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April 2025

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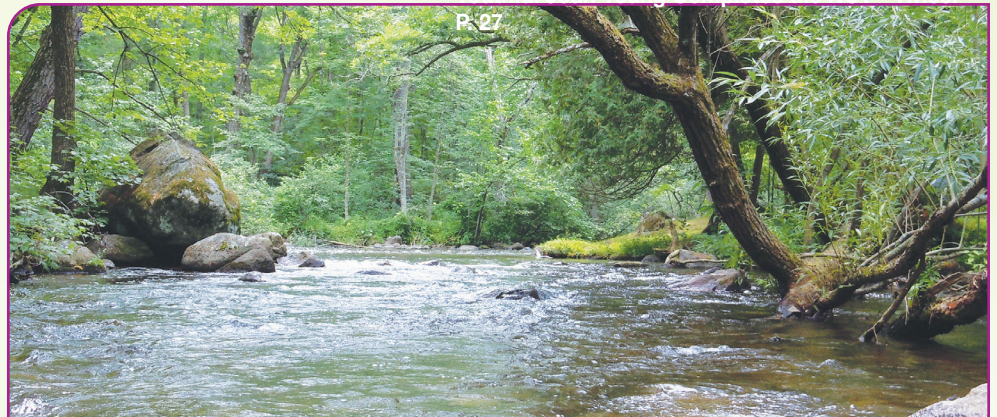
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Youthful Joan Young Completes the NCT - Twice!



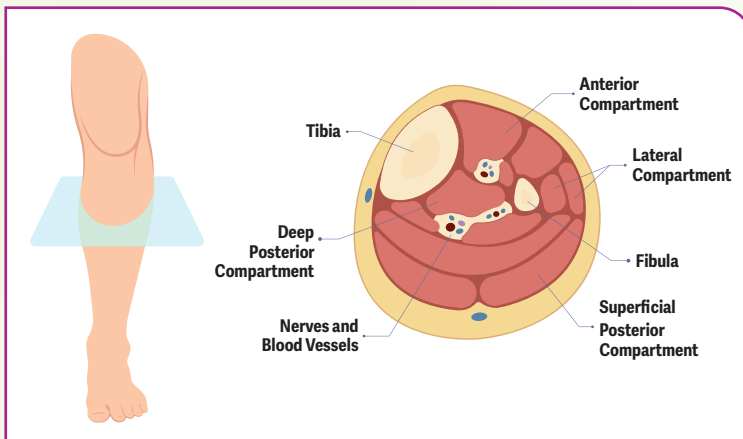
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ON THE COVER: Amanda McGrory winning the 2012 Grandma's Marathon Women's Wheelchair Race Division in 1:36:39. A seven-time champion and two-time course record holder of Grandma's Marathon, McGrory also took victories in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2013, and 2017. Never defeated on the Grandma's Marathon course, McGrory was inducted into the Marathon's Hall of Fame in 2017 and is the only past champion of Grandma's to win more than one Olympic or Paralympic medal in the marathon distance. Photo courtesy of Grandma's Marathon, with our thanks to Zach Schneider!

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The Front Page

Birkie 2025: I'll Tumble 4 Ya

Yes, it happened during Birkie 51's events. I'm not talking about the happenings of Mother Nature's 11th-hour-but-still-timely snowfall and consistently cold temperatures that allowed for a Lake Hayward crossing and Main Street finish. Nor am I talking about the happenings of Lake Hayward crossings that did not have Illinois hills: AKA – in-your-face, powerful headwinds. And you could choose your race finish happenings, whether a victory by a wide margin or a nail-biter/multi-elite-skier photo finish; they both happened during Birkie 51 week. Everyone in attendance at Birkie 51 knows about these happenings.

However, the happening I'm talking about is the last place you'd ever want to commit a Birkie race fall. Go down at the start? Fine. That's expected at mass starts. Fall over during the corkscrew downhill where snowmobilers await to cheer and rate your crash? Of course. There's a reason why the crowd gathers there. A butt-plant along the Birkie course can happen almost anywhere and for any reason; we all get that. But the last, most embarrassing, and utterly inexcusable place to fall is on the Main Street downhill of the Birkie International Bridge — exactly where I fell during Birkie 51's Open Track Korte Classic.

Probably like you, all race long, I couldn't wait for that lake crossing and going up, over, and down that fabulous bridge spanning Hwy 63, to then enjoy skiing the length of Main Street to the finish. With this final downhill, having no twists or turns, all a skier has to do is keep those skis straight and the glory is yours. But no; I had to add in the attempted flair of a kick-double-pole at the ridge where the downslope starts. My kick wax decided to show how good it still was by keeping my left ski there while my right ski continued down, throwing me into a complete skis-in-the-air roll.

While only my pride was bruised, still, this is the locale where people gather, including an ABSF-assigned photographer. With that fall, a cheer went up along with a bit of spontaneous laughter; the joy of a Main Street finish still happened, but with a bit more red showing across my face.

I'm into self-deprecation. Accordingly, I sought out the photo capturing my humiliation, intending to share it with you here. Somehow, there was no such image among the MarathonFoto collection. When I emailed a query about the International Bridge-assigned photographer, the response was:

I show that we only had photographers at the two positions that we show images for you. I apologize that we did not capture the moment that you are referring to.

Other than using "that" four times in two short sentences, MarathonFoto had no need to apologize. Rather, it's another reason to ski the Open Track event.



The eyes says it all:
This is gonna hurt!



Bob Boucher in 2023 after successfully skiing a clean Korte race until Main Street, committing the major faux pas of falling down the Birkie's International Bridge, with the crowd and ABSF photographer awaiting. Oh the tragedy!

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ABSF.

When I confessed my sin to Birkie-Week housemates Charlie Dee and Bob Boucher, Bob responded with, "Hold on a sec." After that sec, he showed me the photo you see here. He had purchased the photo and kept it on his phone; he also talked about another skier who had fallen there.

It seems, in the vast Birkie universe of falling-down self-deprecators, I am not alone.

These days, I'm thinking: *Forget the self-deprecation.* After all, the ABSF has the Wall of Champions and honors Birchleggers and Uberleggers with special pins, bibs, and gatherings. It's now past time to add to these esteemed groups yet another that I'm calling:

The International Birkie Bridge Bumlbers

I can already imagine the commemorative pins and race bibs with the image of Bob's acrobatic fall upon them, assuredly more spectacular-looking than any other. And be warned ...

We await your membership. ☺

Boucher

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 bruce.steinberg@mmclocal.com for any additions and corrections. Thank you!



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6/21	30k Hill Climb	Blue Mound WI
6/29	16k	Kaneville, IL
7/6	25-50k	Team Herscher, IL
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7/26	20-40k	Badfish Creek, WI
8/2	19k	Harvard, IL
8/10	20-40k	Kansasville, WI
8/17	16k	Kaneville, WI
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The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program: Political Crossroad in Wisconsin

Michael McFadzen

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, a landmark in Wisconsin's conservation legacy since 1989, has become the latest contestant in the state's political reality show. This initiative, which funds the acquisition of public lands for conservation and recreation and provides grants for local parks, trails, and public access facilities, is now facing increased opposition from certain legislators.

Despite its longstanding popularity and success in preserving over **723,000 acres of land**, the program's future is as clear as a mud puddle.

History of Success

Named after pro-conservation Wisconsin governors **Warren Knowles** and **Gaylord Nelson**, the Knowles-Nelson program was designed to protect natural spaces, improve water quality, conserve wildlife habitats, and enhance outdoor recreational opportunities. Since its inception, the program has invested \$569.8 million in land conservation, leveraging an additional \$143.3 million from federal funding, private donors, and other state sources.

The program's broad support stems from its ability to balance ecological conservation with public access. Funding projects such as trails, parks, and water access ensure that all Wisconsin residents, regardless of income, can enjoy the state's natural resources. A 2022 survey by Gathering Waters found that **90% of Wisconsin voters across political affiliations** support public funding for this purpose.

Mounting Challenges

In recent years, the Knowles-Nelson program has faced political hurdles. The Republican-controlled **Joint Finance Committee (JFC)** has used an anonymous

objection process to delay or block land acquisitions without public hearings. This has left numerous conservation projects in limbo, including high-profile initiatives such as the Cedar Gorge Clay Bluffs Nature Preserve in Ozaukee County and the Pelican River Forest near Rhinelander.

Governor Tony Evers, a staunch advocate for the Knowles-Nelson program, sued Republican leaders for overstepping their authority by using legislative vetoes to block conservation projects. In 2023, the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Evers administration's arguments, declaring the veto process unconstitutional. The decision allows the DNR to proceed with several previously stalled projects, providing a significant win for conservation efforts.

Critics of the program, primarily Republican lawmakers, argued that it removes private lands from tax rolls and increases state debt. Assembly Speaker **Robin Vos** claimed that Governor Evers' lawsuit has put the program in jeopardy. Senate Majority Leader **Devin LeMahieu** agreed, criticizing the Wisconsin Supreme Court's 6-to-1 ruling against the JFC's anonymous veto process. "We're certainly not going to give a blank check to the DNR," LeMahieu stated.

Conservation groups, including Gathering Waters, view the decision as a turning point. "This ruling reaffirms the importance of public input and collaboration in land conservation," said **Charles Carlin**, the group's Director of Strategic Initiatives.

Future of the Program/Declining Funding

While the Supreme Court ruling is a victory for conservation and the vast majority of Wisconsin voters across party lines, it does not resolve the program's funding

challenges.

At its peak in 2007, the Knowles-Nelson program had an annual budget of **\$84.3 million**. By 2022, this figure had plummeted to **\$14.4 million**, an 88% decline when adjusted for inflation, according to a report from the Wisconsin Policy Forum. This funding decrease reflects broader trends in Wisconsin, where state spending on parks and conservation has steadily declined despite the state's reputation as an outdoor recreation hub.

*Wisconsin ranks **dead last** in per-capita funding for state parks. A dubious distinction if there ever was one.*

The JFC's repeated use of anonymous objections contributed to this funding drop.

Many projects were delayed indefinitely or abandoned due to uncertainty, frustrating local communities and conservationists alike. For instance, the Cedar Gorge Clay Bluffs project faced years of delays before finally moving forward after the Supreme Court's ruling. It turns out that patience is not just a virtue—it's a necessity in land conservation.

Economic and Environmental Impacts

The Knowles-Nelson program's benefits extend beyond conservation. Studies show that protected lands boost local economies by attracting tourists, hunters, anglers, and other outdoor enthusiasts. This influx of visitors supports small businesses, creates jobs, and strengthens rural communities. According to the **Outdoor Industry Association**, in 2023, Wisconsin's outdoor recreation economy generated \$11.2 billion in added total outdoor recreation value, benefitted from \$7.8 billion in consumer spending, supported 96,867 direct Wisconsin jobs, and resulted in \$5.4 billion in wages and salaries. Also of



Little Muskie Lake in the Northern Highlands American Legion State Forest. The Knowles Nelson Stewardship Fund benefits extend beyond conservation. Protected lands boost local economies by attracting tourists and other outdoor enthusiasts. These visitors support small businesses, create jobs, and strengthen communities.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL MCFADZEN.

note, Wisconsin had a 63.4% citizen recreation participation rate. (Go to outdoorindustry.org/state/Wisconsin for the full report.)

Additionally, the program plays a critical role in mitigating climate change and preserving biodiversity. By protecting forests, wetlands, and prairies, it helps sequester carbon, reduce flooding, and maintain essential habitats for wildlife.

Political Resistance and Public Advocacy

Despite its widespread popularity, the Knowles-Nelson program remains a target for political criticism. Republican lawmakers have suggested that they may not reauthorize funding, citing concerns over accountability and fiscal responsibility. LeMahieu has characterized the Supreme Court ruling as the “death knell” for the program, raising doubts about its renewal in the 2025 legislative session.

Conservation advocates, however, are not backing down. Groups such as Gathering Waters are working to build **bi-partisan support** for the program’s renewal. “We would love to work with legislative leaders and finance committee members to craft the next version of the stewardship program that works for Wisconsin,” Carlin said. Gathering Waters sponsored a Knowles-Nelson Lobby Day in March

in which constituents connected with their legislators to voice support for the program.

The battle over the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program highlights a broader tension between conservation priorities and political interests in Wisconsin. While the program has been a cornerstone of the state’s environmental legacy, its future hinges on overcoming political resistance. The program has been vital for Wisconsin’s outdoor recreation scene since its inception.

For supporters, the stakes are high. Wisconsin’s natural landscapes and outdoor traditions are integral to the state’s identity and economy. As the 2025 legislative session approaches, conservation advocates are rallying to ensure that the Knowles-Nelson program continues to preserve these cherished spaces for future generations.

State lands and their infrastructure are vital for outdoor recreation. **You can voice support for the program** by contacting your legislator. Explain how it benefits healthy recreation and your community. Find your legislator here. maps.legis.wisconsin.gov/?form=MG0AV3.

Because, hey — who doesn’t want a state full of beautiful, accessible trails and parks? 🐿️

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July 26, 2025
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March 1

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Dani Serra

Mount Everest: The highest mountain in the world stands at an impressive 8,848 meters (29,032') above sea level — the mecca of mountaineering and a major challenge for adventure enthusiasts who thrive on pushing their limits.

But what if you achieve the same elevation gain as Everest's in a single sporting feat — *anywhere in the world*?

Evolution of Everesting

This very question sparked the creation of the Everesting concept. In 2014, Australian **Andy van Bergen** was inspired by the story of George Mallory, grandson of renowned British mountaineer George Herbert Leigh Mallory, who disappeared on Everest with his partner, Sandy Irvine, in 1924. To date, they leave behind an enduring mystery: *Were they the first to reach the world's highest summit?*

Seventy years later, young Mallory was training to conquer the world's highest peak. During one of his training rides, he cycled

up Mount Donna Buang (1,250m / 4,100'), located 80km east of Melbourne, an astonishing ten times.

Inspired by this remarkable achievement, van Bergen set out to promote the challenge around the world, an initiative that has since motivated over 30,000 athletes from 116 countries to push their limits and take on the feat themselves. From elite athletes, including cyclists Alberto Contador, Mark Cavendish, Emma Pooley, or Lachlan Morton, to anonymous individuals battling various conditions, all were driven by the determination to push their limits and prove their resilience.

