors, without whom this magazine could not exist. To all, be happy, healthy, and Silent-Sporty out there! ☺

Bruce

Silent Sports Magazine

QR Code-Connects

Race Event Calendar

Help plan your training and race schedules well in advance using these QR Code-Connects options. These links take you to the races' websites themselves where you can check with the ultimate source for each event to confirm race day changes, cancellations, race-entry-fee price increase dates, and up-to-date conditions. And you can take them with you on your phone! Please email ldzierzak@mmclocal.com for any additions and corrections. Thank you!



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RACE CALENDAR



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RACE CALENDAR



MICHIGAN:
FATBIKE, MTB, & GRAVEL
RACE CALENDAR



CYCLOCROSS RACE
CALENDAR: MI, WI, IL, IA,
MN



PADDLING RACE
CALENDAR:
MI, WI, IL, IA, MN CANOE, KAYAK,
SUP & DRAGON

Trump, Musk, and the Department of Government Efficiency: A Wild Ride for Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation

As of February and March 2025, actions taken by Elon Musk and the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) to dismantle various federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), have sparked alarms regarding the potential consequences for natural resources, outdoor recreation, and food health. Both departments are on the chopping block, raising serious concerns about the fate of national parks, wildlife refuges, and public lands.

Four major federal land management agencies, the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service manage about 95% of these lands. DOGE directed the DOI to cut 65% of its workforce — without regard for each fired citizen's experience, effectiveness, and positive impacts, including safety for the public regardless of political affiliation, or for actual taxpayer waste. The fox is indeed watching the hen house.

Federal departments such as the DOI and USDA may not be flashy, but their role in protecting our lands and ensuring future generations can enjoy them is invaluable. Dismantling federal agencies poses a serious threat to the health of natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities. These departments manage the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage, provide scientific and other information about those resources, and honor its trust responsibilities and commitments to our country and indigenous

Kayakers enjoying the scenic beauty of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. Consider the shops, guides, and National Park workers that serve to allow this to happen, the resulting tourism economic engine and physical and mental health for U.S. families; now, imagine those people and businesses that make this scene happen reduced if not gone.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL MCFADZEN.





Paddle or recreate this? Polluted tailings pond in Auburn, WI.

PHOTO CREDIT: TED AUCH FRACTRACKER ALLIANCE WITH AERIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED BY LIGHTHAWK.

peoples.

The DOI and USDA also play critical roles in overseeing national parks, wildlife refuges, and public lands, all of which are essential for conservation, ecosystem health, and recreational opportunities for millions of Americans. The reduction or elimination of federal management threatens to create a cascade of negative effects on the environment, public health, local economies, and the overall outdoor recreation scene. Many understand the need for right-sizing federal agencies and eliminating actual misuse of taxpayer funds, but not completely cutting large swaths of public government without control.

"It feels like the world is upside down right now," Greenfire Executive Director **Meleesa Johnson** shared via blog post. "The breakdown of these systems hit each of us differently. These feelings are fed by uncertainty and vitriol. We have all witnessed the purge of the federal workforce. Aside from the grief and sadness so

many of us feel, there are practical implications of the fracturing of the system."

A recent White House executive order encourages energy exploration and production on Federal lands and waters, *including the Outer Continental Shelf*. The memo also asks that aspects of the *Endangered Species Act* should be rescinded.

According to a *Milwaukee Journal* article, scientists working to support wildlife health and protect human health and society are being cut. "It's incredibly important and valuable work that is being endangered by these potential cuts," said **Rebecca Cole** of Madison, a retired parasitologist. As a prime example, over the last three years, bird flu has killed or led to the culling of 166 million domestic birds in the U.S., the largest and most expensive disease outbreak affecting the nation's food supply. But to have not done so would have put all of us at risk, independent of who we voted for.

Impact: Natural Resource Management and Conservation

One of the most immediate and concerning consequences is the loss of jobs and funding for agencies responsible for managing and conserving public lands. The dismissals of probationary workers and permanent employees at DOI and USDA will significantly impact efforts to protect and maintain environments that are vital to wildlife, food safety, and human recreation. Without adequate staffing, enforcement of environmental regulations could lead to increased poaching, habitat destruction, and illegal activities such as unregulated mining, logging, and land development.

The loss of federal oversight also means that many conservation programs and initiatives could be suspended or terminated including the Recreational Trails Program which many 501c3 Midwest ski and bike clubs use to maintain trails. Programs aimed at protecting wildlife, restoring

habitats, and ensuring sustainable land use depend on federal funding and coordination. Without these efforts, vulnerable species and fragile ecosystems may deteriorate beyond repair. The effects will not be confined to federally managed lands alone; state and county lands will also suffer due to the trickle-down impact of reduced funding and support.

Also suffering, without regard to political affiliation, are real people and their families, our fellow citizens, now suddenly unemployed on short notice; and this has been done without distinction between ineffective, wasteful workers versus those with a distinct and dedicated history of hard work and all they have done for each of us and the most precious lands of the USA. The baby has indeed been thrown out with the bathwater, as an apt saying goes.

Effects on the USA's Public Lands

National parks, state parks, and other public lands provide valuable opportunities for outdoor recreation throughout the year, including all those silent sports disciplines we and our friends and families enjoy; and make no mistake — this situation impacts recreationalists and responsible hunters as well.

These spaces are not only crucial for the physical and mental well-being of our population, but they also serve as a means of connecting people with nature and fostering environmental stewardship. Recreational facilities, including trails, roads, and visitor centers, may have to close or operate at minimal capacity. A diminished law enforcement presence could lead to increased incidents of vandalism and illegal activities such as unauthorized hunting or off-roading, further harming the natural environment.

The current decline in park maintenance and oversight is already a problem. Stewardship of these resources must be multi-generational, as it has always been in Wisconsin, up to this point.

Economic Cost of Losing Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor recreation is a major economic driver in the United States, contributing billions of dollars annually to local economies through tourism, job creation, and outdoor-related industries. According to

the **Outdoor Industry Association**, outdoor recreation generated *\$887 billion in consumer spending and supported over 7.6 million jobs nationwide prior to the pandemic.*

A decline in the quality and accessibility of natural resources and outdoor recreation areas could significantly have negative impacts on the economy, harming businesses and communities that rely on tourism and recreation.

In Wisconsin alone, outdoor recreation is a cornerstone of the state's economy. The industry contributes approximately *\$11.2 billion to Wisconsin's GDP and provides employment for over 95,000 individuals, generating approximately \$5.4 billion in compensation.* These numbers reflect actual people who employ and spend money, which has been a huge part of what has made the U.S. economy hum.

Specific recreational areas such as the Wisconsin State Parks system, Kettle Moraine State Forest, Northern Highland American Legion State Forest, the Horicon Marsh Visitor Center, and others play an integral role in supporting local economies through visitor spending on lodging, dining, and gear. A decline in this resource will have devastating economic repercussions for the state, its businesses, and, ultimately, its citizens without regard to their politics. If there's one thing scarier than a bear in your campsite, it's a business owner realizing their best customers have stopped showing up.

Businesses that depend on outdoor recreation, including gear retailers, outfitters, and hospitality services will, as a result, inherently see a decrease in revenue as fewer visitors engage in outdoor activities. Communities that have built their economies around tourism dollars will face financial hardship, leading to job losses and a decline in overall economic vitality. This could create a cycle in which declining visitor numbers lead to reduced investments in recreational infrastructure, further exacerbating the problem.

Public Health Implications

Beyond the economic consequences, reduced access to parks and recreational areas has significant implications for public health. Spending time outdoors is linked to numerous health benefits, including

improved cardiovascular health, reduced stress, and enhanced mental well-being. Parks and natural spaces provide opportunities for physical activity that can help combat obesity, heart disease, and other lifestyle-related conditions. A reduction in outdoor recreation will likely lead to lower physical activity levels, increased rates of obesity, and other related health conditions such as diabetes and hypertension.

Additionally, weakened enforcement of environmental regulations could lead to increased pollution and exposure to harmful substances. This loss of oversight could result in increased water contamination, air pollution, and hazardous waste disposal in public lands. All of this, especially combined, could have dire consequences for public health, leading to higher rates of respiratory illnesses, waterborne diseases, and other health complications linked to environmental degradation.

Although challenges exist in the natural resource sector, it is important to recognize that the current administration's approach to its traditional U.S. allies and trading partners exhibits similarities to its approach to adversaries. While this issue typically falls outside the focus of *Silent Sports Magazine*, it will affect numerous aspects of government and long-term relationships.

Need for Public Advocacy

While the potential decline in the quality of natural resources and outdoor recreation areas presents numerous challenges, it also serves as a wake-up call for increased awareness and activism. If these negative trends continue, people may become more engaged in advocating for conservation and sustainability measures to protect the outdoor spaces they cherish.

Outdoor recreation profoundly benefits public health, conservation, and the economy. It's absolutely essential that individuals take action to support these areas by contacting elected officials, backing conservation groups, and staying updated on policy changes. Public involvement is crucial for preserving our natural resources and recreational spaces. Immediate action is paramount—reach out to your legislators now, voice your concerns passionately, and support initiatives to protect our landscapes. 📢



Recognizing the athleticism, skill, and competition among para athletes, the growth in fans is clear at the Opening Ceremonies held in Maracanã Stadium, Rio 2016 Paralympics. A nearly sold out stadium, with 46,000 spectators in attendance.

PHOTO BY CASY B. GIBSON.

The State of Adaptive Sports

Amanda McGrory

Editor's Note: Amanda McGrory is a four-time Paralympian and seven-time Paralympic medalist in the sport of track and field. She has won over twenty-five marathons including Chicago, New York, Tokyo, and Grandma's. A graduate of the University of Illinois, McGrory currently serves as the Archivist & Collections Curator for the Crawford Family U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Archives. In addition to her role with Team USA, McGrory works as an expert analyst covering major sporting events such as marathons and the Paralympic Games. Thank you, Amanda, for your consistently outstanding stories throughout my tenure, mainstreaming adaptive sports and competition into these pages.

In the United States, the term "adaptive sports" is used to refer to any sport that has been adjusted or adapted to allow greater accessibility, most often for individuals with disabilities. Adaptive sports can range from children's wheelchair basketball programs to professional and recreational wheelchair divisions in major marathons, up to the Paralympic Games themselves. The core principle of adaptive sports is **inclusion** — creating opportunities for diverse groups of people to participate in athletic activities.

Organized adaptive sports as we know them today were largely shaped out of World War II. Two non-disabled researchers, a physiatrist and a graduate student, established programs focused on *rehabilitating disabled veterans* and helping them assimilate back into society, partially through recreational sports. Out of these programs grew the first Paralympic Games, designed to accompany the Olympic Games and showcase the skill and talent of the best disabled athletes in the world on an equitably elevated platform.

From Start to Expansion, Development & Technology

Initially, adaptive sports and the Paralympic Games were focused on wheelchair athletes, but they soon expanded to include a variety of disability groups and impairment types. Beyond the Paralympic Games and events designed specifically for competition by disabled athletes, the 2000s brought about a surge in inclusive programs within school sports, particularly among track and field teams. The groundwork for this was laid in 1975 with the passing of the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**, which guaranteed all children with disabilities, physical and intellectual, access to free and appropriate educational opportunities.

Alongside the growth and development of the sports themselves are the technological advancements in medical and sporting equipment utilized by the disabled community. Wheelchair manufacturing was revolutionized out of World War II to accommodate the influx of disabled

veterans returning home and brought about the first lightweight wheelchairs, what today are often referred to as “hospital wheelchairs.” These developed into even lighter-weight wheelchairs made from materials such as aluminum and then titanium, and, finally, the emergence of specially designed sports wheelchairs in the 1980s.

Equipment for other disability groups has evolved similarly. The earliest prosthetic limbs were heavy, clunky, and often made of wood. Those evolved into plastics and metals, improving everyday wear and use. Today, they are custom-molded from lightweight foams and carbon fiber, providing strength and durability through daily use and specialized designs for different sports.

Increased Inclusion

Access to more programming and specialized technology has helped increase participation in adaptive sports and sustain that growth year after year. The first Paralympic Games had only 200 participants while the most recent Paralympics, held in September of 2024 following the Paris Olympic Games, boasted nearly **4,500 athletes from 159 delegations** and record numbers of female competitors across sports.

A key factor in that growth is visibility and greater public awareness.

The disability community gains new



Mainstreaming wheelchair divisions and their amazing para athletes into major events using knowledgeable experts, bringing the competition to the fore. At the 2023 Chicago Marathon, in the NBC Sports Chicago studio, pictured left to right are Marion Brooks, researcher Dorian Kail, Ed Eyestone, Carrie Tollefson, researcher Jay Holder, and Amanda McGrory. PHOTO COURTESY OF AMANDA MCGRORY.

members every day, and while federal laws such as the IDEA and the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** ensure access to public spaces and services for disabled people, there are still strong societal stigmas surrounding disability in the United States that can prevent members of the disability community, and in particular newly disabled individuals, from fully utilizing available tools and resources.

Over the past decade, and even during the past year, media coverage and

visibility of the disability community have made enormous gains. The Paris Paralympics featured 1,500 hours of coverage across NBC affiliates and streaming, which resulted in an all-time high of **15.4 million viewers**. Major marathons across the world now have analysts and dedicated camera coverage for the professional wheelchair divisions. The NFL released a national commercial highlighting the sport of wheelchair football. And just recently, **Marissa Bode** made history by becoming the first wheelchair user to play the role of Nessarose in the *Wicked* movie, a disabled character traditionally played by non-disabled actors.

This visibility has not only boosted elite adaptive athletics, but also helped to grow grassroots and community programs across the country. **MoveUnited Sport** (moveunitedsport.org), the country's largest adaptive sports body, has 242 regional member organizations across the United States and supports seventy different adaptive sports. These regional programs are essential for introducing individuals with disabilities to adaptive sports and helping them connect with the larger disabled community. For children, these programs offer social outlets, build confidence, and teach valuable life skills such as teamwork. Many of the top Paralympic athletes in the United States, including twenty-two-time Paralympic medalist **Tatyana McFadden**, got their start at one



A tale of two technology eras. At left: Joe Arcese, member of the silver medal winning Tel Aviv 1968 Paralympic Wheelchair basketball team. At the time, all athletes were required to play in standard hospital wheelchairs. Photo Courtesy of Joe Arcese Collection, Crawford Family U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Archives. At right: Steve Serio, five-time Paralympian, 3-time Paralympic gold medalist, pictured here at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games. His wheelchair was custom-designed from ultra-lightweight aluminum tubing manufactured by PER4MAX, specializing in custom sports chairs.

PHOTO BY JOE KUSUMOTO.



Strong Military Connection: Melissa Stockwell made history in 2008 by becoming the first veteran of the Iraq War, injured in combat, to qualify for a Paralympic Team when she became a member of the Para Swimming team. Eight years later as shown here, she won her first medal in the Paratriathlon event, at the Rio 2016 Paralympics.

of these local programs, which provide the foundation for a lifelong love of sports and healthy living.

