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February 2016 Newsletter



NEWSLETTER



Sandpoint Nordic Club

Volume 2 Issue 5: Feb 1, 2016

[Picture of the Month](#)



Thanks to Lee France!

Submit your picture for the next edition by emailing it to
SandpointNordic@gmail.com

Ski While You Can! [Valley venues have turned the corner to spring.](#)

Here's what's happening:

LOCAL SKIING CONTINUES! The valley may be thinking spring but Schweitzer Nordic is still going strong. So is the Roundabout.

Club Meeting [Tuesday 2/9, 5:30pm.](#) McDuff's Brewhouse on Cedar.

Panhandle Nordic Club Loppet [Sunday, 2/14.](#) Fourth of July Pass. See Susan's article.

Langlauf 10K Classic Ski Race [Sunday 2/21.](#) Mt Spokane. See Jared's

article.



Langlauf

Langlauf is perhaps the largest cross-country ski race/ event in the Inland Northwest. I call it a ski race/ event, because that's exactly what it is. Those who want to compete head to head with some of the fastest ski racers in the area can do so, or if skiing a beautifully groomed, exciting, and scenic 10km course with your friends and kids is more your speed, you can join a couple of hundred people doing exactly that. On February 21st Langlauf will celebrate its 36th year. Last year's dismal snow pack didn't stop organizers from holding the event. Depending on weather conditions, Langlauf can have as many as 400 participants. Numerous local sponsors in the ski community donate ~ \$6,000 in door prizes which are distributed by random drawings by bib number for all race participants and volunteers. A hot soup lunch awaits skiers as soon as they complete the course.

Langlauf is strictly a classic ski event. Skating is not allowed. Fitness Fanatics offers free kick wax application near the start area. The start is a wave start with seeding based on previous results for the "elite" wave and self-seeding for the "fast", "sport" and "fun" waves. The course is a 10 k single loop with ~ 640' of total elevation gain and consists of fun, rolling terrain with a couple of relatively short, steep climbs. The down-hills are smooth and fun with good out runs. It's a relative certainty that you will spend the entire time in the presence of other skiers. The top five in each age class receive medals or ribbons and all

participants receive a commemorative Langlauf pin. Most age groups are broken into five year increments. A separate woodies and woolies division exists for those brave skiers who complete the course sporting traditional wool outfits (including knickers) and old-style wooden skis. Sandpoint's own Rick Price took first place in this division last year.

Grab your kick wax and klister and join fellow SNC members in attending this year's event. For more information and registration check out the Langlauf website: <http://www.spokanelanglauf.org/>

Trail fees are not required to ski at the Mt. Spokane Nordic center, but a snow park permit is:

<https://fortress.wa.gov/parks/ecommm/prod/Store/SNO/SnoChoice.aspx> – *Jared France*

Wednesday Ski Group

Skiing with the Wednesday Ski Group is, to quote Forest Gump, “like a box of chocolates”. The weather isn't necessarily consistent from one week to the next. We have skied at 38 degrees in the rain and skied other days in fresh new snow at 15 degrees. Some days you're breaking trail on classic skis and other days you're skating in the sun. We always have a great time regardless of the weather. In addition, you never know who your ski buddies will be on any given day. We have had as few as 5 skiers and as many as 18. Some of these skiers prefer to classic ski while others prefer to skate. Some group members may do either depending on conditions. There is no pressure. Ski as fast or as slow as you like and feel free to turn around when you've had enough. The goal is to meet new ski friends and enjoy some conversation along the way. Reach into that box of chocolates and join us. We meet at the clock tower at 9:10. We're easy to spot, we're the folks with long poles and skinny skis.

– *Bill Tregoning*

Learn To Ski Day

The Sandpoint Nordic Club Learn to Ski Day, January ninth, was our best one yet. The addition of a third session meant that we had over 170 new skiers get a feel for this sport. Thanks to all our volunteers and the hard work of Brandon Peterson, the Events Coordinator at Schweitzer, and the Schweitzer Rental Shop

Crew for a great day. The Round-a-bout area is a perfect place for beginner skiers. See you next year! – *Rick Price*



Miss Ski Manners Says

Nordic skiers who are also snowboarders or alpine skiers should gently remind their friends who are tempted to ski under the rope above Cloud Walker that it is not only off limits (It is the only area on the mountain that is closed and roped off), but it trashes the trail for those of us who have paid for the privilege to ski there. It can also be a safety issue as I have watched as a skater dropped a ski tip into a hole left by a snowboard boot.

Have fun while respecting others on the trails. And send your ski etiquette questions to SandpointNordic@gmail.com – *MS Manners*

OK, call me MR Rude but today, February 1st, the Schweitzer Nordic trails were overrun with downhillers. I met two on Lower GRR and one at the Cloudwalker overlook. Plus there were tracks onto Cloudwalker all along the entire length. At least a dozen and probably many more had been there. On the way home I stopped by the Ski Patrol office and had a good talk with Arlene Cook, Ski Patrol Director. Her suggestion is that, when we encounter a downhiller, we should try to get the person's name. If they are displaying a pass this might be easy. If you engage them in conversation, they will probably assert they have the right to be there in which case they may give you their name. If you can safely, take a picture of them with your cell phone. If you get this information to Arlene, she will block their pass so they have to come talk with her. Arlene can be reached at 255-3076 or acook@schweitzer.com Thank you,

Celebrating the Fourth of July in February!