1st Paralympic Athlete, Everesting 10K Hall of Fame

A recent example of Everesting's inspirational power is **Carlo Calcagni**, an Italian army colonel, who was able to climb 10,000 meters (32,800'). Calcagni's accomplishment is even more incredible given the clinical conditions he endures caused by massive heavy-metal contamination during the NATO international peacekeeping mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As someone who began his military career as a parachute officer, helicopter pilot, and flight instructor for the Italian Army, Calcagni unknowingly

The spectacular Tristaina Sundial Balcony in Ordino-Arcalis (Andorra) located at 2,700 meters (8,900') above sea level - the photoshoot location for the Everesting Challenge.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @EVERESTING.



inhaled toxic fine dust, leading to multi-organ pathologies that resulted in irreversible disability.

As a result, Calcagni's challenge came with additional risks as he suffers from neurological damage, with chronic, degenerative, and irreversible polyneuropathy (multiple peripheral nerve damage), sclerosis, and Parkinson's, which necessitated careful hydration and temperature regulation. To mitigate these risks, Calcagni took on the challenge virtually, allowing for greater control over his body temperature during such a demanding test. "I want to dedicate every pedal stroke, every breath, and every beat of my heart to the victims and fallen," he said, "without forgetting those who, like me, have become ill because of the service rendered."

Calcagni is a man of extraordinary feats and is one of the hundreds of life experiences that lie behind Everesting. He's a record-breaker known for pushing the limits of human endurance. "In difficult situations," Calcagni said, "we must bring out the best in ourselves, that extraordinary strength that everyone can find within themselves."

Dubbed as a "Serial Motivator," Calcagni inspires through action. His relentless determination, courage, and tenacity have made him a living testament to resilience. This determination is what led him to take on the Everesting 10K Challenge, aiming to achieve 10,000 meters of elevation gain, which took him 10 hours and 20 minutes over a total distance of 245 km.

Recognised as a **Victim of Duty** and included in the Roll of Honor, Calcagni's story is one of great perseverance. Medical experts in Italy and abroad have described his ability to continue fighting, mentally and physically, as nothing short of miraculous, a testament to his superhuman mental strength.

Overcoming seemingly impossible odds with assured power, Carlo Calcagni after one of his many challenges in which he demonstrates his resilience. PHOTO COURTESY OF CARLO CALCAGNI.

This is how this challenge was born: *Not as a race to be the fastest or the first to a finish line, but as a deeper personal test of resilience.* It is about proving to yourself that you can achieve the unimaginable, creating lasting memories that stay with you forever. More than just a physical feat, it becomes a journey of self-reflection, inspiration, and unwavering belief in your own strength, breaking through the limitations we often impose on ourselves.

This is Everesting: A community built around a challenge.

Now, a decade after its creation, Everesting takes another leap





Hiking during an Everesting training session.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @EVERESTING.

toward global expansion with events designed to connect people, break boundaries across borders, and inspire personal growth.

Cycling Challenges on the Horizon

The exciting Everesting lineup of events is set to take place in 2025. An Everesting event in Colombia has also been confirmed in March 2026.

This event is designed to push participants to their limits along a 60-km route, culminating at the top of the popular Alto de Palmas, located at an altitude of 2,520 meters (8,300'). Competing in teams of four, each cyclist must accumulate over 2,200 meters (7,200') of elevation gain, repeating the ascent three times. Together, their combined efforts will surpass the symbolic 8,848-meter elevation of Mount Everest.

True to Everesting's commitment to excellence, these events will also combine world-class organisation with breathtaking routes and the enduring challenge of achieving the impossible.

The fall calendar will be completed with high-caliber events in the Austrian Tyrol, on Sicily's Mount Etna and in Andalusia. *The organisers are working on taking the Everesting experience to the community in the United States very soon.*

Legacy of Feats

Since its inception, Everesting has been the Gold Standard for endurance challenges, inspiring over 30,000 athletes around the world to climb the equivalent elevation of Mount Everest in a single effort.

With the new official events, Everesting is transforming its iconic concept into unforgettable experiences that are inclusive, meticulously planned, and brimming with the spirit of adventure and self-improvement.

Preparing Body & Mind

The physical demands of accumulating 8,848 meters of elevation gain in a single activity are undeniable. Undoubtedly,

preparing for such a feat means intense preparation in which muscles and joints play a crucial role. But they will not be the only challenges. In an Everesting challenge, mental strength is the key to success. The mind is what keeps participants focused, preventing them from succumbing to the fatigue that occurs with each ascent. To help participants arrive at Everesting events in peak condition, experts in both physical and mental preparation have designed **specialised training programs**.

The physical training plan has been designed as a comprehensive preparation that combines cardio, strength, agility, and injury prevention. Sessions are structured to improve aerobic endurance, strength-endurance, agility, and proprioception, while focusing on recovery and adaptability to the specific conditions of a challenge of this magnitude.

The mental preparation plan equips participants with practical tools to strengthen their mindset, ensuring they remain strong, balanced, and ready to push beyond limits. The aim of this plan is goal-setting. Clear, individualised milestones act as guiding beacons throughout the challenge. Without them, each kilometer can seem endless, but with a clear point to reach, each step has a purpose and keeps you on the path to the summit.

Alongside physical and mental preparation, **nutrition** plays a crucial role in performance. Ensuring that the body has the right energy and the necessary nutrients is key to the Everesting endurance challenge. The correct intake of carbohydrates, fats, and proteins, combined with correct hydration, can determine success or failure.

Going forward, Everesting is around the corner and coming to an elevation near you. Meanwhile, you are invited to check out the entire Everesting calendar at everesting.com. When you do, prepare to be amazed and, most of all — *inspired!* 💡



Cyclists training for the upcoming Everesting Challenges: cycling events around the world.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @EVERESTING.

Anderson Bluffs and River Trails Foundation

Now and for Generations to Come



The ABR's Elite
Grooming Team! On
your marks, get set . . .
Perfect!

PHOTO BY RANDY AHNEN.

Will Andresen

Most readers have heard and been deeply inspired by **Eric Anderson** and **Angela Santini's** gift of ABR to a non-profit foundation. But few know what the **Anderson Bluffs and River Trails Foundation (or ABR Trails Foundation/Foundation)** has been doing or its plans for the future. On behalf of the Foundation board, I'd like to share our side of this story. Spoiler alert: *We are doing our best to change as little as possible.*

In 2025, the ABR Trails Foundation became the proud new owners of the entirety of ABR, its trails, land, buildings, and grooming equipment; and, most importantly, its brand. Created in 2019, the Foundation's nine-member board of directors is comprised of a strong and diverse group of skiers passionate about sustaining not just the infrastructure, but also the brand that Eric and Angela have lovingly created and gifted to all of us.

With a great gift comes great responsibility. The ABR Trails Foundation Board takes this responsibility very seriously.

Beginnings

In its earliest days, the board worked hard to just understand the complexity of the system that Eric and Angela created piece-by-piece for over 30 years; working to understand the trail network, land ownership, grooming, ski shop, cabins, and much more. Then we learned how to seamlessly transition a for-profit corporation into a non-profit foundation. And then we worked to create the organizational structure and employee model to ensure the Foundation's success.

Perhaps most importantly in those early days, we sought to understand the key ingredients of ABR's secret sauce and to agree that we will not mess with those critical components that we all love.

In response, the ABR Trails Foundation identified its core values to be: Relationships, service, participant experience, and excellence; and crafted its mission to be: "To sustain the ABR legacy as the Midwest's premier Nordic ski destination for generations



The ABR Trails Foundation on Location. Standing, left to right: Will Andresen, Greg Greene, Eric Anderson, Clay Diggins, Randy Ahnen, Missi King, and Kristi Reitz. Kneeling, left to right: Sue Schroeder and Emily Fitting.

PHOTO BY: ALYSSA SCHWAB.

to come and connect ABR Trails to the larger community."

The first part of this mission statement, sustaining the ABR legacy, has been our primary thrust. We remain committed to retaining what we all know and love about ABR for many, many years into the future. We hope that when skiers pull up to the ABR parking lot, walk into the chalet, and ski on its trails, that they will see and feel little to no difference.

Honoring Place & People

The Foundation Board believes that ABR's greatest assets are its scenic trails, excellent grooming, and friendly people. We are focusing our efforts on retaining the ABR look and feel. To the relief of many, *Eric will continue as our Chief Groomer*, leading our existing team of outstanding groomers with their extensive set of grooming equipment. There will be new, friendly faces in the ski



PHOTO BY RANDY AHNEN.



PHOTO BY KRISTI REITZ.

shop on most days, but don't be surprised if you see Angela volunteering behind the counter on a busy weekend.

We already know that there will be some system efficiencies put in place, but for the most part, we anticipate that the skier experience will remain unchanged.

That's not entirely true; we hope that the skiing experience will improve in some ways. For example, we are currently pursuing what we are calling a "golf course loop" to accommodate future low-snow events. Even in Big Snow Country, some low-snow periods can be expected. Especially for early-season skiing, ensuring that we can offer excellent skiing to high school and college teams as well as eager master-blasters will be crucial. As one cog in the great machinery of Midwest skiing, we believe it is our job to help ensure that all skiers will continue to enjoy skiing on natural snow.

Speaking of ski trail enjoyment, **Jessie Diggins** is thrilled to support the transition of ABR into a Foundation that preserves the trails where she learned to love the sport. On December 14, 2024, the Foundation hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially name a trail in her honor. Jessie has many wonderful memories that were made while skiing at ABR with friends and family. The **Jessie Diggins Honorary Trail is the Tamarack Two Track Trail** that winds through the scenic bluffs and forests of the ABR property. Also in recognition of Jessie's support, the Foundation has placed **Honor Your Trail** signs along the Tamarack Two-Track.

While it's too early to know or share in the Foundation's young life, we are also looking at other facility and programming enhancements. For example: new events and off-season offerings. One early project already starting to play out is our **Happy Trails initiative**, an effort to strengthen and promote awareness around the many physical and mental health benefits of cross-country skiing through the woods. Look for upcoming events and updates on our website.

Welcoming Ways

The second part of our mission statement, connecting ABR to the larger community, is just as important. Sustaining ABR for generations to come will be impossible without these crucial community connections.

The workings of the Foundation Board tell just a small part of this story. The real story and the real work come from our numerous, strong connections with committed employees and motivated volunteers, action committees and advisory groups, community partners and foundation donors, and, most importantly, our skiers.

Nestled deep in the forests of Big Snow Country, ABR Trails is a proud community partner with a number of popular neighboring ski trails, including Wolverine, Miners, the Iron Belle Trail, Montreal, Uller, and MECCA trail systems. We are working to establish physical trail connections between these systems wherever possible, with early movement already playing out in several cases in our **Project Connect** efforts. For example, in partnership with the **Gogebic Range Health Foundation**, we have extended trails to the Erwin Township Historical Society's nearby park and trail system. We have also acquired property



Connecting ABR to the Larger Community.

IMAGE CREDIT: EMILY FITTING.

between ABR and the City of Ironwood to extend year-round trail access along the popular **SISU Ski Fest** racecourse.

A variety of partners and volunteers are already on board helping us out. We have hosted several successful volunteer work-bees, from bridge building and trail maintenance to splitting and stacking firewood for our warming huts, cabins, and chalet. We have committed experts in their fields serving on our technical and advisory committees, including national ski industry leaders sitting on our aspirational advisory panel.

Donors have been very generous, sharing their gifts, especially in our recent **Founder's Circle Campaign**. Skiers have been positive and supportive of our efforts, telling us daily how important it is to know that ABR will be there for generations to come.

Bottom Line: The ABR Trails Foundation Board envisions and aspires to change little in what skiers will see, while the greatest change is what we hope skiers will feel. Our greatest hope is that skiers and community partners will feel great ownership in the ABR ski trails and their future. ☺



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The Menominee River provides the backdrop riders will enjoy along many scenic roads they'll travel.

PHOTO BY PAUL LATA.

Marinette,
Wi
Menominee,
Mi



This August, Become a Founder of the WiMi Wish Ride

Cycling in Upper Midwest Heaven for a Cause

Kierstin Kloeckner

Chat with most Midwestern cyclists of all of cycling's disciplines and very few have experienced riding through the corner of Wisconsin that borders the middle-southern section of the Upper Peninsula in Michigan. All of the areas surrounding this wedge are fairly well known: Munising and Marquette to the north; Rhinelander and Minocqua to the west; and Door County to the east.

Marinette and the Kingsford/Iron Mountain areas are often used as a place to resupply with gas and groceries for those moving on to the areas mentioned above, but many can't share the beauty this area offers because, while moving in a car at over 55 miles per hour, you don't get to know a region. You don't learn about the natural history or its physical beauty or get to know those who call this area home. Everything becomes a blur outside the windshield. However, given the chance to cycle this region

at 10 to 20 miles per hour, you'll connect to these extraordinary Upper Midwest surroundings and its people in a different way.

This is exactly what the first WiMi Wish Ride will do — all while raising funds to benefit Make-A-Wish Michigan and Make-A-Wish Wisconsin.

On August 9th and 10th, 200 lucky riders will get to ride 200 magnificent miles: Starting in Marinette on the Menominee River just across from the Michigan border town of Menominee, up to Kingsford (bordering Iron Mountain), and back to Marinette on the second day via a different route. And how exciting would it be to participate in an inaugural ride in a part of the Upper Midwest that has often been overlooked by so many?

Race Director **Glenn Costie** said, "This is a historic ride. As far as we know, this will be the first two-state ride for Make-A-Wish, covering both Wisconsin and Michigan. It will be the first ride supporting the Wisconsin Chapter. All riders and donors can feel good about supporting such an impactful organization as Make-A-Wish."

Experience History and Beauty

The area along the **Menominee River** will tell you tales as you ride low-traffic roads through picturesque surroundings. The **Algonquin First Nation tribe elders** may whisper sagas of wild rice harvests as well as creating pottery that could withstand extreme heat and stress; the **French Canadians** will have stories of fur trapping and trading with the Menominee tribe (a tribe that played an integral role in making Wisconsin a state); and the loggers, who came after the war of 1812, will share the lore of the rapid boom to the area because of the timber industry.