Warning Signs

Despite the growth, adaptive sports still face significant challenges. The biggest issue is funding. Most programs operate as non-profit organizations, relying on partnerships, donors, and sponsors for financial support. The small number of programs that are funded by government grants, such as the **Warrior Games**, backed by the Department of Defense, and **Paralyzed Veterans of America**, financed by the Veterans Affairs Bureau, are at risk of losing that financial support with the current administration's proposed budget cuts.

- Losing funding for these programs including those for our Veterans who sacrificed for our Nation would be catastrophic for an already vulnerable community.

The disabled population is significantly more likely to live below the poverty line when compared with their non-disabled peers. Disabled individuals are unemployed at double the national rate and are less likely to attend college and earn degrees. It remains legal to pay individuals with disabilities less than the national minimum wage for labor. While federal and state programs offer some assistance, these programs are often difficult to navigate and the support provided is minimal, leaving limited opportunities for growth

and advancement.

Adaptive sports at all levels play an important role, offering not only physical benefits but also cultural and developmental support for an underserved population.

Access to adaptive sports is another significant challenge, *particularly for individuals in rural areas*. The closest programs may be hours away and in areas that do not have public transportation, requiring individuals to own their own vehicles, or be able to afford private transport. Small, underfunded organizations may not own their own facilities or have regular access to training spaces, making finding venues, especially ADA-compliant venues, an added challenge.

The cost of specialized sports equipment also presents a barrier. Unlike non-disabled sports, where equipment is readily available and affordable, adaptive sports equipment is custom-made and expensive. A basic wheelchair for sports such as tennis or racing can cost thousands of dollars, and sport-specific prosthetics can cost tens of thousands. *Because this equipment isn't considered medically necessary by insurance*, most athletes must cover these costs out-of-pocket, unless they can secure grants or financial assistance.

The cost of equipment is already substantial, but as the sports continue to evolve, so does the equipment. In the overall history of sport development in the modern world, adaptive sports are



Melissa Stockwell competes in the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Triathlon as a three-time Paralympian. The Paralympic Games developed from regional programs designed to support disabled veterans. Today that legacy continues with military representation on every Paralympic delegation since the first Games in 1960.

PHOTO BY JOE KUSUMOTO.

still in their infancy. The increased awareness has resulted in greater investment in research and design, but this is a double-edged sword. More specialized equipment has improved performances, dropping times and making athletes, especially at the elite level, more competitive.

But because the equipment is so specialized and has a relatively small market, it has continued to drive prices up. While an entry-level racing wheelchair can cost \$2,500, many top athletes are now using carbon fiber frames and the cost for those can range from \$25,000 up to over \$50,000. At that price point, the equipment is available to only a select few with expendable income or support to purchase outright, or an even smaller number of athletes able to secure sponsorships with the manufacturers.

With advanced technology comes

improved performances, which continues to widen the gap between beginners and professionals and makes qualifying standards increasingly difficult to reach across the board. Even among collegiate or sub-elite athletes, some of those standards can be unattainable without top-of-the-line equipment and can be discouraging for up-and-comers who are aiming for a moving goal post.

Silver Linings?

Despite these challenges, technological innovations offer hope. Training techniques and equipment design have improved, reducing overuse injuries and helping athletes perform better over time. 3D printing is making it easier to manufacture custom parts and advances in seating and positioning technology are improving the fit and comfort of sports equipment. Future developments, including more affordable 3D printing and virtual reality for training, hold the promise of reducing costs and making adaptive sports even more accessible.

Beyond technology, the biggest opportunities for the future of adaptive sports lie in **representation and inclusion**. Internationally, events such as the **Commonwealth Games** have successfully integrated adaptive athletes alongside their non-disabled counterparts. In the U.S., most National Governing Bodies now manage both Olympic and Paralympic sports, creating more opportunities for integrated sports events such as national championships and Olympic and Paralympic Trials. This integration not only fosters a more inclusive environment, but also boosts public visibility and provides opportunities for athletes to engage with new fans.

Be Part of the Evolution

With the next Olympic and Paralympic Games coming to the United States in 2028, now is the perfect time to continue building on the growth of adaptive sports. By increasing recognition for Paralympians and supporting adaptive sports programs, we can help build a pipeline for future athletes while ensuring that adaptive sports continue to thrive at every level.

Greater representation has led to more participants and fans. Increased media coverage has highlighted a historically overlooked community, allowing adaptive sports organizations to share their



Tatyana McFadden in 2004 at her first Paralympic Games in Athens as a high school sophomore. In 2024, McFadden became the most decorated Para Track & Field athlete in North America, with 21 medals in the sport over 6 Paralympic Games.

PHOTO BY JOE KUSUMOTO.

missions and connect with more donors and supporters. This visibility is essential for sustaining the financial needs of local and regional programs, which rely heavily on external funding and are prone to financial instability.

The continued growth of adaptive sports is crucial not only for elite athletes, but also for the entire disability community. Adaptive sports foster inclusion, provide a sense of belonging, and offer opportunities for personal growth, social interaction, and achievement. By supporting these programs, we can build stronger, more inclusive communities and a more equitable society.

The future of adaptive sports looks bright, driven by both technological advancements and growing public

awareness. The increased visibility and representation of disabled individuals and athletes are not only elevating the profile of sports, they are also breaking down societal barriers and misconceptions surrounding disability. With continued investment in infrastructure, equipment, and media coverage, adaptive sports can offer more opportunities for athletes of all levels to succeed and thrive.

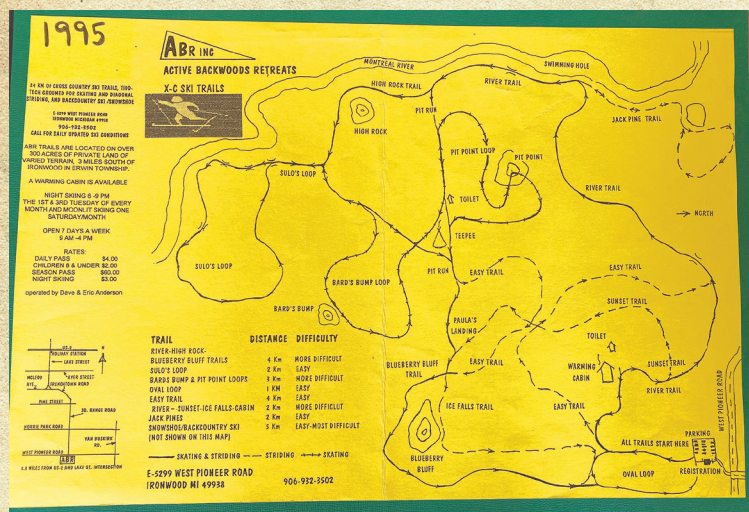
The continued support of adaptive sports programs is essential to develop future Paralympians and to foster a culture of inclusion, equality, and community for all disabled individuals. As the landscape of adaptive sports evolves, it remains clear that these programs are integral to building a more inclusive and stronger society—one in which all individuals, regardless of ability, can participate and excel. ♿



ERIC ANDERSON'S INSIGHTS: THIRTY YEARS OF ABR, WITH MORE TO COME



From 1994: An original trail map, drawn by Eric.



The trail kilometers at ABR doubling in size in one year, Eric had to create a new map in 1995.

Editor's Note: Thank you, Eric, for offering your personal experiences and insights about the creation, history, and behind-the-scenes look into what made ABR what it is today and what it was over those 30 years. Also, with gratitude to your family that no doubt made you into such a generous man. This personal essay, dear readers, is especially for you.

As I look back on 30 years, there are so many memories. I pulled out the scrapbooks and pieced together the history of ABR Trails, a cross-country ski touring center in Ironwood, Michigan.

My family immigrated to Ironwood, specifically **Erwin Township**, from Finland in 1898. They homesteaded a half mile from our trailhead. Their offspring homesteaded close by over four generations; I am the fifth generation to make a life in Erwin Township.

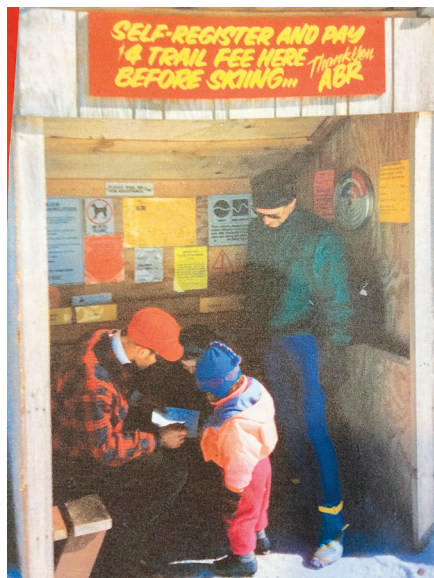
Early Years

Growing up on the property that is now known as ABR was full of adventures in the woods. As kids, my brothers, friends, and I ski-jumped on the property, made rock forts, had apple fights, and built trails with Dad's supervision. We knew the woods and bluffs well; we had an 80-acre playground and enjoyed every inch of it in all seasons.

Anderson Ski Trails on the family homestead land started in 1971. We snowshoe-packed 6K of trails and skied in a track to make ski trails. I was 9 years old at the time and we skied on army surplus, white wooden skis. When we outgrew those skis, we went to a fiberglass composite ski with three-pin bindings. There are many pieces of the original trails still in use today. The **Sunset Trail** probably has the most original pieces of the trail; one of the original carved wooden signs still hangs on the trail.

In 1980, I went to Michigan Technological University to pursue an engineering degree. Little did I know I would be returning permanently in 1994. I battled cancer during my sophomore year, undergoing treatment at Mayo Clinic, and survived. Working in lower Michigan for five years and then in Europe for four, changed my life. I enjoyed the European way of life, enjoying nature. We hiked, biked, and skied as much as we could when we weren't working and had a lot of fun. In hindsight, my experience in Europe taught me to think strongly about a different career path.

In 1991, while working as an engineer, I purchased my first piece of grooming equipment from Europe, an Arctic Cat Panther. While I was still working in Europe, my dad bought a four-foot Tidd Tech grooming implement for \$1,550; he groomed the ski trails for our family and friends, about 6K of trails at the time.



At the three-sided ticket booth, circa 1994.
PHOTO BY ERIC ANDERSON.



1997: Eric, center, and his dad, Dave, pose with ABR's first PistenBully, with the chalet in the background.
PHOTO BY HELEN ANDERSON.

Homecoming

When I returned home from Europe in 1994, I knew I wanted to work outside and spend time in nature. My original plan was to start a recreational business that included hiking trips to Europe, kayak trips on Lake Superior, ice climbing in the Black River Canyon, and cross-country skiing and snowshoeing on the family property. Starting out with ski trails in the winter and kayak sales and trips in the summer, we soon realized there was too much work in building the ski trails and cabins in the summer, causing the kayak business to fall off. As a result, we concentrated on building more trails and cabins in the summer and grooming ski trails in the winter.

ABR started in 1994. At the time, we had a total of 12K of trails and a three-sided ticket booth. We didn't have a chalet, but we did have an outhouse and a warming cabin a half kilometer into the trail. The cost was four dollars per ticket and people were asked to put their cash in an envelope at the trailhead. Grooming in the early days was done by two Alpine snowmobiles and a four-foot pull-behind Tidd Tech grooming drag.

All in the Family

ABR was always a family business. Dad helped with trail-building and grooming while Mom baked cookies and her famous fudge bars for the "chalet in the woods" — skiers hoarded them as they checked in and begged for the recipe. Special note:

The fudge bar recipe will be auctioned off as a fundraiser in the future.

In the early days, we certainly had a lot to learn. We went from two Alpine snowmobiles for grooming to four, all with a radio to rescue each other when needed; then to six Alpines, using two for parts and two for backup. At that time, *there were no employees*. Mom and **Angela Santini** would get recruited to "weigh down" the grooming track-setter in the early days. I'm sure you can imagine the laughs we had riding through the woods, towing our wives weighing down the track-setters in the wee hours of the morning.

Early morning grooming was then, and still is, my happy place.

The trails expanded, customers increased, and, in 1997, with 300 inches of snow that winter, we took the plunge when I purchased a PistenBully 200. Trail conditions improved and, in that era, few places could claim "PistenBully grooming."

The following winter, during the week of Christmas and New Year (our busiest time), the PistenBully threw a rod through the block. On New Year's Eve, my neighbor Mark and I went to Lutsen, Minnesota, to pick up a used engine and change it over. We traded and sold all six Alpines, buying the "new hot set-up": a grooming snowmobile. It turned out to be literally hot because it had a lot of cooling issues; after one year, we worked with Ski-Doo to come up with the 550 super wide track engine fan to be



Circa Winter 1997/1998: Eric, left, and Dave with ABR's original Ski-Doo Groomers that started out "hot" in the wrong way, until a collaboration with Ski-Doo created the 550 fan super wide track engine fan.

PHOTO BY HELEN ANDERSON.

the standard for a grooming snowmobile.

Growing Pains & Gains

Despite the low snow across much of the Midwest in 2001, we had plenty of snow in the UP and our business exploded. Although this was before widespread social media, the word was out. I believe it was January 15, 2001, during a low-snow year, when skiers from places south descended upon the little Ma-and-Pa operation called ABR. Dad collected tickets with his hooded parka and trucker's wallet, and Mom parked cars, trying to get maximum use out of the available parking in our small lot at the time. In time, the skiers arriving overflowed the lot and parked at the Erwin town hall; I ran a shuttle in the van back and forth.

With ABR's limited infrastructure then, we had 1,070 skiers.

Land was the main focus in ABR's first 10 years. For trail expansion, I cashed in my corporate 401k accounts and leveraged some other investments to buy 23 land parcels adjacent to the current property. Many parcels were homesteads with old houses and buildings. We rehabbed the houses and sold them off as trailside homes, keeping the land for the trails. River House, Kaartunen House, Saari House, Hantala House, Hendrickson House, Kaartunen Cottage, Jackson House, Everets Cabin, and more were all included in this effort. You probably recognize these names and perhaps have stayed in these trailside houses.

As the trails expanded and our business grew, we upgraded the facilities, including parking lot expansion, restroom

construction (in addition to porta potties), and satisfying the need for a bigger chalet, which was expanded into the existing space. Of course, the trails were expanded over time and our original 6Ks grew to 12, 24, 28, 33, 40, 42, 52, 58, 60, 65, 70, 73, 75, 76, 87, 92, 100, 102, to the current, 92K.

Angela & I On Our Own

My parents, Dave and Helen, left for southern Texas in 2004, and Angela stepped up to help. Alas as to grooming, she got stuck during her first week — on every curve and hill. She just wasn't "groomer material" and she didn't want to bake Mom's famous fudge bars. So, we had to move forward by hiring employees. Meanwhile, Angela found her niche behind the desk, selling

tickets and merchandise. More importantly, as many of you know, she is known for her smiling face, happy demeanor, and five-star customer service. She has a "Rainman" memory for names, which has become as famous as the grooming and traditional fudge bars.