Say you're feeling the urge to branch out. You've skied around and around the UI extension trails until you're dizzy. You've been to Schweitzer often enough that you've developed a routine that's a little *too* familiar. And perhaps you've managed to fit in a day or two at Western Pleasure.

Where else to go?

Let me suggest the trails at Fourth of July Pass, just east of Coeur d'Alene. I used to ski there years ago when living in Coeur d'Alene, but when I revisited the area last week, I was impressed at how the trail system had grown and how many people were using it.

The area is at the top of Fourth of July Pass, off Interstate 90, exit 28, on the south side of the freeway. The distance on I-90 from exit 12, US 95, to exit 28 is about 16 miles. There's a large, plowed parking area with a pit toilet where the trail system starts. Before you set out from Coeur d'Alene, however, be sure to pick up at least a temporary Park-n-Ski Permit. Permits are \$7.50 for a three-day pass, or \$25 for the season and can be purchased at Vertical Earth, 1323 E. Sherman Ave., or at Fleet Feet, 511 Sherman Ave., in Coeur d'Alene.

The trails are maintained and groomed by the Panhandle Nordic Club <panhandlenordicclub.com>, a volunteer non-profit organization (like ours!) that takes care of these ski trails and sponsors events like the Free Ski Day, club outings and – new this year – a Loppet, a non-competitive fun ski with food and beverages along the course. The Loppet is scheduled for Feb. 14.

And the trails? Pretty sweet!

The club grooms every Friday, so I would suggest hitting the trails early Saturday when they are freshly groomed. (Grooming reports are posted on the club's website every Friday under the heading "Latest News.") The trails generally follow old forest roads that undulate through a thick forest – and at least one old clearcut – of big Douglas firs, hemlocks, ponderosa pines and the many other tree species that call North Idaho home. There are printable [trail maps](#) on the club's website.

The U.S. Forest Service has designated the forest on the southside of the

pass as non-motorized, so all the snowmobiles are on the north side of the pass. That means, once you wind far enough away from the freeway on the Elderberry trail, you're in a peaceful winter wonderland that's truly away from it all.

There's about 25 miles of trails, of which 8-10 miles are groomed for track and skate skiing. They also have designated trails for snowshoes, places for dogs (dogs are not allowed on the groomed trails), two warming huts and a picnic shelter. The backcountry touring options are endless, too. Fun fact: the Coeur d'Alene National Forest is the most roaded forest in the nation! You could ski forever, as long as you don't mind breaking trail.

This may be the year to check out the trails at Fourth of July. Last year's snow drought meant virtually no skiing there – as the pass is only at 3100 feet elevation. So one of these Saturdays, grab a friend and your skis, and branch out to the south! – *Susan Drumheller*

Lubrecht Forest

Lubrecht Forest is located approximately 30 miles northeast of Missoula Montana on Highway 200 near Clearwater Junction. The 28,000 acre forest is managed by the Montana Forest and Conservation Experiment Station whose mission is to provide a research forest for University of Montana students.

In the early 1980's, the newly formed Missoula Nordic Club started grooming trails at Lubrecht. There are currently 12.6 miles of groomed ski trails through rolling forested hills and sage brush covered meadows. At an elevation of 4100 feet, the trails are generally well covered throughout the season. The terrain is varied with small elevation gains and the trails appeal to skiers of all levels. The club still grooms trails, and you can check out current conditions and download a trail map at their website www.missoulanordic.org. Lubrecht has always been dog friendly, and “donations are appreciated, but not necessary”.

Lubrecht was originally owned by the Northern Pacific Railroad as part of a large government land grant. In the 1890's the Anaconda Company purchased some railroad holdings as a timber source for

their Butte mining operation. In 1937 the land

was donated to the Montana Forest and

Conservation Experiment Station. In 1983 a skier

named Ned Brandenberger won the Ozone International Ski Race held on the ski trails. Lubrecht Forest was named after the general manager of the Anaconda Company lumber operations in Bonner. If you have energy left after hitting the trails, there is an old ghost town adjacent to Lubrecht. Garnet Ghost Town is located on BLM land that is only accessible by skis or snowmobile in the winter. In 1897, after the discovery of a rich gold vein, the town was home to nearly 1000 people. There is a visitor's center and gift shop in Garnet (not sure if it's open in the winter). If you still haven't had enough, take the short drive up to Seeley Lake and ski the 18 km Seeley Lake Nordic Trails. I'll cover that in a future article. – *Foreign Correspondent*

The Birkie

Imagine a cross-country ski race starting outside of Clark Fork and winding through the mountains, ending with a few kilometers across our frozen lake. The finish line is on First Street in downtown Sandpoint, which is closed off and snow covered. Now imagine doing it with 7,000 other skiers. That's the best way I can describe the Birkie.