Cycling onward, **Kingsford/Iron Mountain** will show you the other side of history for the region. One rich in iron mining, ski jumping, and the timber industry. Once done with the first day, you will be able to tour a mine, eat pasties (the well-known mining handheld food), and participate in the annual Italian Fest with a game of bocce ball, as the area has a rich Italian heritage.

The Ride & So Much More

All on their own, the beautiful backcountry roads will make your two days of cycling feel incredibly worthwhile. However, although lovely, these experiences are not what this ride is truly about: *It is to support children living with a critical illness, as well as their families, by allowing them to experience a wish they have to give them a little light while being surrounded by darkness.*

Rick Downs, one of the organizers for the WiMi Wish Ride and a resident of Amberg, WI, has been participating in the Wish-A-Mile bicycle tour in some form or another for over thirty years. Those



One of the scenic rest stops riders will get to enjoy on the course.

PHOTO BY PAUL LATA.



Rick Downs accepting his finisher medal from a child at the end of the Michigan Make-A-Wish Ride.

PHOTO COURTESY OF RICK DOWNS.

in the lower part of Michigan know how successful this ride has been and Downs is often greeted by family members with children so positively impacted by the ride year after year. Downs wanted to host a ride in the UP and WI because, he said, "I know from the years I've been doing the ride — it's about the family as much as the child."

Wishes create lasting memories that bring comfort and joy, leaving a meaningful impact on both the child and their family for years to come. As Downs recalled, a family who had lost their child came to him with a twinkle in their eyes knowing that their son was remembered partly because Downs kept showing up for the ride.

Downs is a boots-on-the-ground sort of guy who seeks out donors by talking to individuals throughout the communities and speaks with school administrators to get the kids involved. By doing so, he hears stories from almost everyone he chats with about someone they know/knew who was warmly touched by Make-A-Wish. His hope is to not only allow for wishes to be made, but also, as he put so well, "To unify communities, schools, and kids."

Strengthening Families & Communities

Paul Lata, one of the consultants for the event and someone who spends a great amount of time in the Marinette area with his wife doing silent sports, hopes that participants take a few extra days to truly experience what the Marinette/Menominee area has to offer before or after the ride, from paddling to mountain biking to golfing. Lata talked about the ride going through the town of Wausaukee on the first day and, as far as he knows, that this will



After her heart transplant, Lei Lei (age 11) with her brothers, receiving her wish.

PHOTO BY JENNIFER RAVENSCROFT.

be the first bike event traveling through that community. He also mentioned the lunch stop put on by a local church on the first day in the town of Amberg, where Rick Downs lives. He and **Steve Everson**, the route chair, know that having 200 riders stay in these towns will greatly benefit hotels, restaurants, convenience stores, and local bike shops. Local services and schools will also benefit by catering to riders along the route.

Signing Up & Great Expectations

Riding 200 miles in two days is no easy task. The route will be mixed with flatter sections in the south and rolling hills in the north. The organizers are doing their best to keep it not only scenic, but also safe by using low-traffic roads. For those concerned about being unable to go the distance, Downs assured that there will be support along the entire way: *If you can't go on, there will be a ride for you!*

Those who know me also know that I no longer participate in events, especially fundraising events, unless I support and like the ride organizers or for what the funds raised will be used. This ride is one I am excited about. Not only for the ride but also to support an organization that has touched in the most meaningful of ways several families I know.

A great ride among inspiring communities and people within beautiful scenery along safe and come-hither roads. For cyclists: *What's not to like?* Add to this outstanding cycling mix the ride's main purpose, to help the impactful good of Make-A-Wish, and you'll know you are cycling in the right place for all the right reasons.

For more information and registration, go to: wimiwishride.org. Love the cause but cannot make the ride? Donations, Pledging to Support a Rider, and Sponsorships for the WiMI Make-A-Wish Ride can be made via wimiwishride.org/give.htm. ☺

WIMI WISH RIDE

FIRST ANNUAL WIMI WISH RIDE

AUGUST 9-10, 2025

AUGUST 9TH:
100 MILE RIDE FROM MARINETTE, WI TO IRON MOUNTAIN, MI.

AUGUST 10TH:
100 MILE RIDE FROM IRON MOUNTAIN, MI TO MARINETTE, WI.

ABOUT THE EVENT

JOIN US FOR THE FIRST ANNUAL BIKE RIDE TO RAISE FUNDS FOR WISCONSIN MAKE-A-WISH AND MICHIGAN MAKE-A-WISH, HELPING GRANT LIFE-CHANGING WISHES FOR CHILDREN WITH CRITICAL ILLNESSES.

BIKE RIDERS WILL RAISE PLEDGES AND THEN RIDE FROM MARINETTE, WI TO IRON MOUNTAIN, MI AND BACK.

200 MILES OF CYCLING

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Aiden, right, during his period of cancer treatments, and his cousin Aaron at St. Baldricks. Aaron raised money to shave his head with the proceeds going to St. Baldricks.

PHOTO BY ANNIE CAMPBELL.



Annie Campbell, her husband, Ryan, Aiden (far right), and his brothers Owen and Carter, at a recent family wedding.

PHOTO BY AMANDA LESANDRINI, THE CREATIVE COMPANY.

Aiden's Make-A-Wish Story

Annie Campbell

May 29, 2008, is a day my family and I will never forget.

This was the day our sweet three-year-old boy, Aiden, was diagnosed with Pre-B Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. The next three-and-a-half years of Aiden's life consisted of daily chemotherapy, lumbar punctures, multiple daily medications, blood draws, blood transfusions, IV therapies, doctor visits, and hospitalizations. Life was more a game of survival than anything else — for both of us.

I was a single, 22-year-old mother and in my second year of nursing school at Bellin College when Aiden was diagnosed. Aiden fought through cancer treatment like it was just another part of his life, as if he did not know any different. I believe he tolerated treatments and daily obstacles well because we treated it as another part of his life. "We take chemotherapy today so we can be 'healthy' tomorrow," was like our own motto.

During this time, we stayed isolated to close family and friends. Aiden's immune system was compromised and any little cough or cold could be very detrimental to him and his treatment. We did not go on big trips or go in crowds, but we still had fun with close family and friends camping and getting together at our home.

When Aiden was first diagnosed, we were told he qualified for Make-A-Wish. We were able to save that wish until he was done, or close to being done with treatment, and we decided to wait until he was healthier before proceeding. When he was finally in the maintenance phase of his treatment and nearing completion, we decided to let him decide what his wish would be. He had been obsessed with the Power Rangers since he was little and decided he would love to go to Disney World and Universal Studios to meet the Power Rangers.

Aiden did not have any siblings at the time so Make-A-Wish paid for him, myself, my sister, and my nephew to all go to Disney World for seven days. All expenses paid! We even got spending money each day to buy souvenirs. We stayed at a place called Give Kids the World. There were other families with previous or current life-threatening illnesses who also stayed there. It was the most magical place.

We got to go to all of the Disney Theme Parks, Universal Studios, and Sea World. We also got a personal meeting and show with just the four of us and the Power Rangers. Never once did we have to wait in line for a ride or a character meet-and-greet; we were ushered right to the front of each one.

Each night, Aiden and my nephew were tucked into bed by a different Disney character and read a storybook as well. All of our food, drinks, and literally everything was paid for and we did not worry about one thing, other than having fun.

At that time in my life, I would never have been able to afford to bring Aiden to Disney World or do all the fantastic and magical things we did. It was the most perfect ending-celebration to his graduation from treatment upcoming that July. We are forever grateful to the Make-A-Wish Foundation for not only what they did for my family, but for the thousands of families who they have blessed and continue to bless each year.

Aiden turns 20 years old on April 3, 2025. He is a sophomore at UW Milwaukee where he attends Mechanical Engineering School. The best part of his story is that there is very little he remembers from his cancer journey, which lasted from the age of 3 to 6½ years old. He still talks about bits and pieces, but what he absolutely remembers is that trip to Disney World with his best friend and cousin Collin. The adventure was so great and magical, and the memory of it all remains!

Thank you so much, Make-A-Wish! 💖

As Good As It Gets At Grandma's Marathon

Two Harbors
to Duluth,
Minnesota



An Insider's Focus on its History, Impact & Elite Wheelchair Competition



Current course record-holder (1:27:31) Susannah Scaroni taking the victory at Grandma's Marathon in 2022.

UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED,

ALL PHOTOS ARE COURTESY OF GRANDMA'S MARATHON.

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.

Founded in 1977, Grandma's Marathon began with just 150 participants in its inaugural year. The race's unique name comes from Grandma's Restaurant, the event's first sponsor. **Grandma's Grill and**

Saloon is still open in downtown Duluth. It now houses the Marathon's Hall of Fame.

Walking through downtown Duluth, it's easy to see the race's impact. From the finish line painted across the street to the engraved bricks embedded in the sidewalks of local businesses, each commemorating that year's champion, the marathon has become woven into the fabric of the community.

From the start, the race garnered attention not only for its distinctive name, but



Crossing the finish line for the win, Aaron Pike became the 2019 Grandma's Marathon Men's Division Wheeler Champion.



Amanda McGrory preparing for a nationwide live broadcast of the 2024 Chicago Marathon as an expert analyst providing insight and in-depth coverage of the men's and women's professional wheelchair field.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AMANDA MCGRORY.

also for its location along the rugged, picturesque North Shore of Lake Superior. The route is unusually scenic, beginning in the town of **Two Harbors** and finishing in **Duluth**. Runners follow Route 61, winding along the shore of Lake Superior, offering breathtaking views of the lake, forests, and hills. While most marathons are held in early spring or late fall, the cool temperatures typical of a northern Minnesota summer, especially when along the shore of Lake Superior, further enhance the course's appeal, allowing the race to take place in June.

By the mid-1980s, Grandma's Marathon had grown large enough to attract elite runners from around the world. And in 1991, the event introduced its first elite wheelchair division. Over the years, Grandma's Marathon has stayed true to its roots as a local race while expanding its reach. Today, it attracts over 20,000 participants, many of whom not only run the marathon, but also take part in the accompanying half marathon and 5K races.

Elite Open Race

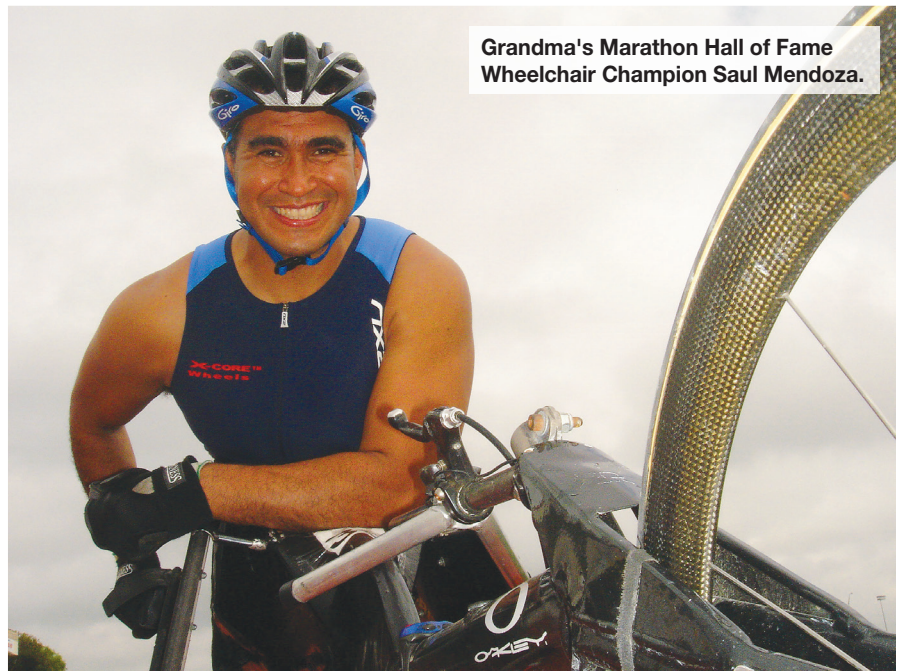
One of the most notable features of Grandma's Marathon is its elite race, which draws world-class marathoners and top-tier professional runners. The event prides itself on being a "world-class race with small-town charm," and the performances in the elite divisions underscore this claim. Grandma's Marathon has

become a critical stop on the competitive marathon circuit, known for its fast times and exceptional talent.

On the men's side, the most recent course record was set in 2014 by **Dominic Ondoro** of Kenya with a time of 2:09:06. Remarkably, this broke a 33-year-old record held by Minnesota native **Dick Beardsley**, whose time of 2:09:37 had stood unchallenged for over three decades.

The current women's course record was set at last year's event by Bulgarian runner **Volha Mazuronak** with a time of 2:23:52. This finish surpassed the previous record of 2:24:28, set by American **Kellyn Taylor** in 2018.

While the elite race attracts competitors from around the world, many participants are top U.S. athletes. In addition to past record holders such as Dick Beardsley and Kellyn Taylor, former champions



Grandma's Marathon Hall of Fame Wheelchair Champion Saul Mendoza.

American James Senbeta races through the city streets of Duluth at the 2021 Grandma's Marathon, en route to an eighth place finish.



include Olympians Linda Somers and Jenny Spangler. Most recently, Dakotah Lindwurm (now Dakotah Popehn), a 2024 Olympian, won Grandma's Marathon back-to-back in 2021 and 2022. Her 2022 winning time of 2:25:01 earned her the 12th spot on the list of the fastest U.S. women marathoners, paving the way for her Olympic career.

Elite Wheelchair Division

Established in 1991, the elite wheelchair division has become an integral part of the event, providing a platform for top wheelchair athletes from around the world to compete on one of the fastest courses in the sport. Known for its smooth and scenic route along Lake Superior, the course is ideal for wheelchair racing — and spectating — with rolling hills, minimal turns, and cool summer temperatures. The point-to-point design of the race also contributes to high-speed performances.

However, weather remains a complicating factor, particularly wind. A tailwind can lead to personal bests, course records, or even world records on the Grandma's Marathon course, while headwinds can significantly increase rolling resistance, adding minutes to an athlete's time.