One of the several business models my parents ingrained in me was customer service: *ABR Nice* and *Ironwood Nice*. Mom and Dad ran a successful retail business in the area with up to five stores. My brother Scott and I worked at all of them following the customer-first rule. I recently came across Dad's handwritten code of operations from the retail store. They were pretty strict rules, but simple and effective, for establishing customer relationships and running a business for all of those years.

With Angela's customer-first skills and the life lessons from Mom and Dad, we worked on figuring out the ski business. We held USSA races, senior events, kids ski programs, and everything in between; they all changed and adapted over the years, as did our style, audience, and ski shop. We started a retail shop onsite and offered equipment rentals. We expanded to high-end race skis and became an Official Fischer Race and Demo Center. Over time, we figured out what worked and what didn't work.

Throughout the years, we expanded the cabins and connected some trailside



Eric Anderson, center, on the trails with his parents, Dave and Helen.

PHOTO BY ANGELA SANTINI.

houses; this helped our business. ABR also offered onsite lodging for all of our out-of-town guests. In addition, our facilities provided a great place for families to spend time together out on the trails and to influence the next generation of skiers. This next generation grew up before our eyes and is now bringing their children to ABR. This makes us happy because it truly is what this has all been about — sharing something special with family and friends.

One thing that never changed was our commitment to quality, consistent grooming, beautiful trails, and the ABR Nice concept, or the ABR Vibe. We ask new people every day, “Why do you come here?” They respond with the same answer: “Because we love the feel, the atmosphere, the vibe.” A few will say it is for the snow but most come because ABR is a special place.

Maintaining ABR’s Essence

While we did add some rustic ski-in lodging, expanded the ski shop, and improved restrooms to flush toilets, we mostly kept to the basics and remained true to ourselves. Good customer service, a nice feel, and great grooming! These have been the most dependable tenets of ABR and have

been the key to our success.

As time went on, we decided to share the knowledge we had learned along the way. We held grooming clinics and, in my opinion, raised the standard of grooming. This is also thanks to the website skinny-ski.com, where the groomers competed on skills and benefited from the feedback from grooming reports. People flocked from all over the country to our grooming clinics.

As the years went on, we expanded our PistenBully fleet to two as well as our grooming crew from two to eight, but in incremental steps, just like trail expansion. This was another secret to our success. What my dad emphasized was growing in small steps; not too big or too fast. We combined this idea with the “Field of Dreams” motto: *If you build it, they will come.*

And they sure did and continued to do so.

Later in the life of ABR, we hunkered down doing world-class grooming with world-class groomers — on a regular schedule. We’ve been fortunate enough to work with a wonderful group of highly

skilled groomers who show up each day before the sun rises to create that trail magic you all know and love.

What put us on the map beyond abundant lake effect snow? Determination and tenacity to fulfill what we set out to do. Being of Finnish heritage, we would say, This is SISU!

For years, we’ve groomed on a regular schedule with highly skilled employees and owners who have had an ownership, skin-in-the-game mentality. This coupled with excellent customer service has been the key to our success for 30 years. The loyalty of our ABR Community is truly incredible and humbling.

What has kept us going for 30 years? Meeting all the nice skiers and forming relationships with them and their families. It is seeing skiers who were five years old return as adults. Seeing the smiling faces as soon as the snow arrives and helping our town of Ironwood become a magnet for attracting silent sports enthusiasts. Many of these wonderful people have moved here and purchased houses to enjoy the winters in Ironwood, at ABR, and the surrounding area. These people have been an asset to Erwin Township, Ironwood, and the greater community. Looking back on 30 years, I thought we could improve people’s health and make a few people happy, but I never imagined the outcome to be such a legacy.

And Now — The Donation

Why did we donate the business instead of cashing in? This is probably the biggest question people ask us and what many others have wondered. For Angela and me, it was an easy decision that comes with a two-part answer. (1) We wanted to preserve the land and trails for many years to come, and (2) We did not want our customers and friends to be left without this gem in their future.

The Anderson Bluffs and River Trails Foundation, ABR Trails Foundation, will continue our legacy. Angela will volunteer in the ski shop from time to time, so you will still see her smiling face. As Chief Groomer, I will assure you that our top-notch grooming team continues to provide pristine skiing for you all to enjoy, for you and for generations to come.

To learn more about the Foundation, visit our website: ABRTrails.com. ❄️

ABR TRAILS FOUNDATION

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Ski or Snowshoe In

BOOK YOUR CABIN STAY



The Tony Wise Museum of the American Birkebeiner prior to its move to Mt. Telemark Village. The three-dimensional trail map is in the foreground.

PHOTO BY TOM KELLY.

The Tony Wise Museum of the American Birkebeiner Telling the story of Tony's Big Idea and the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation

Allison Slavick

Once in a while, I'll tell someone: I "made" the Tony Wise Museum of the American Birkebeiner. Then I explain that, as a museum consultant, I carried out the fundraising, planning, research, writing, design, fabrication, and installation for an inspirational and historical museum to fill about 1,000 square feet in two front rooms at the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation's (ABSF) office building in Hayward, Wisconsin.

Early in my career, I'd worked at the New York Botanical Garden and the Smithsonian, and I went on to be the director of a small museum. Later, as a consultant, I worked under contracts with the U.S. Ski Museum and Hall of Fame, the Colorado Ski Museum, the New England Ski Museum, and the Marin Museum of Bicycling. My work at those museums honed my exhibition philosophy and

shaped a plan for the **Tony Wise Museum**, which I was hired to develop in 2015.

Teamwork & Forward Thinking

Right from the start, the museum wouldn't have been possible without the support and guidance of Tony Wise's family. His daughters, **Janie and Frances Wise**, were especially helpful and enthusiastically gave permission to name the museum after their father. Tony was not only the Founder of the American Birkebeiner, but he also developed Telemark Resort, which hosted the race finish and start lines over the years.

In planning the museum, I sought to balance experiential, media-driven, and hands-on components (relatively recent trends in museums) with reading, observing, and thinking, which are tried-and-true techniques to convey information. One of my goals was to elevate the exhibitions beyond displays of old bibs and skis, race



Original shield design commemorating the Barnebirkie from Telemark Lodge.

PHOTO BY CHRIS SCHMIDT.



CREDIT: CHRIS SCHMIDT



Murals in the old Telemark Lodge used a shield design. The graphic designer for the Tony Wise Museum replicated the shape to introduce themes throughout the new museum.

PHOTO BY ALLISON SLAVICK.

posters, and photos. The painter **Georgia O'Keeffe** said she sought to "fill a space in a beautiful way." In this spirit, I set out to create a visually robust and beautiful space, one that would burst at the seams with the gestalt of the Birkie.

As a **Birchlegger**, now at 24 Birkies, 3 Kortess, and counting, I'm well-familiar with the vibe surrounding the Birkie. Over the years, I have also become intrigued by its history, race fanfare, and growth. I considered what keeps skiers, volunteers, and spectators coming back year after year. What is the source of the passion, and how could I present that to stimulate the senses of museum visitors?

To get started, I asked members of the ABSF Board of Directors to join a **museum planning committee** and to serve as my sounding board. At our first meeting, I asked them to imagine what best represented the Birkebeiner. Think of the Hope Diamond at the Smithsonian or the

Mona Lisa at the Louvre. What would be our icon? What truly represents the race? Is it an idea? An artifact? I asked people to draw their ideas on a square of paper and explain it to the group. Together, we decided that the Birkebeiner trail, undeniably a stellar achievement, should be the centerpiece of the museum.

From Plan to Fruition

I envisioned a three-dimensional map that would accurately show the lay of the land from Cable to Hayward, with museum visitors having the ability to push buttons to light up the trail system and aid stations, akin to maps I'd seen at National Park visitor centers. My colleagues in the museum field pointed me to **Chris Krumm**, a brilliant exhibit designer and fabricator, formerly with the Science Museum of Minnesota. Working with topographic maps, software, routers, and a lot of talent, Chris pulled this off impeccably.

The map was just one component and while Chris worked on it for nearly a year, I developed and refined exhibition themes to tell the story of the race, including Tony Wise's life and influences and the formation of the ABSF. Other themes included the race format, the formation of the Worldloppet, the Barnebirkie, and the importance of volunteers. Working with **Chris Schmidt**, a gifted graphic designer, we selected fonts and a color palette. Various fabricators advised on complementary materials and designed and built fixtures and furnishings.

Volunteers, including die-hard Birkie founding skier **John Kotar**, gathered on a Saturday to sort and identify photos. The **Birchleggings Club**, whose members have completed 20 or more Birkies and Kortess, was a generous and committed backer and advocate. Club members helped me conduct a fundraising campaign for their honored members, who have a unique connection to the race's history.

Concurrently, I took a deep dive into the history of the Birkebeiner. Wise was a prominent Wisconsin businessman whose life work continues to influence many, and his family had the foresight to donate his personal and business papers to the state archives at the Wisconsin Historical Society. The **Anthony Wise Papers** comprise 17.5 cubic feet of documents and 7.5 cubic feet of photographs (including many I had not seen before), along with



Left to right, Caitlin Gregg, John Bauer, and Duncan McLean present their skis to the museum. About that fourth donated ski: Bauer holds the single ski (of historic proportions!) donated by Bill Koch.

PHOTO BY ALLISON SLAVICK.



Hayward native Tony Wise brought vision and entrepreneurship to develop Mount Telemark and later the American Birkebeiner.

PHOTO BY BRUCE FRITZ.

recordings, microfilms, posters, films, and videos. Exploring this collection provided the foundation for telling Wise's life story.

Janie Wise donated a treasure trove of 10mm films of the early years of the race, which were subsequently repaired, cleaned, and digitized. Frances Wise loaned the museum the **St. Olav Medal and Certificate** awarded to her father in Oslo in 1977 by Norway's King Olav V, in recognition of Wise's role in strengthening U.S. ties with Norway. Old awards and

other artifacts and photos were enthusiastically dropped off. A one-of-a-kind vintage Birkie race banner appeared anonymously at the ABSF office with a note that read: "Returning this."

To illustrate the race's origin, I read everything I could find on the Norwegian legend of the Birkebeiners and Prince Haakon, and distilled the tale to a few succinct paragraphs. I sewed a soft, weighted baby wrapped in a custom monogrammed baby blanket and a cap embroidered with "Future King," so visitors could feel the legendary weight of the 7.72-pound baby.

Alongside the history of the race, I wanted to address subjects such as skate vs. classic techniques, waxing skis, and the organization of wave starts. I knew this could seem like innate knowledge to seasoned Birkie skiers, but those topics might leave newcomers in the dark if not explained. And the committee agreed; after all, one of our goals should be to get more people interested in cross-country skiing.

Telemark Resort was closed by this time and I received permission from the owners to rummage in a back room for photos and documents that might be helpful. I also turned to experts such as **Shelly Milford**, who had worked for both the ABSF and Telemark, and **Tom Kelly**, former VP of communications for *U.S. Ski and Snowboard* and author of *Birkie Fever*, which documents the first ten years of the race. They were my brain trusts, filling in gaps in the history and providing engaging anecdotes. Later, Kelly flew in from Park City to interview Birkie founders, racers, children, and volunteers, resulting in videos with first-person stories to correspond with themes throughout the galleries.

I knew people would expect to see skis, but I wanted to show off skis more significant than their technology — *skis with their own stories*. To that end, I decided to round up four sets to represent different eras or milestones of the race.

For the Birkie's origins, I turned to **Duncan McLean**, who provided the wooden skis upon which he won the first and second Korteloppet as a teenager.

From the Birkie's "middle" years, Olympian **John Bauer**, an elite Birkie skier, donated the skis he wore in the Men's 10K classic in the 1992 Olympic Games in Albertville.



A bronze sculpture by Engelbert Hattenberger, an Austrian artist known for the elaborate ice sculptures he created at Telemark Resort during the early years of the race. PHOTO BY ALLISON SLAWICK.

To represent the more recent, modern era of skiing, **Caitlin Gregg** donated her skis from her 2014 win of the Birkebeiner — her fourth; she added a fifth title in 2018. And then ...

That Fourth Ski

As it turned out, the history of the solo fourth ski was intertwined with the history of cross-country skiing in general. I wondered what ski or skier could represent the 1980s, when cross-country skiing, and skating in particular, grew in popularity. I mused out loud to ABSF Director **Ben Popp** who jokingly replied: "**Bill Koch**."

Many readers will know that Koch was the first American to win an Olympic medal in cross-country skiing and that he also developed and popularized the skate technique. I wrote to him and explained what I needed. Months went by and it may have been late January when he called me. To paraphrase our conversation, Koch told me he'd given away all his skis from those years. Apologetically, he offered me one



Interpretive panels use a scrapbook format to illustrate the life of Tony Wise and the founding of the race. PHOTO BY TOM KELLY.

remaining ski he had on hand (the other had been broken): it was an old classic ski, he said, of which he'd shaved off the tip so he could experiment with skating. It probably wasn't something I'd want for the museum — *Right?* he asked.

I'd scheduled a presentation of skis by Gregg, Bauer, and McLean for a day or two before the 2016 race, to be emceed by Tom Kelly. Koch arranged for skiers in Vermont who were driving to the Birkie to meet me in a grocery store parking lot. They handed off the ski just hours before the presentation. It was a thrill to see and hold a piece of skiing history: *a modified ski on which Bill Koch had scribbled some notes about his wax of the day*.

Honoring The Fever

As the plan took shape, one subject continued to confound me. "Birkie Fever," to me, transcends the frenzy leading up to race day. How could I convey the intangible "fever" through a museum exhibition?

I struggled with this particular piece for months; everything I pondered, doodled, and put into words seemed superficial. To use a phrase I came across in Wise's archival papers, *It was like trying to catch smoke*.

I decided that words weren't too necessary. If a picture tells a thousand words, I ultimately looked at images that represented a few million pages of text. Going through digital photo files and old slides of skiers, skijorers, Barnebirkie kids, and volunteers, I selected fifty diverse photos


of enthusiastic participants. I had these reproduced on blocky wooden substrates. It took half a day to arrange these in a complex grid, something like a mosaic. A small mirror in the grid allows museum visitors to see themselves as part of the amazing Birkebeiner story.

The museum has much more. There's the 1888 letter from **President Ronald Reagan** on White House stationery, in which he recognizes the value of cross-country skiing for physical fitness and mental health, and commends the staff, skiers, and fans. Nearby hangs an iconic black-and-yellow **Norwegian "bumble-bee" race suit**, a standout on dozens of racers during the years of the so-called "Norwegian Invasion."

The Wise family films play on a continuous loop. A beautiful bronze bell, given to ABSF on the 25th anniversary of the race by the Swedish Vasaloppet, has a rope attached to the clapper. Visitors are invited to ring the bell if they've competed in the Birkie, Korte, Prince Haakon, or Barnebirkie.