The Birkie's official name is the American Birkebeiner. It is North America's largest cross-country ski race that takes place in northern Wisconsin every last full weekend in February. The course starts outside of the tiny town of Cable, which is a lot like Clark Fork. Classic and skate skiers take off in alternating waves five minutes apart. They stay together for the first seven kilometers before the classic course splits off and winds separately for the next 30 or so kilometers where the two courses rejoin. It winds through the glacially carved north woods, and while there are no mountains in Wisconsin, the course is

mercilessly and continuously hilly, and although the first half is hillier than the second, it remains so almost until the end. The last five kilometers take skiers across a frozen lake, usually with a headwind, before popping up over a wooden bridge constructed just for this race over a highway, and finishing with a snow-covered four-block sprint up Main Street in Hayward, Wisconsin, a town about the size of Sandpoint. Here the bars, restaurants and businesses overflow with people and they spill onto the sidewalks and line the fences, ringing cowbells and urging racers to the finish line. The classic race totals 55 kilometers while the skate course comes in at 51 kilometers.

The race is named after the Norwegian Birkebeiner, one of the world's oldest cross-country races, first run in 1939. Both races commemorate a thirteenth century episode of soldiers clad in birch bark leggings who, on skis, carried the infant prince and future king of Norway away from danger thus preserving the monarchy. The race in Norway is classic only and participants are all required to carry a 3.5 kilogram backpack to commemorate the spiriting of the prince. While American racers don't have the extra load to carry, many are lucky to see the birch leggers and Princess Inga re-enactors that are out on the course every year in full Norwegian warrior regalia.

Both the American and the Norwegian Birkies are a part of the Worldloppet, a series of ski marathons that are held all over the globe. This series attract a certain band of citizen racer from snowy climates around the world, who over the years are slowly ticking the races off their bucket list.

What makes the Birkie unique is the way the town has embraced it. Since its start in 1973, the race has grown into a phenomenon. It is often called the Boston Marathon of cross-country skiing. Schools close for Birkie week, allowing a massive volunteer effort, while I suspect other locals clear out and rent out their houses allowing the various international teams, and ski manufacturing reps a place to stay together. There are festivities for the days before the Birkie, including High School races. Most high schools in northern Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan have cross-country ski teams. There are also sprint races downtown for the elite racers, kids' races, ski-jouring races with dogs, and a giant ski competition where teams of six

citizens try to work together as they all strap in to one pair of skis and race other teams up Main Street. There are other races on Birkie Saturday as well. The Korteloppet attracts 1,000 skiers, mostly those that are not quite ready for the Birkie. The “Kortie” is a 26-kilometer race that starts with the Birkie before looping around back to Cable. There is also the Prince Haakon, a 13-kilometer race. There are over 10,000 skiers descending on this small town when all these races are combined. Combine that with family, friends, locals, and fans, and it is quite a party as well. Remember that this race is in Wisconsin. Suffice it to say the beer is plentiful.

Did I mention it is often cold? While the unofficial birkieguide.com says the average temperature at race start is 16 degrees, four of the last seven years it has been below zero, including a windy -10 degrees at the start in 2011.

I'm heading to the Northwoods for my sixth Birkie, on February 17. Wish me luck! I'd be glad to talk to any member about doing it. The official Birkie Web site can be found at Birkie.com. – *Rick Price*



Need advice? Ask the Ski Curmudgeon!

Dear Ski Curmudgeon,

I love reading the Ski Curmudgeon, but I don't know how to pronounce it. Can you help? *Perplexed*

Dear *Perplexed*,

Cur·mudg·eon ([kər'məjən) SC

Dear Ski Curmudgeon,

How does one become a curmudgeon? *Jealous*

Dear *Jealous*,

This is a very complex question. Becoming a curmudgeon isn't as easy as you would think. There's a lot of responsibility that goes with it. First you have to be an independent thinker, a trend setter that focuses on the greater good. Then you have to be a little surly and grouchy without being cruel. A curmudgeon rejects authority, picks his/ her battles and generally keeps their emotions to themselves. Finally a curmudgeon has a serious disdain for fat bikes on ski trails and believes they should have their own trail system. SC

Dear Ski Curmudgeon,

How many skiers does it take to kick wax a pair of classic skis? While skiing at the Methow last week I discovered it can take more than 6. I came upon a group of skiers standing on the set tracks and in a half circle around the waxer watching the whole process, oblivious to approaching ski traffic. A skier ahead of me approached the group and stopped to gawk in the only portion of the trail available to pass. What gives? *Let Me Through*

Dear "*Let Me Through*",

Kick waxing is an oddity these days akin to watching a trail side snake charmer. The brain dead trail blockers just need a reminder that there are others on the trails. A simple "GET THE HELL OUT OF THE WAY" should make them scatter. SC

Send your question for the Ski Curmudgeon to sandpointnordic@gmail.com
The views expressed by the Ski Curmudgeon are his own and hardly ever reflect the views of the SNC.

Comments and suggestions for the newsletter may be sent to sandpointnordic@gmail.com

Previous editions of the newsletter are available on the Club [website](#).

And we are on Facebook at "Sandpoint Nordic Club".

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