The quality of competition in the wheelchair division is one of the race's

most notable aspects. The event consistently attracts top-tier athletes, many of whom are professional wheelchair racers with experience in both marathons and track racing. To date, 43 competitors at Grandma's Marathon have also competed at the Paralympic Games. Nineteen past winners are Paralympians, and 11 of those winners have earned medals in marathon events at the Games.

On the men's side, U.S. athlete and Minnesotan **Aaron Pike** has won the race five times since 2017 and holds the course record at 1:20:02. Other notable past champions include **Daniel Romanchuk**, the 2024 Paralympic gold medalist in the 5000m track event and 2020 Paralympic bronze medalist in the marathon. Pike and Romanchuk's coach at the University of Illinois, **Adam Bleakney**, is also a past winner of the race.

For the women, 2024 Paralympic bronze medalist **Susannah Scaroni** boasts four wins in Duluth and holds the course record at 1:27:31. Scaroni left Paris as the most decorated American track and field athlete of the event, returning with one silver and three bronze medals, earning a medal in every event she entered from 800m through the marathon. Twenty-one-time Paralympic medalist **Tatyana McFadden** and 2012 Paralympic marathon champion

Shirley Reilly are also among the race's champions.

The Extra Good of Grandma's

In addition to the fierce competition, the marathon offers a robust set of benefits for athletes in the elite divisions. Prize money is awarded to the top finishers, with generous payouts for the top positions. This financial support is crucial for ensuring that elite wheelchair racing remains sustainable, allowing athletes to continue training and competing at the highest level. It also helps elevate the event's profile, attracting world-class athletes from around the globe.

Beyond the elite division, Grandma's Marathon is committed to promoting accessibility for athletes with disabilities. The event supports wheelchair racers, duo-teams, and other athletes with disabilities, offering a variety of divisions and accommodations to encourage participation in all forms of adaptive sports. This commitment promotes physical activity, health, and inclusion for individuals with disabilities.

As the elite wheelchair division continues to grow, Grandma's Marathon remains dedicated to providing a fair and competitive environment for athletes of all abilities. By offering top-tier amenities, prize

money, and world-class competition, the event underscores the importance of adaptive sports in the broader athletic landscape.

Grandma's Marathon is a storied event that celebrates elite athleticism and inclusivity. From its humble beginnings in 1977 to its current status as a top destination race for elite athletes and amateur runners alike, the marathon has become a fixture in the world of distance running. Whether it's the race's history, the competitive elite field, or the significance of the wheelchair division, Grandma's Marathon represents endurance, determination, and the spirit of running in all its forms. This marathon will continue to inspire generations of athletes as it carries forward its legacy of excellence, diversity, and perseverance.

The 2025 edition of Grandma's Marathon sold out at a record pace. But come visit and spectate these amazing athletes, from June 20 to 21! (Check out grandmas-marathon.com.)

*Editor's Note: Not mentioned in Amanda's story is that she was inducted into Grandma's Marathon's Hall of Fame in 2017. Why? Because she won Grandma's women's wheelchair division **7 times (!)** which included setting the course record, since broken. Amanda is a four-time Paralympian and current Archivist and Collection Curator of the Crawford Family U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Archives located inside the Team USA Headquarters building in Colorado Springs, Co. A former professional marathoner and past winner of the Chicago, New York, London, and Tokyo Marathons, McGrory has recently begun sharing her expertise in wheelchair track and road racing as an expert analyst covering major events for ABC, NBC, and ESPN, and in 2024, was featured as one of the voices of Paralympic track & field, commentating on the wheelchair events in Paris for NBC and Peacock. 🏆*



Luis Francisco Sanclemente celebrates winning the 2024 Grandma's Marathon men's wheelchair race, posting a time of 1:22:07 that also qualified the Colombian national for the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics.



Our April 2025 cover photo in full. All eyes are on Amanda McGrory who is all smiles at her 2012 Grandma's Marathon Women's Division victory!



In the town of Iron Mountain, the "Taconite Capital of the World," an employee of a mining company stopped the incoming wave of bikers at a bridge overpass and explained that blasting was taking place.

ALL PHOTOS BY POLLY SCOTLAND.

BAM 2024 —

PROVIDING REASONS TO BAM IN 2025

Polly Scotland

Bicycling Around Minnesota (BAM) was first conceived in 2006 by members of the Minnesota State Bike Advisory Committee. The inaugural invitation-only event with 30 riders was so successful that the tour continued every year with much larger participation except during the pandemic years.

BAM transitioned last year to partner with the **Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota (Bike MN / bikemn.org)**, which now owns the ride while retaining **Mary Derks** as its director.

Michael Wojcik, the executive director of Bike MN, said that his mission is "[To build] a more bicycle-and-pedestrian-friendly Minnesota for all ages and all abilities, which will be strengthened with the addition of BAM."

BAM 2024: August 15 through 18

BAM began in the small town of Hoyt Lakes on Minnesota's Iron Range, where **320 cyclists** registered at the Community Building. They then set up their tent, rented a tent, or cabin on wheels from a



Alex Pennie and Searra Hetherington of Minneapolis thought it would be nice to have their photo taken at Mile 0 of the Mesabi Trail in Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

charter service, or checked into a nearby hotel. Some utilized the talents of the mechanics from **Freewheel Bike Service**, but most got something to eat locally, including a spaghetti dinner at the Hoyt Lakes

VFW.

Director Derks hosted an informational and pre-ride safety meeting at 7:00 p.m. the day before the start of the ride. And then ...

BAM: Day 1

Hoyt Lakes to Chisholm — 63 Miles, 1900 Feet of Climb

On the first day, the sounds of unzipped tents and slammed port-a-potty doors started at 6 a.m. Entrants packed up before going to the breakfast line. Afterward, they took their gear to the transportation truck; each person was permitted to bring two bags maximum (waterproof-suggested) and they were weighed by officials at the truck to make sure they were less than the 35-pound per bag allowed.

The rolling start time period went from 7:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. Downloadable maps were available on the **Ride with GPS app**, or riders could follow the yellow "B" symbols spray-painted on the pavement at all turns or intersections. The trail meandered past lakes, small communities, and parts of the famous Mesabi Trail. Rain fell most of the first day as riders headed

toward Gilbert, home of Lake Ore-Be-Gone, an abandoned mining pit turned fishing hole.

At Minnesota's highest bridge in the city of Virginia, riders crossed the trench created by the Rouchleau Mine. A stop on the bridge offered a jaw-dropping view of the 3-mile-long lake 200 feet below that fills the remains of the open-pit mine abandoned in 1977. The various red hues of rocky cliffs, topped with the multiple green shades of trees, accentuated the silver-blue color of the lake.

In the town of Mountain Iron, the "Taconite Capital of the World," an employee of a mining company stopped the incoming wave of bikers at a bridge overpass and explained that blasting was taking place. (There's still an active United Taconite mine.) The volume of chitchat increased until, as if on cue — *Boom!* — changing the chitchat into varying gasps of Wows!

At the Minnesota Mining Museum in Chisholm, people collected their bags from the transportation truck. Tents were set up around bygone mining trucks, trains, steam shovels, and drilling rigs. With rain threatening, some opted to sleep inside a building. With the day's end, riders plugged in their devices, phones, and batteries at a charging station. Clean, hot showers were a welcome antidote from the chill of the day-long rain.



After Doug Parr got his fourth flat of the trip, Pete Keith determined that Doug had a brake pad that was touching the tire.



These are some of the many BAM volunteers. Michael Wojcik, executive director of Bike MN, is at upper left and Mary Derks, BAM director, is at lower right.

A local band played as a dinner choice of pulled pork or chicken was served, with gluten-free options offered. A continuous mist drove diners under two red-and-white-striped tents. The museum stayed open late and offered coffee, information, and a dry place to gather before heading into a soggy tent.

Day 2

Chisholm to Grand Rapids — 71 Miles, 1700 Feet of Climb

The morning ride, under mostly cloudy skies, was weather-pleasant — until an afternoon microburst pelted some riders with heavy rain forcing many to take shelter under a gas station awning in **Cohasset**. When the rain stopped, bikers pedaled about 5 miles to the **Forest History Center** in Grand Rapids for tales of lumberjacks or to ride on a trolley pulled by draft horses.

Despite a relatively long day, some cyclists climbed the historic Fire Tower's 100 feet of switchback staircases (126 steps) to get to the tower's cab. There, they were rewarded with an unobstructed 360-degree view of lakes and to-the-horizon forests.

The option of a century ride was available to anyone wanting to add an additional 29-mile loop. Others "followed the yellow-brick road" to the **Judy Garland Museum** in Grand Rapids, the birthplace of the actress from *The Wizard of Oz*.

The evening campsite, west of the

county fairgrounds (where the fair was in full swing), was on a football field. Campers along the field's sidelines were surprised when automatic sprinklers went off at 2 a.m., thwacking them with "rain-flies" every few minutes.

Day 3

Grand Rapids to Hibbing — 60 Miles, 2900 Feet of Climb

Leaving Grand Rapids, cyclists pedaled the route that curved them to the Itasca County Fairgrounds and Milepost 0, the west trailhead of the 160-mile paved Mesabi Trail. Heading east, the trail weaved past a chain of small mining towns with rusty red landscapes, including Coleraine, Marble, Calumet, and the Hill Annex Mine Pit.

Nashauk, the first mining town in the county, had an observation platform over the Hawkins Mine and LaRue Pit. Turquoise-colored pit lakes were bordered by bluffs of orange-red vermillion stone and clay. Next was the city of Keewatin (Ojibwe for "North Wind"), home of a large United States Steel plant, a taconite steel pellet mining operation.

In Hibbing, the route threaded past the Greyhound Bus Museum (birthplace of the busing industry), the Hill-Rust Mahoning Open Pit Iron Mine (where docents were on hand to explain the mine's history), and the boyhood home of singer/songwriter **Bob Dylan**.

On a guided tour of Hibbing High School,



Breathtaking! At Minnesota's highest bridge in Virginia, bikers crossed the trench created by the Rouchleau Mine.

Bob Kernay explained that in 1918, the original City of Hibbing sat on the richest iron ore vein. The Oliver Mining Company (a subsidiary of U.S. Steel) negotiated a deal with Hibbing mayor Victor Power (representing mine workers from 46 different ethnic groups), to move the entire town two miles south from the Hull-Rust-Mahoning Mine, the world's largest open pit mine.

The playground equipment at an elementary school provided a great place to dry wet clothing at the evening's camp.

Andrew Chaffe of Freewheel Bike was busy fixing more than thirty flat tires in one day.

Following dinner, at the 7:00 p.m. gathering, Director Derks gave some fun statistics about the 2024 event — *about us*: 60% were first-timers; 20% had done five or more BAMS; our group was 60% male, 40% female; riders came from twenty-seven states, Canada, and Australia; and we ranged in age from 22 to 85.

Gerry Johnson of Bemidji, Minnesota, had been on every BAM except the first one. Johnson said, "I've done tours in many other states. This is a great way to see the state of Minnesota."

Day 4

Hibbing to Hoyt Lakes — 55 Miles, 1500 Feet of Climb

The last day's ride took us to the **Laurentian Divide**, the split where water on the north side flows to the Arctic Ocean and water on the south side flows

to the Atlantic Ocean. The route continued into Eveleth, home of the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame, before bicyclists completed the loop back to Hoyt Lakes. Showers were available as well as a taco lunch topped off with root beer floats.

As director, Mary Derks wore many hats and ensured the ride went smoothly with the aid of 26 volunteers. BAM is a fully supported tour with the safety net of a sag wagon, bike repairmen on hand, and great food. Riders enjoyed the scenery, attractions, route, and camaraderie of the journey. Derks said, "What sets BAM apart from other tours is its focus on tourism. BAM brings an awareness of small

communities and businesses, allowing each locale to showcase their uniqueness while providing an economic boost for their attractions."

Each year, BAM's location moves around the state to one of more than a dozen different regions. When asked which BAM ride was Derks's favorite, she responded, "The one I am currently on."

That means in 2025, her favorite will be...?"

Well, you'll just have to contact Mary Derks at bam@bikemn.org to begin your cycling journey through the beauty of Minnesota among friends. ☺



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Hey, Kiddos!

Have You Walked All 4,800+ Miles of the NCT Once?

Finishing at
76-Years-Youthful,
Joan Young did
so a *Second Time*

trail once would be enough, but the trail was changing as more of the miles were moved off-road. "By 2019," Joan said, "I began planning to do another full NCT hike. Rather than do the hiking in summer as I had done previously, this time I wanted to do the hike in one year. That meant dealing with winter."

Times Two, Part One

Leaving Timber Creek near her home in Scottville on December 1, 2021, Joan walked east through southern Michigan and spent Christmas with friends in Ohio. "I had a small trailer where I could sleep as well as welcome support from many friends and hiking companions, who helped with food preparation and shuttling me to trailheads." By June, Joan had reached Vermont, the eastern terminus of the route where it meets the Appalachian Trail.

Moving to the other end of the trail, she began hiking east from Lake Sakakawea, North Dakota, on June 25, 2022. "Here, the heat made for tough hiking. Some days, it was a hundred degrees," Joan recalled. Averaging 15 miles a day, she made good time until she entered Michigan's Upper Peninsula on November 5. After missing the snow in the Porcupine Mountains, the

Mm-mm good! The rewards of a hike on the NCT. This is a rewarding view along the Michigan Escarpment Trail, Porcupine Mountain Wilderness State Park, Lake of the Clouds.

PHOTO BY JOAN YOUNG.

Dave Foley

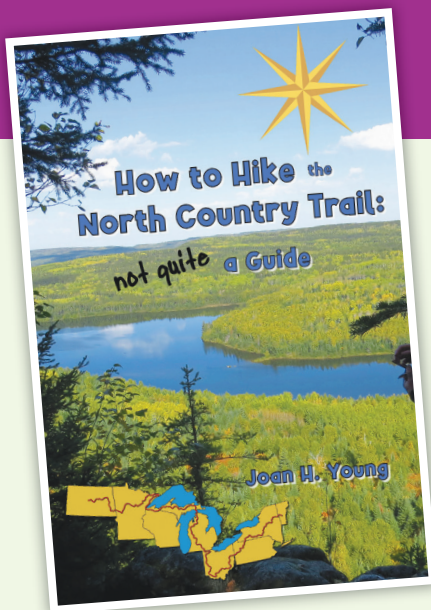
The North Country Trail (NCT), running through eight states from Vermont to North Dakota, covers over 4,800 miles. Only 29 people have walked the entire trail and Joan Young of Scottville, Michigan has done this twice. Young, who is 76, finished her last tour of the NCT in 2023.