With the stories assembled, the **Tony Wise Museum of the American Birkebeiner** opened with a public reception in Hayward in August 2016. The Museum was moved to **Base Camp at Mt. Telemark Village** in Cable in the winter of 2024/25. Visitors are welcome and admission is free.

Stop by, stay for a while, and *Catch the Fever* all over again. ☺



More than a great ski venue,
Trondheim has its downtown
cathedral.

PHOTO BY CLAY DIGGINS.

A Winter Inspiration in May: Our Champions & Achievements of Nordic Skiing

Luke Bodensteiner

Editor's Note: Thank you, Luke, for taking the time to share your observations of and experiences from the March 2025 FIS Nordic World Championships, shining the light on our great Upper Midwest athletes and all the great athletes on Team USA, as well as of the world. Time to dust off our rollerskis and dream of Winter 2025/2026!

For the four Midwestern cross-country skiers who took part in the 2025 FIS Nordic World Championships in Trondheim, Norway, competing there was a pinnacle experience that they're

likely to never forget:

- Jessie Diggins (Afton, MN),
- Alayna Sonnesyn (Plymouth, MN),
- Zak Ketterson (Bloomington, MN), and
- Kevin Bolger (Minocqua, WI)

Each day, all were welcomed and cheered on by 60,000 or more rabid fans as they competed with the fastest skiers worldwide for world titles and personal best rankings.

Setting the Scene

Trondheim is a picturesque city of 212,000 residents, Norway's third largest, founded over a thousand years ago, and was the capital of Norway during the Viking era. Now a student town where PhD fellows routinely publish papers with titles such as



Luke takes a selfie at the start of the Women's Skiathlon in Trondheim, with "Placard Jessie" held aloft by Superfans Deb and Clay Diggins, AKA: Mom and Dad.

"The Influence of Tactical Positioning On Performance In Sprint Cross-Country Skiing," it's no surprise that a ski race of this importance would draw awe-inspiring crowds of raucous fans; every single one, it would seem, was toting a Norwegian flag sticking out from their rucksack.

Trondheim is also located on the **Trondheim Fjord**, an 80-mile inland spur off the meeting point of the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans, so it's also little surprise that the climate there is considered "mild" – and can be wet. Days of rain, wet snow, and wind during the Championship certainly didn't deliver optimal skiing conditions for the competitors. Jessie Diggins, for example, was frustrated with the performance of her skis in the challenging snow conditions for two races before she and teammate **Julia Kern** won a silver medal in the Team Sprint. That didn't deter Jessie's parents, along with the tens of thousands of other fans in the stadium stands and trackside, from maintaining an upbeat energy that inspired every single competitor to give it their life's best.

People, Places & Performance

On the day before the Championship broke loose, I hopped on a city bus to head 15 minutes out of town to one of several local ski areas: "Skistua." In most places, it's unusual to walk through a city center in ski boots and with skis in hand to get onto a packed metro. But in Trondheim, you're not alone. 90% of the riders also had skis and tubes of klister with them. On the bus, I ran into **Clay Diggins**, Jessie's dad, who was heading out to ski to a cabin in the woods for coffee and a waffle, and perhaps to calm his nerves. Clay is a man who has been to many ski races all over the world. He said, "Nothing compares to ski racing in Norway."

And Clay was right. Universally, the racers were blown away by the energy and appreciation, and the volume of the crowds. Think about it: *How many professional athletes of any sort, NFL, NBA, Premier League, much less cross-country skiers, get to compete before a live audience of 60,000 fans or more?*

After finishing her first race, Alayna Sonnesyn reported being "blasted with a wall of screaming," as she crested the

racecourse's first climb. While perhaps there's a little hometown bias, she added, "It gave me Minneapolis vibes," referring to last winter's outrageously successful World Cup in Minneapolis' Wirth Park, the Loppet Cup. Zak Ketterson, competing in his first World Championship, echoed her sentiments saying, "It wasn't as loud as Minneapolis, but it was the coolest experience I've ever had. It was Minneapolis-esque."

Minneapolis should be proud of what it brought to the world of international skiing.

But the mass of crowds grew even larger from there. The final weekend of the Championship saw the revered men's and women's 50km races. This was the first time women competed in the 50km distance in the World Championship, having competed in 30km as their longest race previously. The "*Femmila*," as the Norwegians call it, is an iconic distance in ski racing. Because of this, the weekend crowd soared to 100,000 people lining the racetrack with another 22,000 packed into the sold-out stadium at the start and finish line.

Alayna finished 23rd in an agonizing race where the snow had turned to sugar and slush that was more than ankle-deep along much of the trail. "I think for anyone who just got through that, they should be proud of themselves," she said. Thanks to the energy, enthusiasm, and sheer size of the crowd, she added that she would be leaving the Championship with "a lot of love and joy for skiing."

Based on his outstanding long-distance race results in the final weeks leading up to the Championship, Kevin Bolger was a



A 15-minute bus ride away from the race venue, at Skistua, a local ski area.

PHOTO BY CLAY DIGGINS.

last-minute addition to the U.S. squad. He and his girlfriend, Swedish medalist *Maja Dahlquist*, had moved to Trondheim nearly a year ago specifically to prepare for these races. For several years, Kevin focused primarily on the Sprint events of around 1.5km. But his recent upturn in longer-distance races gave him several opportunities to race in Trondheim. Nevertheless, he said, "[I haven't] done a 50km race in 6 or 7 years," but on the strength of his performances, he was selected for one of four spots available to the U.S. team in the race.

Kevin capitalized on that opportunity by delivering one of his best distance races ever, finishing 22nd. Even with his strong performance, he took time to relish the special environment of the race. "I knew the (snow) conditions were better next to the crowd," he said, "but I actually wanted to ski farther away because it was just too damn loud even though conditions were better." He added, "There was a little bit of misery out there, but I made sure on the last lap to stand up and soak all this in because this is once-in-a-lifetime. There were lots of flares, lots of smoke, lots of beer; warming up, I made a mental note of where my friends were, just in case I had to stop for one. I knew where they would be."

Above & Beyond the Racing

With all the wonders of the events, this Championship was perhaps more of a cultural festival than a ski race, and



The start of the Men's 50K in Trondheim, where the skiers were world-class-fast and the spectator crowd lined the course and filled the stands on a massive scale. As with the other five Men's events, Johannes Klaebo took home the Gold in the 50K.

PHOTOS BY CLAY DIGGINS.

a celebration of being out in the forest and being active. On my first night in Trondheim, the waitress at the restaurant I visited told me, "You know, they say Norwegians are born with skis on their feet. Actually, they're born with skis in their garage." But the truth is, they cherish their time outdoors, in all types of weather, exercising, exploring, and socializing. And they were here to celebrate that lifestyle, which is ingrained in their society and is core to their identity.

Added Note: Many readers will be

familiar with **Johannes Klaebo**, who won one of the two World Cup races in Minneapolis and has taken a keen interest in the skiing culture in Minnesota and the Midwest. Johannes successfully won gold in all six men's cross-country races during the Championship, a historic feat that may never again be matched. ☺



Parental Nordic Power at Trondheim Stadium, right to left: Deb Diggins, Clay Diggins, and Ron Randall, father of Kikkan.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CLAY DIGGINS.

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Sunset on the Ariens Nordic Center main entrance and a drone-photo view over the 3Ks of rolling terrain of the Center's asphalt roller ski trails. Welcome!

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF ARIENS NORDIC CENTER.

Something for Everyone this Summer at Ariens Nordic Center

Walk, run, roller ski, shoot & more!



Tara Perre

They say skiers are made in the summer — and “they” includes coaches, elites, and champions. Summer (from May on, actually) is an important time for winter athletes to continue their training and enjoy the sports they love. But winter sports enthusiasts know the challenges of enjoying their sport in the summer. Roller skiing on roads and public paths can be dangerous while navigating traffic and cracked and potholed surfaces, along routes that are hardly continuous or offer few challenges that our wintertime racecourses throw at us. That’s where Ariens Nordic Center can serve as an oasis.

“Our paved trails are built for roller skiing,” said **Sean Becker**, Director of Sports Operations and Development at Ariens Nordic Center. “The surface is ideal and the course is private, so you are only out there with other roller skiers.”

The venue is open to all levels, from beginners of all ages to high school, college, and even our **U.S. Biathlon Team**. Teams such as Ashwabenon Nordic and University of Wisconsin–Green Bay use Ariens Nordic Center as their home training and competitive venues for biathlon and cross-country skiing. It’s also been designated as an official training venue for the U.S. Biathlon organization.

Just this past year, U.S. Biathlon Team Member **Paul Schommer** of Appleton, Wisconsin, used Ariens Nordic Center to battle back from injury. “Getting back to racing after my knee injury



A Take A Shot program participant shoots a CZ bolt action rifle on the Ariens Nordic Center Range under the supervision of a Range Safety Officer.

has been humbling,” Schommer said. “In some ways, I felt I was back to my roots; training on my own back home in Wisconsin at Ariens Nordic Center and connecting with the grassroots community that is the heartbeat of biathlon in the U.S. It’s given me a new perspective in many ways and I’m grateful for the amazing community that continues to be supportive of me and all U.S. Biathletes.”



A lot of spontaneous smiles arise when athletes of all ages participate in a Novice biathlon race at Ariens Nordic Center, where you can compete even if you do not rollerski. There is a run division as well as a SkiErg division for those who do not run. There are distances and elevations to suit everyone on the 3K asphalt trails.

Venue Focus? You!

It's less common for you to see Olympic-caliber athletes training at Ariens Nordic Center. Its true focus is on providing access to all ages and abilities. "The community has embraced having year-round access," said **Monica Ariens**, Managing Director of Ariens Nordic Center, "as it provides athletes with their own training space in a safe environment, avoiding roads and not having to compete with other recreational activity. We see people of all ages and skiing abilities enjoying our trails. It's been rewarding to watch young and old learning, growing, or just getting back at it because of Ariens Nordic Center."

U.S. Biathlon Director of Sport Development **John Farra** emphasized the critical role roller skiing plays for both cross-country skiers and biathletes. "Without roller skiing in the off-season, athletes would be resigned to running, biking, rowing/kayaking, and other endurance-based sports for the majority of their fitness and would have limited opportunity to work the exact muscles and movements that skiing provides. "Cross-country skiing puts a high demand on the overall cardiovascular system since it uses so much of the musculature, so the best means to stress the body for skiing fitness is skiing itself."

Skiing & Biathlon Year Round

With winter seasons being relatively short for athletes and enthusiasts, venues such as Ariens Nordic Center are serving a vital role. "The Midwest is an important region for U.S. Biathlon since it has such a long history of creating fast Nordic ski racers and exceptional biathletes," Farra said. "Having a world-class training venue in the Midwest with ultra-modern snowmaking capacity, race quality ski trails, and exceptional roller skiing trails offers an

incredible resource to support the current best biathletes in the nation and creates opportunity for the next generation of athletes who dream of representing their country in the **Olympic** and **Paralympic Games**. We're thrilled to have Ariens Nordic Center serve as an important National Training Center and are excited to see how many athletes find their way into the sport through Brillion, Wisconsin."

Summers at Ariens Nordic Center continue to evolve as the venue adds camps and programming for all ages and abilities. "This coming summer," Ariens said, "we are hosting a variety of programs and camps for all ages while focusing on youth and junior athletes. We continue to grow our number of offerings with the courses and programs currently provided while continuing to find new opportunities. It's been a great partnership with the community to ensure we are meeting their needs."

Summer 2025

There is something for everyone this summer at Ariens Nordic Center, including programs, camps, and one championship event. From the citizen level to the World Cup level, Ariens Nordic Centers has a path for you. Be sure to follow us on social media and visit AriensNordic.com for the most up-to-date information, including pricing, registration, dates, and spectator guidelines. In addition, check out these outstanding **Biathlon Programs**, facilities, and equipment geared for beginner, intermediate, and experienced biathletes:

- **Take A Shot at Biathlon:** Held every Wednesday, this program focuses on introducing biathlon. Try Biathlon hands-on with the state-of-the-art Biathlon Range at Ariens Nordic Center. Receive instruction from our Range Marshal and shoot with



This is the Ariens Nordic Center Snowmaking Loop, measuring 3.5K at 1-plus-meter snow depth. This loop was constructed to withstand warm-ups and rain to guarantee the weekly events at our venue for events from last December's Santa Ski race to UWGB CCSA races, Wisconsin HS/MS state sprint championships, and the North American Masters Biathlon Championships. Notice, too, center-right, the 20-point (what ANC calls "lanes") Biathlon range with its Kurvinen Electronic Target System for 50m targets and 10 points of ParaBiathlon Air and Infrared target systems for Paraspport athletes at 10m. 50m targets are 115mm (the size of a CD) for the standing targets and 45mm (the size of an Oreo) for the prone shooting position. All shooting during races is done at an elevated heart rate. Try to hit that Oreo target after skiing 2K with a heart rate of 160 bpm. Come out now to get ready for your winter biathlon!

precision .22 Caliber CZ Rifles, or with the Para-Biathlon Infrared Rifles.

- **Biathlon 101:** This new program will help interested people progress to the next step of becoming a biathlete.
- **Level Up:** This program will further advance athletes on their biathlon journey that meets athletes where they are, helping them advance to the highest level they wish to achieve.
- **Open Range:** Available to those who are Ariens Nordic Center Biathlon Rifle Safety Certified and desire range practice with their personal .22 caliber biathlon rifle.
- **Open Range Plus:** Available to those who are Ariens Nordic Center Biathlon Rifle Safety Certified and desire range practice with a .22 caliber rifle *provided by Ariens Nordic Center*. Open Range Plus includes a precision .22 Caliber CZ Rifle, one box of ammo (50 rounds), two sheets of target paper, use of biathlon mat, and scope.
- **Safety:** This three-hour biathlon rifle safety course must be completed to use the biathlon range for specific biathlon programs, including Open Range Plus and private coaching lessons. If not already completed, the three-hour course will include the online U.S. Biathlon Basic Rifle Safety course and certification.



Runners and walkers enjoy wooded trails within the Ariens Nordic Center trail system. Walking and running are free of charge as long as you check in and obtain a free Walk/Run trail pass.

- **Private Coaching Lessons:** Receive personal instruction in 30 or 60-minute sessions.

Biathlon Camps:

Open Camp: These three-day open camps accommodate all levels of ability with shooting and ski instruction. The camp fee includes meals. As I write this article, June and September dates are to be determined, so use that website URL, above, to keep updated.

High Performance Camp, July 15-20: This camp is open to International Biathlon Union-level athletes and focuses on shooting, skiing, dryland training, and cross-training. Athletes will be chosen through an application process. The camp fee includes meals and lodging.

Biathlon Events, July 18-20: U.S. Biathlon Midwest Regional Summer Championships. There are also monthly biathlon roller ski races.

Other Activities at Ariens Nordic Center include free walking, running, and hiking on paved and grass trails, as well as pickleball and yoga.