Joan's affinity for the NCT began when she saw a sign along the highway near Cadillac, Michigan, in 1988. "I was on my way to town when I saw this sign

announcing the NCT," she said. "I decided I had to see what this new trail was like. I began hiking in Michigan and in the Finger Lakes Region of New York where I had grown up. Working systematically, I began covering sections of the trail in 1991. My hiking partner, **Marie**, often joined me on these treks and we did much of our hiking with backpacks and camping out along the trail."

In 2010, Joan became the first woman to hike the entire trail.

At that time, the total was closer to 4,400 miles. For most, completing the



Joan H. Young has enjoyed the out-of-doors her entire life. Highlights of her outdoor adventures include Girl Scouting, which provided yearly training in camp skills, the opportunity to engage in a 10-day canoe trip, and numerous short backpacking excursions. She was selected to attend the 1965 Senior Scout Roundup in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, an international event to which 10,000 girls were invited. She rode a bicycle from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean in 1986, and in 2010, she became the first woman to hike the entire 4400-mile North Country National Scenic Trail. The NCT has now grown to over 4800 miles, and from December 2021 to July 2023, Young hiked the trail for a second time. *North Country Cache* and *North Country Quest* recount stories of her first trail adventure. *How to Hike the North Country Trail* is a planning guide. She writes an award-winning outdoor column for the *Ludington Daily News* and *Mason County Press*. For the past 12 years she has also written fiction, including short stories, mysteries and mysteries for children.

weather caught up to her in Ishpeming where Joan had to deal with 22 inches of fresh snow. After struggling with the weather conditions and being unable to find open roads near the trail, Joan stopped hiking on December 20 and returned to Scottville.

Although Joan had made several trips to the UP, the deep snow necessitated switching to snowshoes because she often found that the roads were closed or impassable. With all the snow, the trail at times became treacherous. She finally gave up and waited out the winter, returning to the UP to continue her trek in April.

Onward Among Friends

On June 18, 2023, Joan was joined by a group of friends to hike the last six miles near Timber Creek closing out the Michigan connection of 1,170 miles. She logged all 4,815 miles of the North Country Trail in 365 hiking days, averaging 13.2 miles a day. A remarkable average when you consider the low-mileage days she had logged hiking through deep snow and the times when she had to snowshoe to press ahead. While the total distance of

the NCT is more than 4,800 miles, the specific mileage increases as more off-road sections are added.

Highlights Among Upper Midwest Highlights

Joan pointed to the following experiences as her highlights as she trekked through the NCT in the Upper Midwest:

- Starting from the west, North Dakota, and western Minnesota, the trail passes through the low rolling hills of the great plains and across the level remains of Glacial Lake Agassiz into Minnesota, and lakes and forests appear. As you travel north into the Minnesota Arrowhead, past and current iron mining operations bring historic and cultural riches to the route. Near the Canadian border, high cliffs, blue lakes, and challenging terrain are the norm. This is also some of the most spectacular scenery along the NCT along the Kekekabic and Border Route Trails, in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.
- From the tip of the Arrowhead to Duluth, the NCT joins the **Superior Hiking Trail**, going up and down hills and ridges



Joan taking a break at the 270-degree overlook where the Border Route and Superior Hiking Trails meet in the tip of Minnesota's Arrowhead. Joan: "No writing except a daily blog occurred on the trip. I suspect the papers are maps."

PHOTO BY BILL COURTOIS.



Joan, far right, with friends/supporters at the final steps, at Timber Creek (US 10) a few miles from her home in Scottville, Michigan, on June 18, 2023.

PHOTO BY LOREN BACH.

- Many small cities and villages along the Lower Peninsula route offer resupply options, many more than in the UP. Mackinaw City, Petoskey, Kalkaska, Mesick, and White Cloud are on or near the trail. As the trail heads south toward Grand Rapids and Battle Creek, it transitions into flatter farmland in the southern counties.
- Northern Ohio is less wild, with fewer forests but more development. The trail now uses historic transportation routes and paths used by Native Americans. For the first time in Ohio, walkers will be treading on land that was not covered in the most recent Ice Age.

When not hiking, Joan enjoys writing. In addition to monthly columns for the *Ludington Daily News* and the *Mason County Press*, she's published 17 books, several of which are about the NCT as well as mystery novels for children and adults. Her most recent effort, *How to Hike the North Country Trail: Not Quite a Guide* has recently been published. While Joan's books are available via Amazon, please order them through your favorite independent bookstore or at booksleavingfootprints.com. ☛

Close to the WI-MI border. The actual border is at the Montreal River bridge. PHOTO BY BILL COURTOIS.

with amazing views of Lake Superior. *Backpacker Magazine* lists this section as one of the top 20 hikes in the United States. Even the trek into Duluth, which overlooks St. Louis Harbor, offers scenic panoramas.

- According to Joan, the terrain in Wisconsin is easier to navigate—smaller hills, many lakes/ivers, and magnificent hardwood forests, with an occasional waterfall to encounter.
- Some recently added miles off-road in eastern Wisconsin take the hiker back among rocks and into the mining history of the region. Iron and gold mines can be encountered among the large rocky outcrops.
- Shortly after entering Michigan, the trail passes through the Porcupine Mountains. Numerous waterfalls appear along this stretch. As one goes east, there are the rugged Trap Hills, Sturgeon River Gorge, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, and Tahquamenon Falls. Although it can only be walked on Labor Day, the Mackinac Bridge is part of the North Country Trail.
- The northern Lower Peninsula offers many miles of forests and relatively easy walking. Starting at the Mackinac Bridge

and continuing for almost 300 miles to Croton Dam on the Muskegon River, the trail is in State and National Forests for much of the distance. If you plan to camp on State Forest lands, be sure to first get a permit online.



A Trio of Fun & Accessible Central Wisconsin Rivers

Central
Wisconsin
Rivers



One of the many picturesque boulder gardens along the Upper Plover.

ALL PHOTOS ARE COURTESY OF
WISCONSINRIVERTRIPS.COM.

Dan Higginbotham

The **Upper Plover**, **Crystal**, and **Waupaca Rivers** are all small rivers in Central Wisconsin on the cusp of the Subcontinental Divide¹. The waters of the Plover make it to the Gulf of Mexico while the Crystal and Waupaca receive water from the Atlantic Ocean. These rivers are primarily spring fed, are not large, and are all swift, fun little rivers. My family and friends paddle them with 10-foot kayaks, which is the appropriate size due to the narrow width, tight turns, and obstacles found in these rivers.

Because they are primarily spring-fed and have small drainage basins, we have never found them to be too low or too high for paddling. That said, common sense would be in order if a huge rain event had recently occurred.

Upper Plover River

The Upper Plover River is a beautiful, narrow, and fast-moving river. We have kayaked it from Esker Road to Bevent Drive (9.1 miles total). There are three road crossings while paddling this section, which can be chosen to match ability and time constraints. We are recreational paddlers and not experts, so preface some of my

comments with that in mind. There are no facilities at any river location along the Plover.

- **Esker Road to Plover River Road (1.5 miles):** Park on the shoulder of Esker Road. The put-in is a path on the west side of the bridge. This is a section of river with a slower current and some wide marshy areas as well as a lot of narrower, cedar-lined banks. We have never paddled this section without seeing a bald eagle. There is someone who has done a fantastic job of keeping all of the reviewed segments of the Plover free from obstructions. Thank you!
- **Plover River Road to Kristof Road (2.7 miles):** We always park on the road's shoulder and put in via a path on the west side of the river. The river changes its personality in this section. There are lots of boulder gardens and three Class I-II rapids. There are bridges, boulders, trees, and islands to navigate around and through. Skill at reading the river and downright luck help paddlers through this section as you will encounter three sets of short Class I-II rapids. Usually, at least one person in our group will swim through here! Don't get me wrong, I love this section. Some of our friends aren't as excited about it. There is limited danger as the rapids are short and the river isn't deep.



Ready for some bubbly? Pictured is one of the challenging rapids along the Plover River Road to the Kristof section of the river.



Waupaca River Boulder Garden: Choose your line and apply your paddling skills. The Waupaca is a fun, speedy little Central Wisconsin river.

- **Kristof Road to STH 153:** There is a road intersection (Miller Road) and a private driveway on the west side of the river. Find a shoulder to park along but be cognizant of the needs of the locals. Depending on the season, farmers pulling large equipment may have to navigate the turns near the intersection. Put-in is a path on the south side of Kristof Road west side of the river. A boulder garden greets you immediately at put-in but the river calms a lot from Kristof to STH 153. The current remains swift with many turns in the river and some boulders to maintain your paddling skills. This is a scenic section of the river primarily through coniferous forest. A paddler can catch glimpses of farm fields not far from the river and, in spring, will hear farm equipment working the adjacent fields. There is one necessary portage at a very low private bridge. It is an easy, short portage river left.

- **STH 153 to Bevent Drive:** There is parking access in a little driveway on the west side of the Plover River on the north side of STH 153. I don't know if the parking is within the STH 153 R/W or if the farmer allows access out of the goodness of his heart. Either way, be respectful of the needs of the farmer to access his adjacent field. This is one of our favorite sections of the river since it's enjoyable with a quick current and numerous riffles and boulders. About 2/3rds of the way through this section is an old wooden-slatted field access bridge that crosses the river. This is where we like to sit with a snack. The takeout, just upstream from Bevent Drive, has a large, easily accessible parking area on the south side of the river.

Along all these sections, you are likely to encounter trout fishermen. With its clear, fast-moving water, the Plover is a Class 1 fishery. Also, the Plover is a great paddle because it's accessible to a large part of Wisconsin's population, scenic, fast, and paddle/pedal friendly. The terrain is slightly rolling; the roads are all paved and even. County J and State Highway 153 are lightly traveled to pedal back to your vehicle.

Crystal River

The Crystal is one of our favorite paddles. This trip includes some

of the lakes within the Waupaca Chain of Lakes. We like to begin at Marl Lake in the Chain of Lakes. Of course, so do many other people because of its beautiful light-green coloration. (Think: *End of the Door Peninsula*.)

This is a small lake with extremely limited parking on the south end of Marl Lake, with no facilities available. Facilities are reportedly available at Whispering Pines State Park north of Marl Lake. Another access/parking point is at Knight Lane on the creek between Manomin Lake and Knight Lake. We always begin our trip at Marl Lake and then paddle connecting lakes (non-motorized) and streams to Long Lake. Bring a rope along as the connecting stream into Beasley Lake is always very shallow and needs to be walked. Long Lake is motorized and heavily used. We paddle the shoreline and eventually make it to the south end of Long Lake. The outlet of the Chain of Lakes becomes the source of the Crystal River. Because of the Chain being spring-fed, we have never had an issue with water flow on the Crystal.

A mile or so downstream, you will encounter two large culverts and a dam as you enter the little Village of Rural. Take the left culvert and then a small portage around the dam. Rural is a pleasant surprise as far as human habitation is concerned. The village has the look and feel that you have just paddled back in time. The residents have well-manicured and nicely landscaped backyards with welcoming, fun signs. And there are three small, old-arch road bridges that you float under within one-quarter-mile through the village.

Not far below the Village, the Crystal flows through Junction Lake. Stay left and you will find the outlet. The riffles and fast water continue for a while and then the river slows. A great spot to end your trip is at Woods Park Canoe/Kayak access along County Road K. Woods Park is a newer landing with great facilities. By taking out here, you don't get to paddle to the Red Mill, a famous attraction along the river. However, the last three-quarters of a mile of slow water to the Mill seems like a slog. We like to leave our bicycles at Woods Lake Park and ride back along County K and Rural Road to return to our vehicle. These are paved roads with relatively light traffic.



Waupaca River Covered Bridge: Is it strange to think this a calming highpoint to this trip? You'll just have to paddle along to find out.



Come paddle within nature's scenic best: A good view of the swift and pleasant Crystal River.



Marl Lake, a popular small lake in the Chain, is a great place to begin the Crystal River Trip.

The whole Chain of Lakes can get busy at times so plan accordingly. Area recommended restaurants would include the Wheelhouse Restaurant or Clearwater Harbor for good food and atmosphere. The Wheelhouse is definitely more laid back; they also have an adjacent ice cream store. What more could you want?

If you want to do an overnight, we have stayed at the Crystal River Inn, a bed and breakfast in Rural.

Waupaca River

We have always enjoyed this little river for its brisk flow, riffles, and boulder gardens. We leave a bicycle at Brainard's Bridge Park on the edge of Waupaca. The put-in we use is at a nice landing on County Q just south of Hwy 10. The trip is about 7 miles and can be combined with the Upper Plover and Crystal River trips over a long weekend as they are all within 30 miles of each other.

The first part of the river trip will be noisy as you are within ear-shot of Hwy 10. However, the boulder gardens, swift current, and glaciated environs make for a pleasant paddle. Waupaca County is classified as the "tension zone" by scientists, the portion of the state where both Northern and Southern vegetation species exist. You can find a Beech Tree next to a White Pine.

The Waupaca River (called the Tomorrow River in Portage County, but it's the same river) is an easy non-technical river to paddle that is also a trout stream. Watch out for fly fishermen as you navigate the riverbends. There will be flat, swift water interspersed with boulder gardens and riffles as you make your way downstream.

In my experiences paddling the Waupaca, I have not encountered any logjams; even during periods of extended drought, the river is not too low to have an enjoyable paddle. There is a new gauge on the Waupaca River near the takeout, but I am not familiar with the readings to give you any good guidance.

A high point of the trip is the Waupaca Covered Bridge, one of only a few in Wisconsin. This covered bridge is about a mile upstream from the takeout. It's always interesting to paddle under a bridge and, for whatever reason, it always feels alluring to approach and paddle under a covered bridge. (There is another covered bridge near the Red Mill on the previously reviewed Crystal River.)