Now is the time: No more tears over your skis in storage wax; and no more fears while upon unsafe roads. For the experienced athlete, newbie, and the family, Ariens Nordic Center in Brillion, Wisconsin, awaits — and inspires! \$



US Biathlon National Team athletes complete an exhibition race at Ariens Nordic Center. Sean Doherty (front), Paul Schommer (middle), and Campbell Wright (rear).



MoHo riders and coaches gather to enjoy the sunset after practice.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF MOUNT HOREB MTB.



Generations of Trail Stewards

Building Community, One Trail at a Time

Renee Griswold

*Editor's Note: **Renee Griswold** is the Director of the Wisconsin Interscholastic Cycling League, a Chapter of NICA (National Interscholastic Cycling Association). Check out the following video on NICA hosted by Renee; you'll be inspired by the people and the trails: youtube.com/watch?v=gQ5K_WPF0VU&t=6s. And you can then check out more WI NICA videos at youtube.com/@wisconsinmtb.*

Blue Mound State Park has long been home to some of Wisconsin's most challenging and rewarding mountain bike trails. For years, these trails were maintained by a small group of dedicated volunteers who spent countless hours ensuring that the park's rugged terrain remained rideable. Their passion kept the trails alive, but the work was never-ending, and the need for fresh hands was growing.

In the summer of 2024, a new chapter in Blue Mound State Park history began when **CORP Trails** (formerly Capital Off Road Pathfinders) partnered with the **Mount Horeb Mountain Bike Team**, part of the Wisconsin Interscholastic Cycling League — a NICA (National Interscholastic Cycling Association) chapter — for a Teen Trail Corps (TTC) maintenance day. The TTC program empowers NICA student-athletes in grades 6 through 12 to take an active role in trail stewardship and advocacy. What started as a simple collaboration quickly became a transformational experience for everyone involved.

A New Generation Steps Up

Karl Wigdal, one of the CORP Trails trail stewards at Blue Mound State Park, had long wondered why more young riders weren't involved in trail maintenance. "I always wondered why we are not getting these people involved with maintaining our trails," he said. When NICA coach **Ambra Baldwin Hart** reached out about organizing a work night, Karl



Student athletes and coaches gather for an initial lesson in slope/trailwork.



Mount Horeb Mountain Biking Team post trail work.

and his fellow steward, **Jay Gunderson**, were thrilled. "My initial reaction," Karl said, "was relief that yes, the NICA team would like to work with us, followed by the realization that we had better step up our game and organize something that would exceed everyone's expectations."

From the outset, this was not just going to be a simple workday. The goal was to educate, inspire, and empower the young riders to see trails from a new perspective: not just as paths to ride, but as living, breathing networks that required care and attention.

Learning the Ropes

On the first work night, Karl and Jay introduced the student-athletes to the tools of the trade. They didn't just hand out shovels and rakes, they explained why each tool was important and how every small repair impacted the ride experience. "I wanted them to understand the reasons behind the various maintenance techniques," Karl said. "I wanted to teach them to start looking at mountain bike trails from a design perspective."

Coach Ambra structured the teams carefully, mixing up groups so that riders who didn't normally train together could collaborate. "We took the time to talk with the kids about what needed to be done and why," she said. "They learned to look at the slope and grade of the trail, identify cups and berms that had formed, and look for drainage lines."

As the evening progressed, something incredible happened — the young riders weren't just participating, they were leading. They started asking insightful questions, making connections between their riding experience and the work they were doing. The CORP Trails leaders and NICA coaches saw firsthand how quickly they adapted. Gaining knowledge and technique quickly led to growing confidence and success.

By the time the second workday rolled around, the

student-athletes were no longer hesitant beginners. They arrived confident, choosing their preferred tools and grouping themselves based on the tasks at hand. "It was incredible to see how much more comfortable they were with the tools and the tasks that needed to be done," Ambra said. "They rebuilt two culverts that had washed out, and de-cupped, de-bermed, and opened up drainage on miles of trails."

Karl was amazed at the transformation. "They all impressed me. They were focused, they were cooperating, and they were problem-solving together," he said. The excitement was contagious, creating a positive feedback loop that fueled their energy throughout the day.

Then came the biggest reward, proof that their work mattered. After a rain event that autumn, the trails, which typically stayed closed for days due to drainage issues, dried out and were ready to ride in record time. "That is unheard of at Blue Mound State Park," Ambra said. "These kids were able to see their hard work pay off."

More Than Just a Workday

For Karl, one of the standout moments was watching Coach Ambra realize how much her team had accomplished. "Watching Coach Ambra realize that her team was doing such good work, and that they were having fun doing it, was a highlight for me," he said. That joy was shared across generations. "Student-athletes brought enthusiasm and good listening skills," a community volunteer observed. "CORP Trails leaders brought trail maintenance experience. NICA coaches and parents brought leadership skills."

Each group complemented the other, creating an experience that was greater than the sum of its parts.

Beyond the physical work, an even greater achievement was taking shape: the passing of knowledge and stewardship from

one generation to the next. "Because of Karl and Jay's extra efforts," Ambra said, "they have truly inspired the next generation of trail stewards. This is what Teen Trail Corps is all about."

Looking Ahead

The partnership between WI NICA and CORP Trails is far from over. This initial collaboration has set the stage for ongoing efforts to ensure that trail maintenance remains a community effort, engaging riders of all ages. "Go ahead and volunteer!" Karl urged. "There is always a need for volunteers. And if you aren't excited about 'dirt work,' there are many other opportunities to help advocate for trails."

For the student-athletes, the experience has changed the way they see trails. No longer just places to ride, they are now places of responsibility and where their efforts can create better experiences for themselves and others. "Use your riding knowledge on what makes a positive riding experience and let that guide your trail maintenance work," advised **Monica Mooberry**, trail volunteer.

Looking back on the season, everyone involved agreed on one thing: this was only the beginning. As Karl put it, "Mountain bikers should try to volunteer some time for maintaining trails if their situations allow it. Not everyone is interested in working on the actual trail in the dirt, and that's okay. Contact your local mountain bike trail organization and become involved in other aspects of advocacy and building and maintaining our trails."

And if the trails could talk, they would say: "Thanks for fixing my drainage problems — you folks rock!"

The future of trails at Blue Mound State Park is bright because



Trail workers repair a washed-out culvert.

of the work that has already been done as well as the spirit of stewardship that has been ignited. As the next generation of riders takes the reins, they carry with them not just a love for mountain biking, but also an appreciation for the hands that shape the trails beneath their wheels.

One word to sum it all up? "Awesome." \$

WI NICA riders take a break along an enjoyable single-track trail in Blue Mounds State Park.



About CORP Trails

CORP Trails (Capital Off-Road Pathfinders) builds and maintains natural surface mountain bike trails in south-central Wisconsin with the mission to create a vibrant community of bikers and outdoor enthusiasts. Since 1995, we have partnered with private landowners, municipalities, and county and state property managers to provide more than 60 miles of bike-optimized trails. We connect the mountain biking community through group rides, skills clinics, exciting events, and volunteer opportunities that grow and maintain local trail systems. Connect with us at CORPTrails.org.

About the Wisconsin Interscholastic Cycling League

The Wisconsin Interscholastic Cycling League, a Chapter of NICA (National Interscholastic Cycling Association), is all about creating an exciting, welcoming, and positive cycling experience for middle and high school students of every skill level. Whether you're new to riding or a seasoned mountain biker, there's a place for you here.

We're built on NICA's core values of Fun, Inclusivity, Equity, Respect, and Community — because mountain biking is more than a sport; it's an adventure that brings people together to become their best selves through new and rewarding experiences. Find a team near you at wisconsinmtb.org.

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George Kapitiz in Broken Spoke. What started as a shop in George's basement in 2010 has now grown into a top full-service shop in Green Bay.

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Refo24 + 50 = New Cycling Adventures

Kierstin Kloeckner

Turning the big Five-O last year made me take stock of my life, for most of which I feel like I've been cycling. To keep pedaling without getting burnt out, I try new avenues surrounded by two wheels and different two-wheel friends. From road racing to commuting, to touring to gravel, to endurance gravel to mountain bike, and now — drumroll please — to my first team bike event ever, where my time and standing are added into a collective versus just being part of a team. And what's this? On a mountain bike? Why yes: I have fully gone to the dark side.

Two years ago, I did my first twenty-four-hour mountain bike race, the **Wausau 24**. I chose to do it solo because, being raised as an only child and having few cousins, I wasn't known to compete and play well with others. I thought if I messed up, it's on me. If I did well, that's on me too. None of this messy *carrying-the-anchor-across-the-finish-line-for-others* stuff; that sort of pressure scares the living daylights out of me.

The 50 Catalyst

It's time to not only grow up, but also to try new things. After all, turning 50 makes a person re-evaluate pre-50 attitudes. Take this as a formal apology to my three teammates who knew nothing

of this when they signed me on to the team. What makes this grander, and possibly more of a comedy/horror flick in the making, is that I'm trying to be a part of a team for a brand-spanking-new event called **Refo24**, held at the Brown County Reforestation camp in Suamico, Wisconsin.

On June 14th, solo riders and teams will line up for a 6, 12, or 24-hour adventure. Some will race it to win while others will use it as an extended time to play bikes in the woods. Another set of cyclists will show up for a combination of the two — and this is why I'm going.

With the highly successful Wausau 24 race, which sells out each



year, I wanted to find out why race organizers **George and Sarah Kapit**, owners of **Broken Spoke Cycles** in Green Bay, decided to start another 24-hour race. "As endurance riding becomes more popular, the demand for longer races is there," Sarah said. "With trails that are rideable for anyone from beginners to experienced bikers, and a campground for people to stay in, the **Reforestation Camp** makes it easy to host this race."

This beautiful spot is just north of Green Bay and the Fox River Valley area and offers 19 miles of mountain bike trails that are quite different from those you find at Nine Mile for the Wausau 24. Where W24 is full of rocks and roots, Refo24 will open the door for less-technical riders so that they too can experience a 24-hour event. It is, however, sandier, and many riders say true skill comes from being able to wind through trees at top speed — without hitting one.

Setting the 24-Hour Scene

Reforestation Camp consists of almost 1,600 acres and holds a little something for everyone, from biking and hiking trails (which are transformed into Nordic ski trails come winter) to a zoo just up the road. With the recent addition of campsites, those attending the event, including spectators, will now have everything they need for a perfect weekend. Sarah said that food will be available from **888 Cheese and Co.** as well as **Coffee Wizards** for those early morning laps. "Just bring a positive attitude," she said, "because, although endurance events are hard, most of the challenge is often mental versus physical. A positive attitude can make the dark times just a little easier."

Who should sign up for this inaugural event? "Everyone!" Sarah said. "It's a great race for first-time mountain bikers, people looking to do team building events, people looking to test their limits, or those looking to get extra riding in." As someone who has done several twenty-four-hour endurance events, I'd also add that it's a great way to learn about yourself, even if you're used to doing



There will be outstanding singletrack at the Inaugural Refo24, as shown here during a Reforestation Camp group ride.

three-hour rides and sign up for the twelve-hour race.

There are no penalties for taking a break; take half the time to socialize if you'd like. For those looking to dig deep within a twelve or twenty-four-hour time frame, you might go through several waves of emotions that you didn't know you had. You may also learn you are much stronger than you had ever realized. For me, I will quickly learn if I like being on a team and if I can control my personal dark thoughts when I get tired or frustrated with myself.

Events like this provide several positive things for several communities. For the cycling community, rarely do riders hang out together for 24 hours, which can give a much stronger family feel. For spectators, they'll get to see what riders look like on sleep deprivation as well as winding through the trees in darkness. There's something special about witnessing headlights dancing in the woods; it often reminds me of fireflies. For the outlying community, this will bring funds to improve the park, awareness of the trail system, and money into local hotels, restaurants, and convenience stores prior to and after the event.

Get Prepped!

For those who have never done an endurance event like this, here are a few tips that might help with training and what to pack:

- Train with the food you think you'll be bringing and remember to eat and drink small amounts frequently. Staying hydrated and nourished is one of the most important aspects of feeling good when doing an endurance event.
- Test your gear! The shorts and shoes you wear for a two-hour



Woods riding at Reforestation Camp.

PHOTO BY GEORGE KAPITZ.

ride might feel horrible for twelve-plus hours. Bring extra shorts, gloves, socks, and even shoes so you can switch them out and have dry, non-sweat-laden clothes against your skin.

- See if Chamois cream is right for you because riding with chaffing or saddle-sores is never fun.
- You can never have too many charged lights for an overnight event. *It will be mandatory to have at least a charged headlight and taillight on your bike if riding at all in the dark.* I tend to bring three sets of each so I can have one set always on the charger between laps.
- If you haven't done a night singletrack ride, go out and try it before the event. I find it quite fun, but it does take some getting used to.
- Finally, remember to not get too hard on yourself. You're out there to have fun whether racing or just riding; everyone else there is as well. If you find yourself going down a dark hole, take a break; eat, drink, and try to reset.

Does all of this sound like it's up your alley? Or are you ready to ride down a new alley of challenge, fun, and camaraderie? Find out more and sign up here: brokenspokebikes.com/events/refo24-pg221.htm.

And by the way — I hope to hear your voice cheering on **Team Spice Girls!** ☘



There are youth-friendly, accessible trails for everyone in Reforestation Camp.

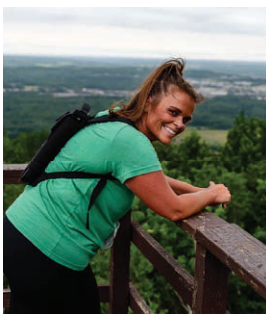
IRONBULL

A 501(c)(3) charitable organization that creates outdoor adventures for all ages and abilities by producing silent sport races and challenges. IRONBULL fosters healthy lifestyles while showcasing natural resources.

Follow **IRONBULL** on Facebook or visit IRONBULL.org for additional free events!



RIB MOUNTAIN ADVENTURE CHALLENGE | May 24, 2025



SOLSTICE SUMMIT | June 14, 2025
plus free kids run



UNDERDOWN TRAIL RUN & BIKE | August 16, 2025



RED GRANITE GRINDER | October 11, 2025
plus free kids ride



GRAVENTURES | Summer 2025
FREE!



RIB MOUNTAIN TRAIL RACES | September 13, 2025
plus free kids run

December 6, 2025
RMAC-WINTER

Sponsored in part by the City of Wausau Room Tax





Duluth,
Minnesota



A sea of anticipation: The 2024 NSIM startline, a colorful gathering of skaters representing all ages and abilities.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE NSIM.

No Matter How You Roll — Or Run — The 2025 Northshore Inline Marathon and Skate Festival is Your September Place to Be

Bruce Manske

Editor's Note: Bruce Manske is an avid silent sports enthusiast. He divides his outdoor time into three primary activities: cross-country skiing, mountain biking, and trail running. Manske joined the NorthShore Inline Marathon staff for the 2024 event as the Chief of Competition. He was thrilled to witness the excitement of athletes who participated in skating, rollerskiing, and running. As a result, Manske has remained on the NSIM staff to further promote outdoor fun and exercise in Duluth, Minnesota.