The takeout location is beautiful. A couple of pedestrian bridges cross the Waupaca River within Brainard's Bridge Park. Great picnic areas, parking, and bathroom facilities are available in this City Park.

Bicycling back to your car is relatively easy and scenic. I bicycle north of the park and then cross Hwy 10 on River Dr. The last hill on Cobbtown Road is a gotcha. Once you cross the summit, it will be all downhill to your car.

Take your pick, choose more than one, or paddle all three. With each of these rivers, you will have had a wonderful paddle in a great and beautiful part of the state. \$

ENDNOTE

ⁱ *The Subcontinental Divide in Wisconsin extends north-south though the eastern third of the state and divides the watershed of the Lake Michigan/Atlantic Ocean from that of the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico.*



Early morning rolling on a calm northwoods lake is a great way to start the day, physically and mentally.

ALL PHOTOS BY IAN DEVEAU.

The Physical, Social, and Emotional Benefits of Log Rolling

A Key to Fun and Fitness

Abby Hoeschler Delaney

Editor's Note: Abby Hoeschler Delaney is the founder of Key Log Rolling and a passionate advocate for the sport. She has dedicated her career to making log rolling accessible to people of all ages and abilities.

When I founded **Key Log Rolling**, my vision was simple: To make the centuries-old sport of log rolling more accessible and to bring its unique blend of fitness, fun, and camaraderie to communities everywhere.

Over the years, I've seen firsthand its transformational benefits; not just physically, but also socially and emotionally. Log rolling may have its roots in the rugged world of lumberjacks, but today it's a modern sport for everyone, from kids to grandparents. Whether you're looking for a new fitness challenge, a fun way to connect with others, or a tool to enhance your mental health, log rolling has something to offer. In this article, I'll explore the incredible benefits of the sport, explain why it has the potential to become an Olympic event, put forth its cross-training benefits for your other silent sports disciplines, and provide tips on how to get started.

Physical Benefits

At first glance, log rolling might look like just a balancing act, but it's so much more than that. From the moment you step onto the log, your entire body engages to maintain stability, adjust to movement, and keep control of the log beneath your feet. Here's how log rolling provides a total-body workout:

Core Strength and Stability: Log rolling is the ultimate core workout. To stay upright on the log, you engage your core muscles constantly, making micro-adjustments with every movement. This strengthens not only your abs but also your lower back, obliques, and deep stabilizing muscles. Over time, this builds a foundation of strength that benefits other activities, from skiing to yoga to everyday life.

Balance and Coordination: Every second on the log engages your sense of balance, and your body learns to react quickly and efficiently. Log rolling is a supreme perturbation exercise, which is a type of dynamic balance training — think Bosu Ball exercises and the airplane in yoga — because it requires continuous balance adjustments in response to the spinning and shifting log. These inherent attributes of log rolling challenge the neuromuscular system, improving core stability, proprioception (your awareness of where your body is in space), and reactive agility. *These skills translate into better performance in nearly every*

sport and reduce the risk of falls or injuries as you age. And unlike falling during other silent sport activities, including Bosu Ball exercises, with log rolling you simply fall into the water where your greatest injury is your own laughter!

Cardiovascular Fitness: Log rolling is an aerobic workout that gets your heart pumping. As you move faster to keep up with the spinning log — or compete against a partner — you'll quickly find yourself in a zone of moderate to high-intensity activity. Even a few minutes of log rolling can leave you breathless, making it an excellent option for improving cardiovascular health.

Muscular Endurance: Unlike other sports that focus on bursts of power or strength, log rolling requires sustained muscular endurance. You'll feel it in your legs, especially your calves, quads, and hamstrings as they work to keep you stable on the moving log. Your arms and shoulders also get a workout as you use them for balance and recovery.

Low-Impact Exercise: For those looking for a low-impact workout, log rolling is ideal. The water cushions your falls, and there's no pounding or repetitive stress on your joints. This makes it a safe, sustainable option for people of all ages and fitness levels, including those recovering from injuries.

Social & Emotional Health Benefits

Beyond the physical fitness aspect, what sets log rolling apart is its ability to foster connection, confidence, and joy. For example:

Building Community: Log rolling is inherently social. Whether you're learning in a class, competing with friends, or cheering on others, the sport creates an atmosphere of camaraderie and



Elite log rollers Claudia Duffy and Abby Hoeschler Delaney train together in a friendly sparring match.

mutual encouragement. I've seen communities of log rollers from all over the country, groups that share laughter, support, and a love for the water. *It's also an intergenerational sport.* Kids, parents, and grandparents can all enjoy log rolling together, bridging age gaps and creating shared experiences.

Confidence Booster: There's something incredibly empowering about stepping onto a spinning log, falling off, and then climbing back on again. Log rolling teaches resilience and persistence, as progress comes with practice. Each fall is an opportunity to learn and improve, and mastering the skill gives a profound sense of accomplishment.

Stress Relief & Mental Clarity: There's a certain mindfulness to log rolling. When you're on the log, you're completely focused on the moment—on the feel of the water, the movement of the log, and the balance of your body. This immersion in the present can be deeply calming, helping to reduce stress and clear your mind.

Plus, being on the water has its therapeutic benefits. Studies show that time spent near water can boost mood, lower anxiety, and enhance overall well-being. Log rolling combines physical activity with the natural serenity of water, making it a powerful tool for mental health.

Pure Fun: Let's not forget the most important benefit: *Log rolling is incredibly fun!* There's a joy in splashing into the water on a hot day, laughing with friends, and pushing yourself to improve. That sense of play is something many of us lose as adults and log rolling is a wonderful way to bring it back.

Olympic Potential

Log rolling has all the hallmarks of a great Olympic sport. It combines athleticism, strategy, and excitement, captivating audiences with its high-energy action and dramatic matchups. If breakdancing can get in, why not log rolling?! Here's why I believe log rolling deserves a spot on the Olympic stage:

Global Appeal: Thanks to lightweight and portable Key Logs®, the sport now has the ability to grow worldwide. Many cultures across the world share some form of history transporting lumber via waterways, making it a unique blend of tradition and contemporary sport.



Log rolling is a great activity for all ages at the beach; and it always draws in passersby.



Families and neighbors gather at the dock for some friendly competition. It's fun to do and fun to watch!

Spectator-Friendly: Log rolling is thrilling to watch, with quick matches and the ever-present suspense of who will fall first. It's easy for audiences to understand, making it accessible to viewers of all ages and backgrounds. It's also easy to produce for television.

Athleticism and Skill: Olympic sports celebrate the pinnacle of human physical achievement and log rolling is no exception. It demands balance, strength, speed, and endurance—qualities that align with the Olympic spirit.

Getting Started

One of the best things about log rolling is how accessible it's become. Here's how you can dive in:

Rent or Buy a Key Log: If you're not ready to invest in your own Key Log® yet, many community pools, camps, and clubs rent them out for events or personal use. Key Log Rolling also offers summer rentals in Wisconsin and Minnesota. Renting a log is a great way to try the sport to see if it's a good fit for you. When you're ready, owning a Key Log® can take your log rolling experience to the next level. Our portable, lightweight logs are easy to transport and can be used in pools, lakes, or rivers.

Find a Class or Program: Many recreation centers, YMCAs, and summer camps offer log rolling classes using Key Logs®. Instructors will guide you through the basics and help you build confidence,

whether you're a beginner or looking to improve your skills. **Beginners** can use Key Log Trainers to stabilize the log and reduce its spinning speed while learning. As you gain balance and confidence, you can remove the trainers for a greater challenge.

Join the Community: Connect with the log rolling community through local clubs, competitions, or social media. You'll find support, inspiration, and plenty of opportunities to grow in the sport.

I invite you to give Key Log Rolling a



Kids can't help but smile as they leap into the water when learning to log roll for the first time.

try. Whether you're a competitive athlete or someone looking for a fun way to stay active, the sport offers endless opportunities for growth and enjoyment. You might fall into the water a few times (or a lot!), but I promise you'll come away stronger, happier, and ready for more.

Gotta roll! 🌀

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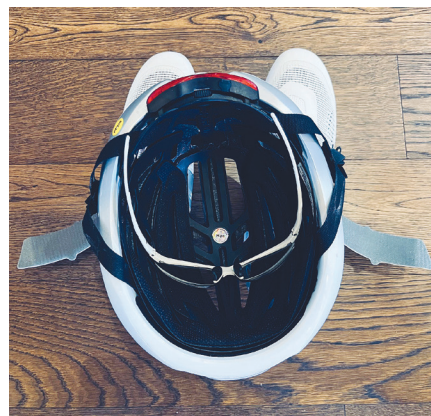


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YOUR FIRST TRIATHLON



Here's a tidy Transition 1 (T1) setup. Staying organized and compact are key to avoiding a disastrous gear mistake that could ruin your Tri experience.

Joe Bainbridge

Last fall, we discussed reasons and basic concepts when considering adding multisport training to your fitness program. (Nov. Issue: *Why Tri? Transitioning to Triathlon.*) How about taking the next step and Try a Tri? It's spring and time to put all you have been working on to full use.

Reducing Resistance to Tri

For those who have one main silent sports discipline, competing in triathlons is a great reason to keep up cross-training during our main competition season. For runners, there's a big lull in running events from June till September — but no worries because that's prime triathlon season!

Keeping events on your schedule will keep you motivated, provide fitness, and help you stay mentally sharp.

And how about heat acclimation?

For experienced and trained triathletes, heat does not stop triathlons. Temperatures can reach 135 degrees in the lava fields of Hawaii during the world championships. And on a hot day at your spring or fall running events, you won't hear complaints from competitors who completed the Door County Half Iron distance triathlon in the mid-July searing heat, running the final miles of the half marathon completely exposed to the sun.

I point these examples out because



One of the top Tri pieces of advice is to keep smiling and have fun. That approach alone makes your first Tri worth trying.

ALL PHOTOS BY
JOE BAINBRIDGE.

people can get acclimated to that extent and here — we're talking about much smaller steps and less-extreme conditions and options. So have confidence that your ability to manage heat and humidity is enhanced by training and competing in the types of conditions you will find yourself in when you race.

This conditioning is something you build up to, preferably under the guidance of a qualified coach or experienced triathletes via a well-managed club. But your first short effort under tougher conditions is your first step toward acclimation and success. The Tri Community's growing and popular selection of sprint triathlons is also perfect for your first test of successful acclimation. You can use the Silent Sports Magazine QR-Code Connects Race Calendar (P. 7 in this issue and others) to help you find a selection of Sprint Tris.

Tri Basics

The most common triathlon has, in chronological order, a swim, bike, and run. The officially recognized sprint distance triathlon, as your recommended starting point, includes a 750-meter swim, 20K bike, and 5K run; but these can vary quite a bit due to existing roads and trails. Generally, you need to swim 400 to 750 meters, bike 12 to 15 miles, and run 5K.

You don't have to be good at all or even any of the three disciplines to enjoy yourself and cross the finish line as a newly designated triathlete; just keep moving. The bigger challenge is understanding hydration/nutrition. The longer the event, the more nutrition factors into your enjoyment.

Planning and preparation are key. In the weeks before your event, make sure your swim, bike, and run gear are in good repair. Before race day, replace anything worn out or that could cause injury, such as past-their-prime running shoes. But make sure you do so with time to check things out. Wearing a new pair of running shoes for the first time on race day is an invitation to discover mid-race that the fit is less than desired. Keeping your bike in good operation is always a must; don't let sticky shifting or squeaky breaks ruin your enjoyment.

Especially because triathlons involve three disciplines with their own gear, plus the transitions between stages, organization ahead of time is necessary. As race



With the incredible Tri community, you never know what you may see along the way, including hugs from a puffy pink unicorn.

day approaches, put a list together of all the items you'll need before, during, and after the event. Don't forget food, water, and items you may need for comfort such as a towel, TP, or anti-chaffing cream. There are Tri packing lists available online. It's best to get one far in advance and modify it to suit your specific needs throughout the months leading up to your event.

Picking up your race packet the day before will allow packing everything the night before and putting race numbers on your bike in advance. A backpack offers a great way to organize all your gear. Consider using the same pack you use for swimming so it has your swimming stuff inside, including no-fog spray and spare goggles. It's better to take stuff out, such as fins or a pull buoy for race day only to find that you forgot to pack your goggles in your race pack. An alternative to a backpack is a bucket; it not only organizes your stuff but can be a seat in the transition zone and may help keep your stuff dry in the rain!

Basic Packing List

General: Race number(s), timing chip, charged watch and bike meter, and headlamp if setting up in the dark. Nutrition/hydration and personal comfort items.

Swim: Goggles and spares, swimsuit or

tri shorts, swim cap (most events provide caps).

Bike: Bike (of course!), helmet, and glasses — *helmets and glasses are mandatory safety equipment* — bike/tri shorts.

Run: Running shoes; a hat/visor is great for keeping sweat and sun out of your eyes.

Having water bottles and a bike meter mounted on your bike and packed in your vehicle the night before simplifies race morning.

Race Day: Sleep On It!

Wake up with time to spare. Fifteen minutes of less sleep is well worth avoiding having fifteen minutes too little time once at the race site. Consider dressing in what you plan to race in as soon as you wake up on race morning. Once dressed, items such as timing chips, tri shorts, a watch, and heart-rate straps are set.

Plan to arrive early. There may be road closures, as well as delays at parking, check-in, and body marking.

As to sleep, it's easy to feel anxious the night (or three) before the race. A good strategy is to address your worries away from bed an hour or more before bedtime. You can read, stretch, do yoga/deep-breathing exercises, or whatever relaxing approaches you enjoy, and do them out of bed (but not work or other things that can make you feel anxious). This is to make your bed *a place for sleep, not worry*, and slip under the covers when you feel yourself becoming tired. Do not fret if the hours of sleep you get leading up to the race turn out less than what you had hoped; it's no small irony that worrying about sleep can be the main thing that results in problems falling asleep, and you may likely find your performance is not diminished come race day. If sleep issues before a race become a chronic problem, there are professionals out there to help. Don't be too proud to give these people a try, as recommended by your doctor.

Transition

The transition area is busy. Therefore, it's good practice to have laid out your transition items in advance so you can get set up quickly and confidently. Consider taking photos of the transition you laid out at home to reference race morning.