Got Quad Skates? Quad-skaters are a subcategory of skaters, and skaters who just wanna have fun find it at the NSIM.

For almost three decades, the **NorthShore Inline Marathon (NSIM)** in Duluth, Minnesota, has been a destination for skating enthusiasts, drawing beginners and professional participants from across the world to the picturesque rolling hills on the North Shore of Lake Superior. As the event prepares to celebrate its 29th anniversary on September 12 and 13, 2025, excitement and anticipation are growing for what is being slated as the most spectacular NSIM schedule of events to date. Athletes and spectators from all walks of life will once again converge in Duluth to not only participate in this world-class event, but also to learn more about the outdoor health and fitness opportunities in the area.

The NSIM Festival offers participants to



The lead pack of elite skaters; competitors, yes, yet working together to keep the pace steady.

go head-to-head with friends, teammates, and elite athletes from around the world in a variety of competitions: inline skaters, quad skaters, rollerskiers, and runners come together in one big festive event. As a first-time participant or as a seasoned pro, the NSIM schedule offers a rewarding outdoor experience, with breathtaking views of Lake Superior along a fun-filled course that winds along the scenic North Shore Drive from Two Harbors to Duluth — the same route used by Grandma's Marathon.

Pre-Race Adventures

Although the races begin on Saturday, September 13th, the festivities begin on Friday afternoon with the **Skate and Health Expo** at the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center. Throughout the day, the Expo will feature demonstrations and clinics, and will host over 75 vendors promoting health, wellness, and outdoor fun; plus, a **Kids Sprint Race** along the shores of Lake Superior will showcase the talent of youngsters ready to roll.

The NSIM, a family-friendly event dating back to 1996, originally attracted inline skaters from around the world but has

since expanded to welcome runners and skiers to join in the fun and excitement.

Historic NSIM & Inclusive Expansion

Starting plans in 1995, thanks to the vision of Olympic cross-country skier **George Hovland**, the NSIM has become one of the oldest inline skate marathons in the world. Past competitors include Olympians **Viktor Thorup** and **Sofia Prosvirnova**, National Hockey League players, professional speed skaters, World Cup skiers, and the founders of Rollerblade, Inc., **Scott and Brennan Olson**, plus, many other avid skaters.

The Rollerski Marathon and Half Marathon were added to the NSIM schedule in 2011, and running races joined the schedule in 2012 and 2013. According to professional Nordic skier and Team Birkie athlete **Zak Ketterson**, who was the 2024 Rollerski Marathon Champion, "The Northshore Inline Marathon is a one-of-a-kind experience. There aren't many rollerski events in the United States, and I tip my hat to Duluth for hosting such a high-quality race. On top of being a really



The NSIM includes family-focused events, such as rolling along North Shore Drive.

competitive event, the course along the Lake Superior shoreline was beautiful. I will definitely be back."

The running event within the NSIM schedule continues to be popular for many reasons, other than following the famous Grandma's Marathon route. "Running is soul searching," **Ruth Boedigheimer** said. "It's time for yourself and it's such a sense of accomplishment." The course is unique for several reasons: the sparkle of Lake Superior on a crisp fall morning, the stunning historic mansions on London Road, and the experience of running through the Interstate 35 Tunnel before finishing near the Aerial Lift Bridge and Canal Park. There are actually two Interstate 35 Tunnels, hence the 10K Tunnel Run. The first tunnel is called the Leif Erickson Tunnel; shortly thereafter, the course goes through a second tunnel, the Brewery Historic District Tunnel. Participants have often mentioned how cool it is to be on the Interstate, closed just for the NSIM, and that the tunnels add even more uniqueness.

The mission of the NSIM is to professionally produce inline skating, rollerskiing, quad skating, and running events and competitions that are inviting and attractive to our local community, as well as regional, national, and international competitors, while promoting health and



Welcome rollerskiers! Rollerskiing has increased in popularity during the NSIM weekend, including team participation from the College of St. Scholastica and Team Birkie.

fitness through the organization, promotion, development, and execution of our events. Thus, as the NSIM has grown in popularity, the staff and board of directors strive to add additional opportunities and activities. **The 2025 NSIM Inline Marathon Events Include:**

Inline skating:

- Full Marathon; Half Marathon; 10K
- Combined: Athletes do a Half Marathon followed by a Full Marathon for a total of 39.3 miles.

Running:

- Aspirus/St. Luke's Half Marathon
- Finden Marketing Tunnel 10K

Rollerskiing/Quad Skating:

- Full Marathon – Volkswagen of Duluth Roller Ski Marathon
- Half Marathon
- Full Marathon and Half Marathon combined, 39.3 miles
- 10K

Special Events: Kids Sprints, Costume Contest, Team Awards, and the Last Skater Standing Award.

While many races have elected to use loop courses, the NSIM remains a point-to-point event. Other worldwide inline skating events include Argentina, China, Spain, and Berlin. Still, the NSIM is the

largest point-to-point inline skate marathon in the world.

Rob Brown, a member of the Hill Country Inline Club in Central Texas, who has competed in several Combined Events (Half Marathon + Full Marathon) said, "I love point-to-point races. I am not a natural at making friends or hanging with groups, but leading a group of skaters is one of the greatest thrills in my life. Plus, the rolling hills and urban environment of the Minnesota North Shore is awesome."

More Than the Race

The NSIM provides a chance to skate, ski, or run in a setting that is simply beautiful, refreshing, and exhilarating, as well as challenging. Plus, the event is surrounded by a supportive and enthusiastic Duluth community, with the glistening shores of Gitchie Gumee as the backdrop. Inline skating continues to gain momentum and popularity and 2025 promises to be another great year for skaters of all skill levels.

Also, the NSIM will begin its second year as a premier event in the **Rollerblade Inline Skating Series (RISS)** alongside events in St. Paul, Minnesota, the Apostle Islands, Wisconsin, and Grand Forks, North Dakota. The 2025 RISS is a celebration of outdoor fun and camaraderie in the spirit of inline skating. Each race is designed to bring together communities, encourage healthy lifestyles, and provide a platform for personal achievement.

The NSIM promotes health and fitness by organizing and promoting events and activities that start with recreational inline skaters, and sustains the excitement with elite and pro athletes. The NSIM's mission is to foster national and international amateur in-line skating competition while educating people about running and skiing.

Even if you are not interested in participating, make plans to visit the Skate and Health Expo, and then come out and cheer on one of over 3,500 athletes either skating, running, or skiing along Scenic Highway 61, on London Road, or at the finish line on the day of the races. It's mind-blowing to watch skaters and skiers hitting speeds of more than 35 miles per hour!

At the end of the day, the NSIM hosts an entertaining and welcoming awards

ceremony; and then, participants, spectators, volunteers, and the race committee will be found reliving the day's events during the post-race afterparty, **Oktoberfest**, at Bayfront Park.

For more information and registration schedule, you can check out NSIM information by calling 218-723-1503, emailing info@northshoreinline.com, or checking out the NSIM website, northshoreinline.com. Whether inline skating, rollerskiing, roller skating, running, or spectating, and even in costume, on September 12th and 13th, the NSIM is the place to be. 🏆



With XC-Skiing's Dryland Training Season Underway (*Right?*) ... Reviving the Kick-Double Pole

David Chamberlain

Editor's Note: David Chamberlain grew up in the western Maine mountains where he learned to ski and enjoy outdoor adventure at a young age. David began to work in the ski industry after a long Nordic ski racing career that took him to races around the world. He now works in Minneapolis where he is the Nordic Manager at Gear West in Long Lake. David lives with his wife, BethAnn, and two boys in Bloomington.

When I was at a training camp many years back, US Ski Team coach **Pete Vordenberg** ("Vordie") commented to me that if I wanted to perfect my kick-double pole skills, I had to "do it on the flats, uphill, downhill, and in my sleep; even climb trees with that damn technique."

I laughed and then got to work incorporating my kick-double pole into more of my training. During the same conversation with Pete, we also addressed the idea that the kick-double pole technique is often overlooked. The kick-double pole may not be used as much as other techniques on a racecourse, but it is still an important technique to master. I am writing this article to help classic skiers understand when and how to use it.

Upon Review ...

I wrote in *Silent Sports Magazine's* January 2025 issue that the double pole is one of the building blocks of all ski techniques. (*The Secret Weapons of Classic Double Poling, Psst: They work for skate-skiers, too!*) That is especially true of the kick-double pole. On the face of it, the kick-double pole is nothing but a single leg kick at the start of the double pole phase, giving light to the name my high school coach used for it — *Double pole with a kick*. But for those who have tried to explain the technique to another or tried to break down the steps, it is understood to be more complicated than the name implies.

To begin the discussion, however, all details of double pole technique apply to the kick-double pole — and in the following order:

1. Relaxed arm swing,
2. Strong core crunch, and,
3. Hip flexor engagement.

Once the double pole is mastered, the challenge for the kick double pole is the timing and body position of the kick. We will focus on that here.

When, Where & How

The kick-double pole can be considered to be **second gear** in the classic arsenal. Often used as an intermediate step between double pole and striding, it is *most often used on gradual uphill*s. For gradual run-ins to steep uphill, the kick-double pole can extend the momentum of the double pole before transitioning to striding. It can also be used at the top of hills when the terrain starts to gradually flatten. Athletes who use the technique effectively are those who can keep the momentum going as they transition techniques and can turn over their kick quickly. I am thinking of athletes such as **Therese Johaug** here; she uses the kick-double pole often in races and it clearly works well for her.

One of the most important uses of the kick-double pole is in ski marathon races. Races such as the Vasaloppet USA or the American Birkebeiner give plenty of chances to use this technique to good effect. After all, it's no secret that the arms get tired toward the end of a long-distance race, no matter how well-trained the skier is. If the kick-double pole is used at strategic opportunities from the start of a marathon race, this gradual wearing down of the upper body can be prolonged by sharing some of the upper body load with the legs. When done efficiently, the kick-double pole technique can start to feel restful in a way.

Now: Let's talk about — and show — how to do it!

Picture 1: Starting with the first of the four pictures, the start (and end) of a good kick-double pole is with the arms extended behind the body at the end phase of the previous double pole. Notice the engagement of the hip flexors in the picture. This is an especially important engagement in kick-double pole as it keeps tension in the hips and legs allowing for a very quick transition to the kick phase.

Picture 2: The first of two important steps in the kick-double pole is the "pre-loading" of the kicking leg. In this picture, I am

straightening slightly in my upper body and legs, and my kicking foot has slipped forward a few inches in front of my other boot. What is happening in my body, which is not so obvious in the picture, is that my entire body weight has shifted onto my kicking leg: the left leg. This preloads the leg and allows the kick to happen quickly and efficiently.

Picture 3: In this picture, I have kicked with my left leg and my arms have moved into full extension. The second important step in the kick-double pole happens when the back foot comes clear off the snow, allowing the front leg to straighten slightly and the hips and upper body to come into a very forward position. From here, the poles can be planted far in front of the boots, allowing use of the full weight of the upper body to crash down on the poles. The double pole happens here.

Picture 4: The double pole has happened and the end of the double pole phase comes with engagement of the hip flexors again. This sets the body up to move into the preload phase with the next leg.

Hints to Help

Two important steps that I mentioned, (1) the preload of the kicking leg, and (2) the back foot together with the upper body movement, are the movements that need to be practiced again and again for this technique to feel smooth and efficient. These two steps, if not done quickly, can give the technique a feeling of trying to kick through wet cement.

One observation that I hear about the kick-double pole is that it “doesn’t feel as fast” as double poling. This observation usually is a result of not being quick and efficient with the preload, and the movements that follow just feel plain slow. With practice (and to Coach Vordie’s point about practicing this technique everywhere), these movements come together into a fluid motion and the kick-double pole starts to feel highly effective.

To end where we started, begin practicing the kick-double pole in places that you might not do otherwise. It’s not a bad exercise to force the technique in places such as uphill and downhill just to give the body a chance to feel and work out the awkward spots in the movements. There are many opportunities in training to work on this technique.

My hope is that this article might spark some interest in the kick-double pole for those who do not use it much, if at all, and to start working on it, and often, while rollerskiing. It’s a technique that can help extend momentum in transitions and also take the load off the upper body in long races. For me, it also just plain feels nice to do on the days when the skis and body are firing — and that has become the single reason why I like it so much. ☺



At the start of the kick-double pole cycle, David has completed his double pole after kicking on the left side and is setting up for the next phase. Notice the hip flexor recruitment as he has finished following through with his arms and core.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF DAVID CHAMBERLAIN AND GEAR WEST.



Setting up for the kick is one of the most crucial steps of the kick-double pole. Here, David is preloading his left leg by standing up and scooting the foot forward slightly.



With full extension of his arms, David has kicked and is gliding on his left leg. The arms are in a natural swing and relaxed.



David has completed the push with his arms and core engagement. Notice again the hip flexor engagement as he starts to think about setting up for the next kick.



How To:

GET YOUR RIVER SURFING UNDERWAY!

Hannah RayJ catching some air on her ollie while riding a high-water standing wave on the Cedar River. Neoprene-covered, helmet on, PFD secured, leash attached to PFD, and in the company of others. Safety first!

PHOTO BY MARTY COLBERT.

Hannah RayJ

The sport of river surfing focuses on riding a **standing wave** in the river on a board. Standing Wave? That's a hydraulic jump formed when water flows downhill over an object such as a ledge, rock, or engineered structure. As the water flows over the object, it gains speed. If the geometry is correct, when the flowing water hits a slower pool behind the object, the water "jumps" up into the shape of a wave.

And surfing a standing wave is a way-cool silent sport! But how do you get started?

Wave of Your Future

In ocean surfing, surfers ride the energy of the wave moving from point A to B, making turns along the way. Rides in the ocean last seconds before the wave dwindles and ocean surfers must wait for another set to come in.

With river surfing, surfers ride the current of the river moving underneath them and make turns back and forth across the wave. The wave remains relatively constant, changing dramatically only when the river flow is rising or falling. *Rides on a river wave last for as long as your legs will hold you up or less if there is a line of people waiting for their ride.*

River waves can naturally occur or be intentionally created by engineered structures typically found in whitewater parks.

The shape of each wave is unique, ranging from green to foamy. Smooth green waves are preferred by river surfers as the glassy face of the wave offers more opportunity for carving across the face of the wave. Foamy waves are possible to ride but may not offer the support needed underneath the board for stable surfing and carves.

Safety Absolutely First

Rivers are dynamic, changing environments with hazards of which users should be aware. Some of these hazards include:

- **Strainers/Sieves/Undercuts:** Think of a colander. The water passes through the holes and you are the spaghetti noodle. The most common among these are trees/branches in the water or hanging low just above the water. Rocks can also form sieves, where water can pass through but large objects, such as people, cannot. Undercuts are underwater obstructions that can trap a person and hold them underwater. All of these hazards pose a drowning risk. Spotting and avoiding these hazards mitigate the risk of entrapment.
- **Water Levels:** A river's water level can pose increased dangers. High, flooded rivers can have strong currents and in-river debris. On the flip side, low water can expose rocks and constrict river flows. Study river gauges, release schedules, and current as well as past weather patterns to familiarize yourself with water levels.
- **Cold:** Shock and hypothermia are real hazards in the river

when the water is cold. According to the **National Center for Cold Water Safety, 70°F and below** is considered cold water, and thermal protection is recommended. Cold water shock can cause drowning within seconds as your body reacts with a gasp reflex upon immersion. Hypothermia can cloud judgment and impair limbs used for swimming, causing drowning. Check out the National Center for Cold Water Safety to learn more about cold water via coldwatersafety.org.

- **Hydraulics:** Terminal holes, boils, whirlpools, and strong currents can be created as water flows over natural and man-made objects. Some of the most dangerous known manmade objects are **low head dams**. These river-wide obstructions look innocuous from upstream, but at the base of the dam is a terminal vortex of churning water. Research your wave location and study river features to mitigate dangers associated with hydraulics.

Also key: *Do not go it alone!* Being in the company of others not only increases the fun, but also enables immediate help or rescue the moment any trouble should arise. Check out **American Whitewater** for additional safety-related information via americanwhitewater.org/content/Wiki/safety:start.

River Surfing Equipment

Now to the fun stuff — *the gear!*

- **Board:** River surfboards are generally thicker than boards used in the ocean as more volume is needed for surfing river waves. River surfboards are made from various materials. The most common are EPS, soft top, and inflatable. There are trade-offs for each board material. Boards are equipped with 3 to 5 fin boxes to customize your fin setup. The board's construction, size, and shape you choose to ride are based on your wave location, skill, and personal preferences. In general, a flatter, slower green wave or a foamy hole-ish wave will require a board with more volume and length (around 6' but this can vary depending on your wave). On a faster, steeper wave, short boards (approximately 5' and under) with less volume can be ridden on the more powerful green waves. To see a full range of river surfboards check out badfishsup.com.
- **Leash:** You've likely seen surfers in the ocean wearing a leash running from their board to one of their ankles. This is appropriate for the ocean, but it is *not* acceptable in the river. **Never wear a leash attached to your ankle in moving current!** In the river, the current is relentless. If you wear a leash attached to your ankle and get snagged on a rock/tree/bridge pier/etc. in the river, the current pulls you underwater and you will not be able to release the leash. This danger is mitigated by **wearing a quick-release leash attached to your Personal Floatation Device (PFD)/waist** that you can reach with either arm. Check out: badfishsup.com/collections/leash/products/6-straight-release. You can also opt for wearing no leash at all. So, why would you want to wear a leash? In most instances, you want to swim to the eddy as quickly as possible after falling off the wave. A leash allows you to tow your board as you quickly swim to the eddy, rather than chasing your loose board down the river. Check your local wave and determine for yourself whether a quick-release leash is appropriate for your spot. Also keep in mind that some whitewater park waves do not allow leashes at all.



Ready for takeoff on DD Wave.

PHOTO BY MARTY COLBERT.

- **PFD:** A Type III Coast Guard-approved PFD is highly recommended for whitewater currents. The added buoyancy helps keep you afloat in rapids when swimming and pads your core should you fall onto shallow waves/rocks in the river. There are a number of low-profile PFDs on the market. Try some on and find your best fit. Check out **Astral** and **NRS** for low-profile PFDs via, respectively: astraldesigns.com and nrs.com.
- **Helmet:** A whitewater helmet is strongly recommended for surfing river waves. These helmets are designed to take multiple hits and remain on your head securely in whitewater conditions. Rivers have rocks and rocks hurt. *Put a lid on that melon!* **NRS** (see URL above) and **Shred Ready by Salamander Helmets** (salamanderpaddlegear.com) work well for river surfing.
- **Warmth and Protection:** Wetsuits are a surfer's main way to stay warm in frigid water. Wetsuits work by trapping a thin layer of water between the neoprene suit and your skin. Your body warms this thin layer of water and, along with the neoprene, keeps you warmer longer in cold water. Suits vary in thickness from 2 to 6 mm. *Check the manufacturer's water temperature ratings to find the suit you need for your wave.* Here in the Midwest 5/6 mm for winter; 3/4 mm for spring and fall, and 2/3 mm or just a rash guard in summer. Other extras for warmth and protection include: neoprene boots to protect your feet from sharp river rocks, neoprene gloves/mittens, neoprene hood or skull cap, and ear plugs. Check out NRS and Xcel (xcelwetsuits.com) for wetsuits and extras.

Ready, Set ...

You've got your gear, found your local wave, and assessed all hazards. Now what?

Time to surf!

But how do I catch the wave?

Depending on your wave, there are a few techniques to slowing your downstream momentum in order to catch your first ride.

- **Wave with Eddy Access:** Paddle in a prone position (lying on your stomach on the board and using your arms to propel yourself forward) from the eddy toward the wave. Point your board upstream as you get close to the wave. You are looking to cross the eddyline parallel to the wave so that you slide right out of the eddy and onto the wave. If you are too far upstream when crossing the eddyline, your momentum compounded with the river current will be too much to overcome to catch the wave. If you are too far downstream when crossing the eddyline, the river current carries you downstream quickly and you'll miss the wave completely. **Board angle** is important too. Keep the board angled upstream. Too much angle and you will be swept downstream or flipped. Too little angle and you will get stuck on the eddyline and miss the wave.

- **Wave with Access from a Rock or Engineered Wall:** Some waves can be accessed by bomb-dropping or by prone-launching from a rock or concrete wall next to the wave. To bomb-drop, hold your board between yourself and the wave. Gently drop the board flat onto the wave and simultaneously, but carefully, jump onto your board from your platform. Land on your board on your feet and be ready to zoom across the wave. To prone-launch from a platform, hold your board between you and the wave. Bend your knees and push off the platform while bringing the board under your chest. You will land on the board in a prone position, ready to get up and surf.

- **Catch on the Fly:** These are waves that have no access from an eddy or a platform. These waves typically require a foamy section to catch. Start upstream of the wave and paddle prone on your board out into the river. Position yourself so that the current will take you to the foamy spot of the wave. Before you descend the initial drop down to the wave, point your board upstream and begin to paddle upstream. By now, the current



Not going it alone, all ages enjoying some boogie style surf fun at Prairie Rapids in Cedar Falls, IA. PHOTO BY TY GRAHAM.

is strong and you are moving downriver even though you are paddling upstream. This slows your momentum just enough so when you hit the foam, you'll be able to catch the wave.

Each technique takes practice. Keep going and you'll get it.

Get Outstanding

So, you've caught the wave, but how do you stand up? In the ocean, rides last seconds and you must have a quick and proficient pop-up to get a good ride. In the river, the waves are constant and consistent so you can take your time standing up.

Get comfortable staying on the wave on your stomach first. Then, work getting to your knees, then one knee up/one knee down, and then — stand. Once on your feet, bend your knees and keep your weight centered over your feet. And, of course, *practice, practice, practice!*

Don't fear the fall; that's part of surfing. Everyone falls. When you do fall, it's best to land flat or like a starfish, limbs extended. Waves can be shallow so falling flat helps reduce the risk of landing hard on an extended limb or getting a limb stuck on an underwater obstruction. After the fall, swim to the eddy and give it another go.

Surfing For Friends

One of the best ways to find fellow surfing peeps is to head to your local river break and introduce yourself. The river surf community is welcoming and happy to help newcomers catch their first ride. Sharing the river stoke is real! You can also reach out to **Surf Iowa**. These folks surf not only Iowa, but also elsewhere throughout the Midwest and beyond. They can get you hooked up with a fellow river surfer in your area. Check out: [facebook.com/surfiowa](https://www.facebook.com/surfiowa) and Instagram [@surf_iowa](https://www.instagram.com/surf_iowa).

Midwest River Surfing? Yes!

Charles City Whitewater: This whitewater park is located on the Cedar River in north-central Iowa and features two river surf waves: DD Wave and Tew/Full Shanez Wave. These green waves offer surfing for beginners to advanced surfers. Look for water levels from 1000-5000cfs for the best river surf opportunities. Boards of all types work at Charles City, but EPS boards provide the best experience for green wave slashing. Check out: americanwhitewater.org/content/River/view/river-detail/10267/



Mentor Hannah RayJ guiding a mentee to the surf wave with proper angle and position. Joining a river surfing group allows for more fun while increasing skills and safety.

PHOTO BY MARTY COLBERT.

[main](#) and [facebook.com/ccwhitewater](#).

Manchester Whitewater Park: Located in northeast Iowa on the Maquoketa River, this whitewater park offers beginner surfers a taste of wave riding. The features are foamy wave-ish holes. Summers can be busy with tubing traffic during hot weather afternoons, but morning rides are a great way to start the day. Look for water levels from 200-800cfs. High-volume inflatable boards work at most surf levels. EPS boards can be used at high flows (600-800cfs). Check out: [americanwhitewater.org/content/River/view/river-detail/10410/main](#) and [facebook.com/manchesterwhitewaterparkiowa](#).

Prairie Rapids: This river park offers an introduction into whitewater currents with three main features designed for beginners. These foamy wave-ish holes are

located in Cedar Falls, Iowa, on the Cedar River. All of the features function at different water levels ranging from 2000-4000cfs. Boogie boards and high-volume inflatable boards work best at Prairie Rapids. Find out more at: [facebook.com/prairierapids](#).

Wild, natural waves may exist too! Go explore your river and find your favorite river wave. Check out American Whitewater for whitewater rivers in your region via [American Whitewater.org](#).

River surfing is an incredibly fun sport. Riding the power of the river moving under you is magical. It's the closest thing to the feeling of flying without ever having to leave the ground. It does take some time and practice, but the journey to standing up on your first river wave is well worth the effort. 🐾

Black Squirrel Scurry Triathlon



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Merrill, WI

[www.blacksquirrelscurry.com](#)

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BRIDGE THE VALLEY - BIKE RALLY



Part of Rotary's
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Stillwater, MN

Northfield Rotary Bike Tour
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- Scenic routes through St. Croix River Valley (in MN&WI)
- 4 exciting paved routes: 10, 25, 45, & 70 miles
- Live music, drinks, and food in Stillwater after ride
- Register at: [bikereg.com/bridgethevalley.org](#)
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Silent Sporters Beware ... Of the Bucket List

Is that a smile or grimace showing on long-time contributor Mike Ivey as he climbs the Col de la Colombière on the first day of the Raid Alps tour in France in September 2024. Warning: Hills shown in Tour de France brochures are steeper than they appear!

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MIKE IVEY.

Mike Ivey

It was a gorgeous early September morning in the French Alps, with bright sunshine and light winds, the aroma of espresso drifting out of a sidewalk café. If life had gone according to plan, I'd have been riding up the Alpe d'Huez, the legendary climb of the Tour de France, with its 21 switchback turns and a mountain top finish. Instead, I was flat on my back in a parking lot at the base of the Alpe, down with a likely norovirus that hit several in our tour group of mainly aged 60-plus riders. Even one of our guides fell ill and spent a day sleeping in the back of the sag van.

This was to have been the proverbial "Trip of a Lifetime," a chance to finally test my legs and lungs against the high mountains featured in the Tour. But if you've enjoyed watching these epic battles, I've got news for you: The climbs are way harder than they look on TV.

Here's another tip: Beware the Aging Baby Boomer Bucket List because, by definition, you're not a kid anymore, even if you play like one.

Looking Good — On Paper

I'd long intended to book one of these catered bike tours that have swelled in popularity over the past decade. Companies such as Trek Travel, Backroads, and DuVine Cycling are among the many operators that have realized active travelers with healthy retirement accounts are a key segment of the global tourism game.

Preferring to go local, I started emailing with **Xavier Lopez**, an ex-racer who runs Echappe Cycling Tours out of Biarritz, France. I was set to register for a six-day supported ride through the Pyrenees, from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, when the COVID pandemic put those plans on hold. Fast-forward to 2023 and I get a note from Xavier that the Pyrenees tour, including a climb of the legendary Col du Tourmalet, was back on. The only caveat was getting eight riders.

I started talking up the trip, mentioning the great price (\$2,000, including a carbon bike rental) and saying to my Madison-area cycling buddies that if they wanted to ride the roads of the Tour de France: "You aren't getting any younger."

Turns out it wasn't that hard to recruit enough guys from our

regular Tuesday morning retiree “Slacker Rides” to fill the **Raid Pyrenees Tour**. Deposits were made, airline tickets secured, and the Duolingo language app was getting heavy use. I was hitting it hard on the bike, too, pounding out the miles and doing as much climbing as possible so I’d be ready. Then, disaster struck.

Ready, Set ... Ka-blooey!

While visiting friends in Milwaukee, I got up early on a Saturday morning, hoping to catch on with the fast group from **Ride MKE** that was meeting at the Fox Point Wheel & Sprocket. Unfortunately, I missed a turn onto the Oak Leaf Trail and my front wheel got caught in a deep rut.

The tip-over didn’t break the skin but it happened so fast that I didn’t have time to unclip from the pedals and fell on my side, breaking my ankle. When the orthopedist told me I would need surgery, all I thought was, *Well, there go the Pyrenees.*

While I eventually secured a travel refund from Air France (the X-rays of my broken bones helped), it was tough to follow all the Facebook posts and Strava logs from my pals who were having a fine time sans me. But there’s always next year, right? However, I had begun to realize that the older you get, the fewer next years there are.

Trip of a Lifetime Versus Life Itself

Based on the great reviews, I signed up for Echappe’s “Raid Alps” 2024 trip from Geneva to Nice. With the broken ankle healed, I started training again for the high mountains and preparing for a second try at France.

Then life threw me another curveball. This time it was a call that my 91-year-old dad had taken a fall at his home in La Crosse and was in the hospital with a broken arm. Bike riding went to the back burner for the rest of the summer as my dad’s condition deteriorated before he passed away just two weeks before I was to leave for France.

With a heavy heart, I packed for the trip realizing it would be a challenge given my lack of fitness and the stress from repeated drives between Madison and the nursing home in La Crosse. The first day of the Raid Alps was billed as an easy day to loosen up the legs, but there was nothing easy about climbing the Col de la Colombiere (15K at 7.2 percent) as part of the opening 80K route. A couple of riders did sag it in with flu-like symptoms, which should have been a warning of things to come.

The third day of the tour was billed as the toughest, with the Col de la Madeline (25K at 6 percent) followed by the Col du Glandon (19.5K at 7.3 percent), and it was maybe the most physically taxing day of my life. The 32-tooth rear cog on my rental Orbea wasn’t nearly enough and I had to dismount a couple of times on the grueling Glandon to regroup.

Worn down from that effort, the norovirus found me an easy target. I woke up the next morning with a fever and a bad stomach. No way I could get back on the bike.