You'll only have about 2 to 3 feet (wide) of space for your transition, so keep it compact. Take note of where your transition

location is. Note where you will enter the transition after your swim, where you will leave and re-enter the transition for the bike and run-out, and where the finish is. Transitions close before the race starts, but plan time for a potty stop and getting in the water.

Start Warm Up & Swim

Plan to take a short dip in the water at least 30 to 40 minutes before the first wave of athletes starts. Use this time to warm up swimming with others, determine (feel) the water's temperature, and acclimate to it so there are no surprises when the swim starts; also, scope out both start and finish.

Know when your wave will start. However, be mindful that you will have to be out of the water well before the first wave starts for final race safety announcements.

Plan to swim out of the way of others so you can focus on getting around the course without bumping into or getting bumped by others. The extra distance avoiding other swimmers is worth it.

Know that some events have **First Timers' swim waves**. Unless you are an elite and experienced open-water swimmer, do not decide to start early to buy extra time; those speedsters behind you will catch up and swim around/into you. Unless you feel confident about "full contact swimming," stay off to the outside of the course. Besides, starting the swim out front when you are not able to keep up with the elites is fundamentally poor etiquette and will not score you points with the Tri community.

Transition 1 (T1)

One hundred meters before the swim finishes, think about when you can stand up. The water near the finish will likely be murky from the other swimmers so you may not be able to see the bottom. You will have gained an idea of where you can stand up if you have taken advantage of a swim warmup. Consider waiting until your fingers touch bottom to know when you can stand. This will help since the bottom seems closer than it really is.

Once on land, think through T1. Focus on where you have placed your bike. Remember to take off your goggles and cap. (It's amazing how easy it is to forget.) You will need your helmet on and clipped



Bike and swim gear stored in the bucket to make it easier for you, as well as provide you with a seat in the narrowly spaced transition zones for each racer.

before moving your bike. Walk or run with your bike to the "Bike Out." There will be a designated spot, usually a line across the pavement where you must cross before mounting your bike. Volunteers will be there to show you when you can mount.

The Bike

The first part of the bike leg can be congested and going from swimming to riding can be disorienting. Stay alert and ride close to the right side of the road in a straight line. In most events, riders can only pass on the left and *staying right is a rule* until you pass someone. Keep your head up and watch for upcoming turns; gauge your speed compared to others, leaving enough space to corner safely. Stay out of groups of riders — not only is

this drafting and therefore illegal under Tri rules, but also many riders aren't used to riding close to others. Keeping several bike lengths between you and others is best.

As with the swim, you're not alone out there. Being mindful of others can be the difference between a fun experience and a crash. The bike leg is typically the longest Tri race segment so relax. The key is getting through the bike portion with energy left to run.

Transition 2 (T2)

In the last few minutes of the ride, spin using an easier gear to get your legs ready to run. As with the bike start, there's a designated spot with volunteers to tell you where to dismount.

Once off your bike, think through T2: Where is my location in transition? Am I switching to running shoes?

Remember to leave your helmet with your bike.

The Run

Running after riding a bike can be tough. Hopefully, you've incorporated short runs after training rides to get used to it. Walking a bit while you top off liquids at the start can help before finding your running legs.

During this last Tri stage, you will be getting tired, but the run is pretty low-stress. Run as you can and there's no crime against walking at times if you need to; just keep moving to prevent feeling your muscles tightening up. Keep your head looking forward and don't forget to hydrate. Sharing encouragement with other competitors and smiling will help make the run fly by. It can get hard, but the end is not far so keep going. Think about why you wanted to "Try a Tri" and know you are about to complete your first.

Finish and celebrate!

Like most of us, you may initially think as you finish: *Well, I'm never gonna do THAT again!* Trust me — that thought will soon disappear as you talk with other finishers sharing race stories and realize that you not only tried a Tri but also finished. You are now an official Triathlete!

Tri events and the Tri community can be habit-forming, and that's a great thing! See you out there when you're trying a Tri once again. 🏆



Ankle Dorsiflexors, or shin muscles, are active during the glide, push, and swing phases of skate skiing. There is minimal rest time for these muscles.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL MCFADZEN.

Chronic Exertional Compartment Syndrome in Endurance Athletes

A Physical Therapy Perspective

Cara Battles

Editor's Note: Cara Battles is a Doctor of Physical Therapy and a competitive Nordic skier and mountain biker. She has 20 years of specialization in orthopedic sports medicine. Notable experiences include lead physical therapist for MNUFC professional men's soccer team and PT for XC World Cup races and Junior National XC Championships. She also serves in the medical pool for US Ski and Snowboard. Cara was the recipient of a Distinguished Service Award from Allina Health for developing a

post-doctoral PT residency program. Cara practices at and owns Precision Performance Physical Therapy in Minnetonka, Minnesota, where she treats predominantly endurance athletes. She is also a strength and Nordic ski coach for the Loppet Foundation in Minneapolis.

As a physical therapist who works with recreational and professional athletes, I have seen firsthand the toll that repetitive, high-intensity sports can take on the body. Common conditions such as muscle strains, shin splints, and tendinitis are relatively easy to diagnose and manage with the right physical therapy and commitment to rehabilitation.

However, there is a lesser-known and less frequent condition called **Chronic Exertional Compartment Syndrome (CECS)** that is challenging to diagnose and difficult to manage. CECS is a condition that affects endurance athletes such as runners and skate skiers. This is a potentially disabling condition for athletes.

As a medical professional specializing in endurance athletes and an endurance athlete myself, I have grown my awareness of this condition over time. My clinical experience with CECS has motivated me to share insights that can help athletes receive a timely diagnosis and the appropriate treatment plan to return to their sport as soon as possible.

Understanding CECS

CECS develops over time and is not

considered an emergency. It can occur in the lower or upper extremities. In endurance sports, it is typically in the lower extremities, but this is dependent on the specific sport. A rower, for example, may develop upper extremity CECS.

CECS is characterized by increased pressure within a muscle compartment during exercise, leading to pain, tightness, and potential dysfunction. A compartment is a group of muscles, nerves, and blood vessels bundled together and surrounded by fascia. The fascia is like a sleeve. Some say fascia is inelastic but others argue that it does have some elasticity. Either way, there is only so much room inside the fascia. There are four compartments in the lower leg: anterior, posterior, deep posterior, and lateral.

With an exercise such as skate skiing, running, or cycling, there is an increase in blood flowing to the muscles you are using. Muscles need oxygen to fuel their efforts and blood carries oxygen. Blood flow also helps to deliver nutrients and remove waste. Increased blood in the muscles causes swelling. Swelling increases the pressure inside the compartments. Pressure increase is normal to a certain level. However, in CECS, the pressure increases beyond a normal level.

The exact pathophysiology of CECS is not well understood. One common theory is that there are varying degrees of elasticity in fascia and that some fascia cannot accommodate the increase in pressure. Another theory is that muscles in the compartments hypertrophy (enlarge). The muscles take up more space within the compartments so the capacity to tolerate increased blood flow is diminished. Pressure inside the compartment increases to a point where it compresses blood vessels and nerves. This causes pain, numbness, or even weakness.

The symptoms continue to build up until the exercise is stopped. Once the exercise is stopped, symptoms typically subside.

Why Endurance Athletes Are at Risk

Endurance athletes are particularly susceptible to CECS due to several key factors:

- **Repetitive Motion:** Endurance sports are repetitive, high-intensity sports that demand a lot from the muscles. These activities cause the muscles to

Cross Section of Normal Calf Showing Muscle Compartments

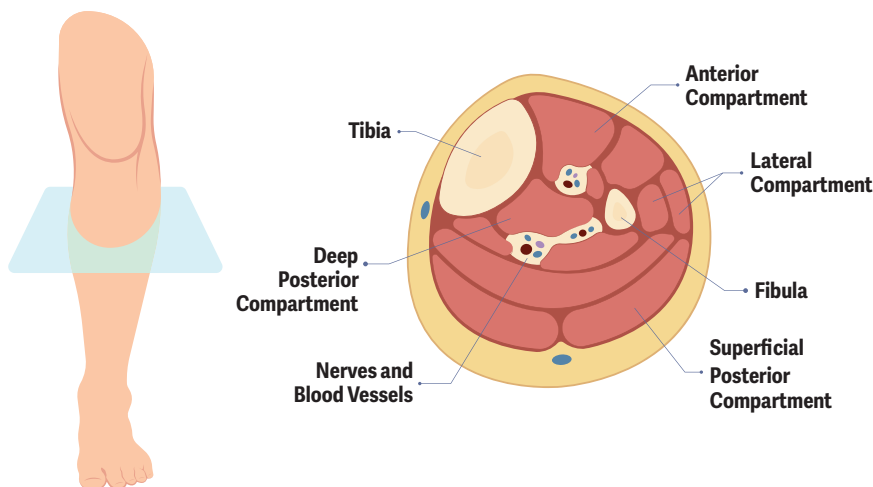


IMAGE COURTESY OF ADOBE STOCK.

repeatedly swell with blood, especially during long sessions or steep climbs.

- **Muscle Hypertrophy (Growth):** Over time, regular training leads to muscle growth. Although that's generally a good thing for performance, larger muscles can overflow the available space within the fascia, leaving less room for swelling during exercise.
- **Faulty Technique and Posture:** Improper technique or overloading certain muscle groups can intensify swelling.
- **Poor Recovery:** Inadequate recovery between sessions can lead to chronic swelling or inflammation, increasing the risk of developing compartment syndrome.

Sport-Specific Considerations

There are sport-specific considerations with compartment syndrome.

Nordic Skiers: CECS occurs most often in the lateral (outside) or anterior (front) compartments. These compartments contain nerves and muscles that are responsible for ankle dorsiflexion (pulling the foot up) and stabilizing the ankle for balance. Dorsiflexion is a vital component of Nordic skiing. Skiers maintain a level foot through most of the lateral push phase. They hold their foot level in order to maintain a level ski in the swing phase. In the glide phase, the ankle stabilizers are working to balance you on your ski. The shin muscles are quite active in all phases of skate skiing. There is minimal opportunity for these muscles to relax so there

is a high demand for blood flow to these muscles.

Runners: The anterior compartment is more often involved. The posterior (back) compartment can also be involved, but less often. Runners repeatedly pull their feet up to varying degrees in the swing phase of running. Runners with CECS in the anterior compartment may experience a foot drop, a feeling of the foot slapping onto the ground. There are some studies suggesting that improper running mechanics may play a role. One could speculate that someone who lands with a heel strike may be more at risk for anterior compartment syndrome. A heel-striker will activate the shin muscles more to pull the toes up in order to land on the heel. In the same vein, a toe-runner would likely have more problems in the posterior compartments as they contain the calf muscles. Running on uneven terrain will require additional stabilization from the ankle muscles; again — this demands more blood flow to the lower limb.

Diagnosing CECS

There are many reasons for having pain in the lower legs. Stress fractures, shin splints, strains, pinched nerves, and many other pathologies can cause symptoms similar to compartment syndrome. Here are signs and symptoms to note when considering compartment syndrome:

- Tightness and pain that build during exercise and continue to build to a disabling

level. This will happen more during sustained or high-intensity efforts.

- Pain that stops when you rest but comes back during the next session.
- Numbness or tingling in your foot. It can feel like pins and needles or loss of sensation.
- A feeling of weakness in the legs after the pain and inability to create power.
- CECS is often bilateral, meaning in both legs at the same time. This is not common in most other lower extremity or orthopedic injuries.
- Symptoms are hard to reproduce with a clinical exam. There may be tenderness and tightness in the muscles involved, but without exertion, symptoms will not be reproduced.

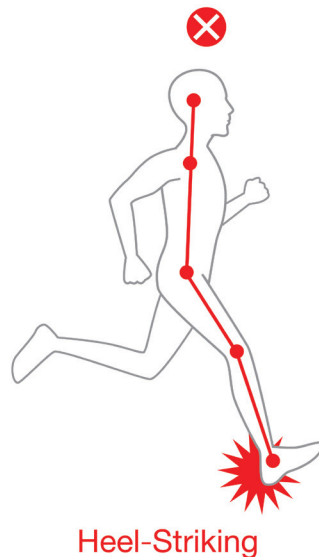
If these symptoms sound familiar to you, seek help from a sports medicine physician or sports physical therapist. Left untreated, this can cause chronic problems that can keep you out of your sport for good. Diagnosis is typically done by ruling out other possible problems first. The gold standard for diagnosing CECS is a compartment pressure measurement. This is a test where pressures are monitored in the compartments while exercising in a clinical setting. Often this is done on a treadmill.

Keep in mind that if you are a skate skier, running may not reproduce your symptoms. Please mention this to the ordering physician if the testing is done on a treadmill.

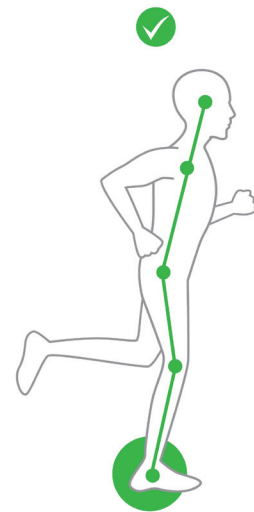
Managing and Treating CECS

While there is not a lot of quality research indicating the most effective way to treat CECS, there are many ways to try to minimize the pressure in certain compartments that are worth exploring. The suggestions presented are based on my clinical and athletic experience.

- Consider your training load. Do an honest analysis of how much you work out and how much you rest. Ways to decrease the workload include taking a rest day during the week, decreasing the amount of high-intensity workouts or decreasing the duration of each workout. Cross-training is a good idea. A skate skier could cross-train with classic skiing as CECS is less common with classic skiing. A runner could cross-train by swimming or cycling. CECS is present in cyclists



Heel-Striking



Mid-Foot Strike

Two running foot strike patterns. The runner on the left has a more active shin muscle, pulling the toes up prior to initial contact. The runner on the right has a more relaxed shin prior to initial contact.

IMAGE COURTESY OF ADOBE STOCK.

but at a lower rate. If using cycling for cross-training, using flat pedals would minimize activation of the shin muscles. Youth training plans should adhere to the USSA XC age/phase-specific training guidelines which are available at usskiandsnowboard.org/sport-programs/training-systems.