The following day brought heavy rains so I didn’t mind missing a second day of riding as I watched my soggy mates from the warmth of the sag wagon. And I did recover enough to make the final push to the Cote d’Azur on the last day so the tour wasn’t a bust by any measure.

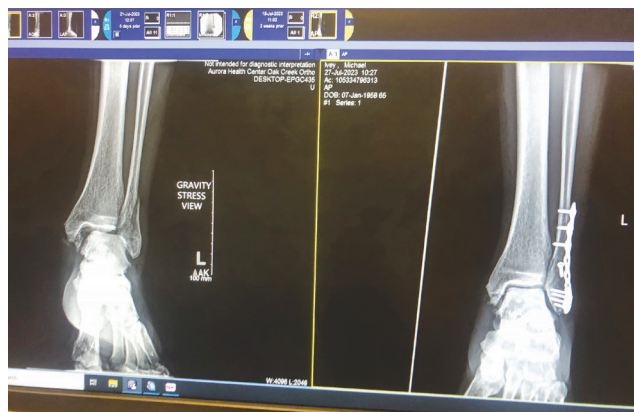
Relaxing on the pebble beach in Nice a day later, looking out on the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean, I counted my blessings and understood: *We should all be so fortunate.* ☺



The view from the top of the Col de la Madeline with snow-capped Mount Blanc in the background. The fans mooded their approval.



Day Four of the Raid Alps found Ivey down with a suspected norovirus that hit several members of the group.



It took an X-ray for Ivey to secure a refund from Air France after his first attempt at the “Trip of a Lifetime” was delayed a year by a broken ankle.

A sunrise at the peak of Buggy, a man in his element. PHOTO BY TIEKA KNIGHT.

Sunrise as a Silent Sport? Absolutely! Year of the Sunrise with Buggy Sailor

Frida Waara

Have you ever made a promise to yourself, only to keep it for a week or less?

Heading into New Year's Eve in January 2019, Marquette, Michigan's, **Justin Sailor**, also known as "Bugsy," made a resolution that changed his life. "Every New Year's Day, for five or six years," he said, "I would get up, do a little Great Lakes Road Trip, and watch the first sunrise of the new year." Bugsy loved that tradition but realized, "Why wasn't I doing this more? And I wasn't touching my camera; I wasn't getting outside very much."

Growing up, he always had cameras around his house, particularly his mom's 35-millimeter. Bugsy liked photographing waterfalls and old mining ghost towns near his home in Baraga, a village 70 miles north of Marquette overlooking L'Anse Bay on Lake Superior. He's not a professional photographer like his grandpa was, but his passion for capturing images and stories is strong.

So, the idea stuck and **The Year of the Sunrise** was launched.

It's never easy to roll out of bed before dawn, every day, especially in the cold when you may have to add another layer



A selfie of a photo setup for a foggy sunrise. Sometimes not having a clear image of the sun can make for the most alluring of sunrise photos.

and take time to shovel out, or at least brush off, your car. When he started, he wasn't a morning person. He figured it took about six months before he adjusted to the routine. But now, sunrise comes before anything else.

"It's pretty simple," Bugsy said. "I don't

check emails. I don't drink coffee. Don't brush my teeth. I'm up and out the door with my camera and tripod in five to 10 minutes."

Arriving With the Rising Sun

No matter the weather — raging snowstorm, sideways rain, or sweltering summer — Bugsy's there. Fortunately, Marquette faces east and this sunrise city offers easy access to Lake Superior, which ranks as the real magnet to his mornings. "I've always joked that my soul is just buried somewhere out there in the middle of the lake," he said. It's no surprise that 95% of his pictures frame Lake Superior, but he reminds folks who live away from Big Blue, "The sun will rise no matter where you are."

We like to think of every sunrise as spectacular but some only rate peek-a-boo views between cloud banks. Still, Bugsy finds the fun and the beauty. "Some of those cloudy mornings are the most gorgeous."

When his sunrise resolution made it through a full year, he credited having a daily checkbox as the key to keeping his self-promise. Then, on December 31, 2019, he realized 2020 was a leap year and thought, "I can actually watch more sunrises in 2020 than I did in 2019."

People were catching on to his website



Bugsy's Sunrise Gallery. Come by the Upper Peninsula Supply Company in Marquette, MI, and have a look.

PHOTO BY FRIDA WAARA.



A man on a mission!

PHOTO COURTESY OF ELM CREATIVE.

photos and coming into his store, **Upper Peninsula Supply Company** on West Washington Street in downtown Marquette. They were purchasing cards for anniversaries, birthdays, and other special occasions from his 20 x 6-foot Sunrise Gallery, a wall divided into 12 rows with 31 columns displaying 365 cards organized by date for every sunrise of the year. Customers were also signing up, pledging to see more sunrises. Bugsy and his resolution were making a difference. "Instantly, in my heart, I felt this push to keep going," he said, "but also dread of like, *Oh no, I have to do it again!*"

And he's not stopped, well ... except for one morning.

Resolution's End?

On September 15, 2023, Bugsy's phone didn't charge overnight and the alarm failed. He woke up at 8:03 a.m. in a sunlit room for the first time in years. He was a full 36 minutes past sunrise.

"I'm a little mad at myself, a lot embarrassed, and I'm definitely sad," he posted on his Year Of The Sunrise blog. "This isn't how I wanted this streak to end."

The community rallied. The outpouring on social media not only forgave him, but also gave him permission to make a mistake and come back. After all, chasing dawn across all seasons for going on seven years has become more than a photographer's journey; it's also a testament to resilience and mindfulness.

Admitting his missed sunrise also adds to the integrity of his dedication. To many,

looking at a horizon, whether sunrise or sunset, may seem the same. Bugsy can't cheat. He knows the difference. "Nature leaves clues," he said. "Sea smoke and morning dew are unique to sunrise when the lake is evaporating."

For Bugsy, it's not just what you see, but what you feel. And that's where his energy comes from. "One of my favorites about sunrise versus sunset is the experience in terms of society. The world is a quieter place at sunrise. You have the beach to yourself. There aren't many people asking for your time, calling you, or texting about a meeting, especially in the summer at 6 a.m. When you're doing sunset, you're wrapping up and you're calling it a day and it's time to kind of go to rest. I think if you get up and out the door to watch the sunrise, it makes the day attainable. Like you at least started it on the right foot and can give yourself that potential to live that day to the fullest."

Over the years, Bugsy has collected thousands of images and now records video as well as weather and location data for his YouTube channel, *Behind the Sunrise* and his website yearofthesunrise.com. Keeping up with the project not only consumes up to three hours every morning, but enormous amounts of data as well. As a trained web developer, he's navigating storage systems to keep archiving his content but, he admits, "The opportunity cost is high. Athletes have an off-season, but I don't have a window greater than 24 hours."

Take the 906

As the **Official Unofficial Ambassador of the Upper Peninsula**, Bugsy said that The Year of the Sunrise was not his first idea to gain traction with and for Yoopers. One of the founders of the **Fresh Coast Film Festival**, he's full of ways to celebrate where and how we live.

On September 6, 2011, he had an epiphany: The date 9/06 looked like the UP's area code, geographically the largest of Michigan's 12 area codes. He rushed off to send a message out through his store and **906 Day** was born.

How do you celebrate 906 Day? From 9:06 a.m. to 9:06 p.m., Bugsy suggested some ideas: "Buy a friend a pasty, take a sauna and a dip in the lake, or play a game of euchre. And, if you are traveling back to the U.P. over the Mackinac Bridge, pay the fare for the car behind you."

That's just the kind of guy he is.

This forever-young and spirited Scotsman, his twinkling eyes the color of Lake Superior, admitted that he has many missions. He wants to ensure that the words "Pasty" and "Sauna" never go mispronounced and that the Upper Peninsula is included on every single State of Michigan map.

As to taking sunrise photos, Bugsy said, "It's never been about the photos. It's been about the wind on my face, the sand between my toes, and *feeling* the sunrise while being present in nature." With a grin, he added, "No photograph of a sunrise is better than the *experience* of a sunrise." ☼

The Travels, Heart & Life of Tom Haas

Tom Haas was many things, including a master student of physics and geometry, especially when it came to momentum and glide in sports. He knew the secrets to speed and control whether in a boat, on a bike, or gliding on skis and skates.

Born in West Norwalk, Connecticut, in 1948, Tom's childhood prepared him for a lifetime outdoors. A confident pioneer, he always seemed to be ahead of his time. He made his first trip to Isle Royale National Park in 1967 while a college student working as an intern for the Student Conservation Association. He recalled, "They gave me a wooden box camera and tripod to take photos."

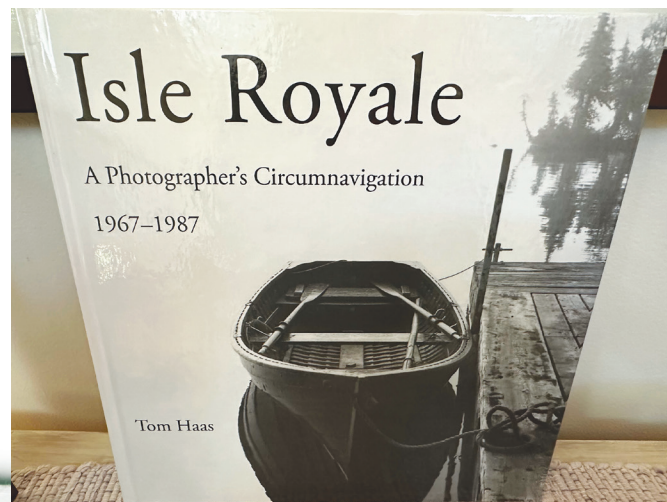
His park ranger boss wanted pictures of the iconic moose and wolves, so hauling the gear, a combined weight of 20 pounds, he traveled by foot and canoe over the rugged terrain and shoreline. Tom quickly learned that the old-school equipment, exposing one frame at a time, was not meant for candid shots of wildlife, but the clarity and detail were ideal for capturing the fishing camps and characters, along with the dramatic landscapes and lighthouses of the remote archipelago.

Lake Superior was a long way from Connecticut, but Tom was smitten. The next year, he returned to take more pictures. He bought his own large format camera for \$40 and a seaworthy folding Klepper kayak. Years before anyone else was kayaking Isle Royale, Tom was touring the shoreline. He even paddled the entire length in one day, as he said, "Just to see if I could do it." He continued exploring the islands, taking photos, bonding with the old-timers, and helping them with odd jobs.

Over 20 years, Tom took an estimated 3,000 black and white photos, chronicling the island's history like no other photographer.



At Isle Royale: Before selfies, Tom had the shutter bulb under his foot to snap the shot.



"I was at the right place at the right time," Tom said. Last year, with help from his wife, Jeannie Thoren, they edited 275 of his favorite images into the publication *Isle Royale, a Photographer's Circumnavigation 1967-1987*.

Once Tom came to Lake Superior Country, he couldn't leave. During winters, he worked at Lutsen Resort, selling lift tickets, waiting tables, and, most importantly, learning to ski. In 1975, he became the first cross-country ski instructor at Duluth's Spirit Mountain before managing the Continental Ski Shop. In 1977, his finish time at the American Birkebeiner in Cable, Wisconsin, qualified him to race the granddaddy of races: the Norwegian



Tom Haas at home in Duluth with his 8 pound wooden box camera. Imagine hauling that thing around all over Isle Royale! PHOTO BY FRIDA WAARA.

Birkebeiner in Lillehammer. He also served as Fischer Cross-Country's national sales and product manager.

At the 1978 Las Vegas ski show, he met Jeannie, and they shared a love for Isle Royale and skiing. When they married in 1992, Tom switched his focus to alpine skiing and helping Jeannie spread her "Thoren Theory," revolutionizing boot fit and binding position for women. He worked from a trailer full of demo skis and boots, his knuckles raw and sometimes bloody from pulling boot liners and adjusting heel pieces. For 15 years, Tom and Jeannie toured the country, from Lake Placid, New York, to Mount Bachelor, Oregon, hosting seminars to show thousands of women how improvements to their equipment would change the way they skied.

Their tireless mission not only had an impact on the ski industry, but also made a lifelong difference to the women they helped, and earned Jeannie induction into the US Ski & Snowboard Hall of Fame.

In 2009, they opened the Jeannie Thoren Women's Ski Center, the first women's-specific ski shop in Vail, Colorado. They sold the business to Outdoor Divas in 2015 and have been living full-time in Duluth.

Over Christmas, in 2014, Tom was diagnosed with Pulmonary Fibrosis. The doctors figured he had two to three years, but Jeannie knew better, "I'm going for 10." She was right. Tom passed peacefully holding Jeannie's hand on December 23, 2024. A man to know — and never forget. 💰

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Celebrating the Legacy of Silent Sports – Editor Bruce Steinberg Retires

After five years as the managing editor of Silent Sports magazine, Bruce Steinberg is hanging it up, to join wife Peggy in retirement. In the world of Midwest silent sports, few names resonate as strongly as that of Bruce Steinberg. As the respected editor of Silent Sports magazine, Bruce's passion and dedication to the realm of non-motorized outdoor activities have left an indelible mark on the community he so energetically serves.

Under his leadership, the magazine has thrived, becoming an essential source for enthusiasts of cross-country skiing, cycling, paddling, and running. Both print and online readership have grown substantially during his tenure. His talent for helping writers craft compelling stories and providing a platform for both seasoned athletes and newcomers is a testament to his commitment to the silent sports community.

Being an inquisitive person, Bruce often recruited compelling stories that introduced readers to non-traditional silent sports such as the Paralympics, speed skating, climbing, among others.

Natural Landscape

Bruce is an ardent advocate for the silent sports lifestyle, emphasizing the importance of preserving natural landscapes and promoting sustainable recreation. He guided the magazine to reflect a deep appreciation for the environment, encouraging writers and readers to explore the outdoors with a sense of respect and stewardship. Through his work, Bruce has inspired countless individuals to embark on their own silent sports adventures, fostering a community that values both athleticism and environmental



Photo of Bruce, Peggy and Allen on the south rim of the Grand Canyon in 2024, taken by Peggy Steinberg.

consciousness. He encouraged stories that address relevant political issues that impacted the silent sports world.

A Mentor and Friend

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Bruce is recognized for his warmth, generosity, and support for others. He has served as a mentor to numerous contributors, always willing to share his knowledge and offer assistance. His colleagues and writers hold him in high regard for his approachable demeanor and genuine interest in their success. Bruce's legacy will persist within the pages of the magazine.

Bruce's influence on the silent sports community has been substantial. His

dedication to promoting non-motorized outdoor activities and his commitment to preserving natural resources have established a lasting standard. The writers and contributors of SS acknowledge Bruce's stewardship of the magazine and its influence on the silent sports community.

Be on the look-out. With Bruce's retirement, he will be popping up more frequently at silent sports events, ready to share a laugh and a story. Give this guy a well-deserved pat on the back.

Bruce, wife Peggy and son Allen reside in the Chicago area. Bruce and Peggy plan to travel more; visiting many of the locations that are featured in Silent Sport Magazine. Imagine that! ☺



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