- Assess any recent changes in medications or supplements that correlate with the onset of symptoms. There was a time when it was speculated that creatine supplements may contribute to this. There was not any conclusive research done to disprove or prove this, but it is food for thought and worth considering.
- For Nordic skiers, typically skate skiers, consider trying a lighter pair of skis. The greater the ski weight, the higher the workload on the muscles. Skiers can work with a coach to assess technique and correct faulty movement patterns. Skiing relaxed is also a good way to take tension out of your muscles.
- Runners can seek out a coach or physical therapist who understands running mechanics. Modifications to form will depend on which compartment is involved. Demo a variety of footwear. Certain shoes may decrease activation or increase activation of certain muscles around the foot and ankle.

- For runners and skiers, an assessment of lower-leg mechanics and muscle strength and mobility can uncover imbalances adding undue stress to the lower legs. My advice is to seek out a sports physical therapist as we have a deep understanding of anatomy, body mechanics, and pathology, and have an extensive toolbox to strengthen and stretch certain muscle groups and re-train movement patterns in order to meet your sport-specific needs.

- Massage work to the lower leg can help manage or delay the onset of symptoms. If an athlete is trying to get through a season, adding this to their treatment may give them some relief and is worth trying. However, this is not likely to resolve the underlying problem.

CECS is difficult to treat and for many and the ultimate fix is surgical. Surgery does have good outcomes, with 70 to 90% success rates. Athletes and physicians often prefer to exhaust conservative treatment options prior to entertaining surgery. In some cases, conservative options may work or at least manage symptoms to get through a season.

If you have questions or comments about CECS or would like to problem-solve your particular case, please don't hesitate to reach out. My email is dr.battles@pre-cppt.com. ☎



Oh Canada! Did Adam and Eve have a Maple Leaf wardrobe too? A morning plunge after sauna and before another round of sauna somewhere near Toronto.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER RICE.

Sauna Culture + Silent Sports Culture = *Ahh, Perfect!*

Pam Christensen

The Finnish pharmacy: A place to get rid of your squirms and germs; the think tank, a holy place where you go to replenish your soul. These are all phrases and praises sauna aficionados use to describe the sauna experience.

With a 2023 population estimate of 334.9 million, the U.S. is estimated to have 1.3 million saunas; meanwhile in Finland, its population of only 5.584 million owns an estimated 3.5 million saunas. Despite lagging behind Finland in sheer numbers, and especially in percentage, the USA's sauna culture and sauna building is a growing trend as evidenced by the expansion of commercial saunas, sauna builders, and the popularity of portable and/or mobile saunas.

Sauna Warmth & Growth

Some of this burgeoning sauna enthusiasm in the States can be traced to the pandemic when people were not able to go out and many became more focused on their health. During this time, interest in sauna culture grew as people looked for ways to improve their home environment. That growth has continued post-pandemic with home saunas popping up in basements and backyards across the country. Public saunas and mobile saunas that can be rented are also gaining attention and customers.

Eero Kilpi was recently the guest lecturer for Hancock, Michigan's, winter celebration — **Heikinpäivä**. From Visit Keweenaw, this celebration is Copper Country's *homage to Finnish-American identity and a mid-winter burst of joy and quirkiness to hearten the community through the long Keweenaw winter* (visitkeweenaw.com/heikinpaiva).

Kilpi moved to the U.S. from Finland almost 30 years ago. He is one of the founding members and former president of the **North American Sauna Society (NASS)**. The NASS was founded in 2004 and its mission is to demonstrate and promote traditional Nordic sauna experience in the U.S. and Canada. Go to: saunaso-ciety.org. Kilpi is also President of the Finlandia Foundation's finlandiafoundation.org, New York Metropolitan Chapter, and one of the co-hosts, along with **Sam Wacha** and **Christopher Rice**, of "The Upper Bench," a podcast dedicated to the benefits of the art, science, and culture of sauna. Wacha is the manager of the *Sauna Forum* on Reddit and Rice is the editor of *Sauna Digest*, an online publication dedicated to all things sauna.

During his hour-long lecture titled "Sauna Lost and Found — Restoring Finnishness to a Global Tradition," Kilpi explained that the tradition of using heat and steam is over 10,000 years old. "The Ancient Nordics and other indigenous cultures," he said, "used heat and steam 'sweat bathing' for cleanliness and spiritual purposes. For as long as humans have been in existence, they have used fire and water. Many of the earliest saunas were located underground. Smoke saunas were first seen in the 1600s. The modern sauna using a wood stove and smokestack began in the 1800s."

According to Kilpi, sauna culture is most



A birch switch and water bucket await the next round of sauna bathers on a bench in the Kurtti sauna.

PHOTO BY JIM KURTTI.

identified with Finland, but there is archeological evidence of sauna culture in the Americas, Guatemala, Scotland, Mexico, Russia, Korea, and Japan.

Sauna Historical

In the Americas, indigenous people would heat rocks on a wood fire and then move them into a wooden structural frame covered in animal hides or tarps. This is often called a "sweat lodge." This practice was considered a spiritual ceremony and continues today as a way to shed physical and non-physical impurities. They celebrated the four elements of fire, earth, air, and water — *all are present in the sauna*.

The fire is represented by the stove, whether electric or wood. The earth is found in the rocks on the stove, the wooden structure, and foundation. Air is what is breathed during the sauna and water is the essential for all: The steam created by throwing water on the rocks and the water used for bathing. There is a connection with all four elements of nature while taking a sauna.

Lassi A. Liikkanen is the author of *The Secrets of Finnish Sauna Design*, a book that explains how to design a functional, healthy, and enjoyable sauna. Liikkanen addresses heating, air quality, and interior design to the reader, whether they are

interested in sauna or building a sauna. Filled with advice, illustrations, and beautiful photographs, the book is available in Finnish or English.

Liikkanen will also be one of the featured speakers at the World Sauna Forum to be held June 4-6, 2025, in Jyväskylä, Finland. Check out: worldsaunaforum.com.

Sauna Finnish

Finns are known for being introverted, but Finnish sauna culture is communal. Heating a sauna and bringing it to the optimum temperature of from 160 to 210 degrees Fahrenheit is the goal, whether using electric or wood stoves. In the early days, the smell of wood-stove smoke would alert neighbors that the sauna was on, and it was considered an invitation to join the owner for a sauna. Many families had a regular sauna schedule, one or two standing days of the week when the sauna would be hot.

The sauna brought communities together and was a place to discuss the events of the day, ease tensions, and share in the spiritual connection to nature and each other.

Sauna Spiritual

There are various philosophies about the holiness of the sauna. In the early days, it was a multi-purpose space. Women gave

birth in the sauna; it was a place to smoke fish and meats or to dry nets. Clothes were washed and dried in the sauna; the dead were often prepared in the sauna. The sauna was not just a hot room; it was an integral part of life and would be used for bathing and washing away the cares and tensions of daily living. Bathers would emerge from the sauna reborn.

NASS defines "sauna" as follows: A specific room heated from about 150 to 195 degrees Fahrenheit and where the temperature and humidity of the room can be controlled by casting water on rocks

placed on the heater or stove. The average relative humidity level in a traditional sauna varies from as low as 10%, if no water is added, to 60% or more, depending on how much steam the user likes and how hot the sauna temperature is.

The traditional sauna is different from a Turkish-style steam bath or steam room. The goal of the steam room is to reach a relative humidity level of 100% at a lower temperature, approximately 110 to 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

Sauna Experienced Right

A proper sauna includes several rounds of

heat, rest, hydration, heat, rest, hydration, and then heat with water on the rocks to create steam. The resting portion can be taken in a changing room, anteroom, or outside. Some people find this is enough of a cooldown, but others prefer a cold break for contrast. While not necessary, Kilpi said, "The cold break can include a roll in the snow or a plunge in a nearby lake, pond, or pool."

No matter what the sauna looks like or where it is located, one of the most important features of a sauna is ventilation in the hot room. Ventilation is important to keep carbon dioxide levels low and provide airflow to maximize the heat's effectiveness. Reaching a temperature of at least 160 degrees will also serve as a natural germ killer. Sauna maintenance and cleaning are important to keep the sauna a healthy and pleasant experience. Many Finns have a tradition of doing a deep sauna clean at Christmastime, but the sauna owner can choose any time of year for this annual task.

And Now: Sauna Midwest!

The great wave of Finnish immigration lasted from the 1860s until the start of World War I. For many Finnish immigrants, the sauna building was the first structure built on their homestead in their new homeland. Wherever Finns settled, the sauna was an integral part of Finnish American life and remains so today. **Nowhere is this more evident than in the Upper Midwest,** a place the Finns call the *Sauna Belt*.

For the last two years, the organizers of Heikinpäivä have dedicated one week of the January celebration as Sauna Week. The week includes a Sunday tour of four or five local saunas. Tickets are limited and viewers are treated to a variety of saunas. Hand-hewn log saunas, saunas over 100 years old, saunas overlooking a lake, saunas with a plunge pond, and smoke saunas have all been featured.

The low ticket price of \$10 is well worth the cost to visit saunas and speak with the sauna owners about their saunas' designs, uses, histories, and decors.

The Upper Midwest boasts many public saunas and their numbers are growing. Sauna culture is taking root in communities large and small; it provides sauna lovers with a cost-effective alternative to having a home sauna. The NASS website gives a helpful listing of saunas located



The Kurtti sauna is located in a picturesque setting in Painesdale, MI.

PHOTO BY JIM KURTTI.

across the country. Rice's *Sauna Digest* features many private and public sauna stories and photos. The *Digest* also has a compilation of public saunas.

In Michigan's Upper Peninsula, saunas are being chronicled by **Haley Goodreau**, the originator of the *Keweenaw Logbook* podcast. Goodreau is a photojournalist exploring how the natural beauty of the Keweenaw Peninsula and culture intersect with the natural world. She is matching stories about people, nature, and the outdoors through various formats to share the beauty of the Keweenaw.

Sauna has a long history and tradition around the world. Some credit sauna with health benefits while others enjoy the connection to nature and community. Sauna culture is growing and newbies can discover sauna today, easier than ever.

And last, while it hasn't been said yet, it must be said now: Sauna Culture is a great asset to your Silent Sports culture. If you don't already know the experience, the time in the Upper Midwest to immerse yourself in Sauna Culture has never been better! ❄️



Debbie Kurtti makes her way to the family sauna in Painesdale, MI.

PHOTO BY JIM KURTTI.

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Fueling the Transition:

Smart Nutrition for Young Athletes Moving from Winter to Spring Sports

Michele Pettinger

*Editor's Note: This is Part One of a two-part story. In July, Smart Nutrition for the Older and Aging Athlete. Michele Pettinger started running at a young age in the Midwest under the tutelage of her father, the high school cross country and track coach. She has a passion for carrying on the legacy of reaching young runners and helping them build a solid nutritional foundation that will empower them now and long into their future running careers. She holds a master's degree in communication studies and had a career as a technical writer before she fell in love with trail running while living in the Pacific Northwest, where she founded **P3Running**, a collective of coaches specializing in custom run and nutrition coaching. Michele is an RRCA Level II Certified Running Coach, Certified Specialist in Fitness Nutrition, and Certified Functional Nutrition Counselor. She is most at home on the trails, training for ultramarathon distances. She lives in Santa Cruz, CA, with her husband, Joe. They have a grown daughter, Anika. Find Michele online at p3running.com and follow her on Instagram (@p3runningcoach and @mjpettinger) and Facebook (P3Running).*

As the sun sets on winter, the transition to spring brings a symphony of change — the drip of melting snow, the crackle of ice, and the earthy scent of thawing ground. While the shift may mark the end of a winter sport, it also signals new beginnings. Skis are waxed and stored, kayaks come down from the rafters, and fresh shoes are ready to welcome the trails. But are your body and mind ready for the change?

Unlike winter, where sustaining body heat and endurance are key, spring brings new challenges: warmer temperatures, increased sweat loss, and the potential for higher-intensity workouts. This guide provides the best nutrition strategies for your transition from winter competition. It covers everything from winter sports recovery to fueling around your spring workouts and hydration adjustments, giving you the tools to approach the transition from winter to spring with confidence.

As a young athlete, your physiology is unique. You're still growing and developing, so your top priority should be supporting this process. This means taking in enough energy to fuel growth and sport-specific demands. It's essential for maintaining balanced hormones, building strong bones, developing muscle, and supporting brain and cognitive function. With this as your foundation, you can then fine-tune your nutrition strategies around your workouts for optimal performance and recovery.

Signs You Need More Recovery

Whether you competed in a winter sport or used it for cross-training, assessing how you feel, physically and mentally,



Michele Pettinger, author of *The Young Runner's Guide to Nutrition*.

is important before jumping into spring training. Are you excited about the new season or do you feel unmotivated and sluggish? You may carry accumulated fatigue from winter training if it's the latter. Left unaddressed, this can lead to burn-out, injury, or underperformance in the early weeks of your spring sport.

Before ramping up your spring training, take a step back and listen to your body. Signs that you need more recovery include:

- Heavy, sluggish legs even after rest days.
- Lack of motivation despite the changing season.
- Persistent soreness or trouble sleeping.

If fatigue, sluggishness, or lack of motivation persists despite rest, it might not just be lingering training fatigue; it could be **Low Energy Availability (LEA)**.

LEA occurs when you're not consuming enough fuel to support your resting metabolic rate and the energy expended during exercise. Unlike normal training fatigue, which improves with rest, LEA can lead to slow recovery, poor performance, increased injury risk, and long-term health effects such as hormonal disruptions and weakened bone density.

Many athletes unintentionally fall into LEA, especially when increasing training volume or intensity but *failing to increase energy intake to match the output*. If you're experiencing prolonged fatigue, disrupted sleep, or a noticeable dip in motivation,

look closely at your fueling habits.

Nutrition for Recovery

A thoughtful nutrition plan can help reset energy levels and accelerate recovery. Since you are still growing, carbohydrates should form the foundation of your diet, fueling energy stores and replenishing muscle glycogen. Lean proteins aid muscle repair and anti-inflammatory foods help reduce soreness and improve overall recovery.

Key Nutrients for Recovery Include:

- **Carbohydrates for Energy:** Sweet potatoes, quinoa, whole grains, fruit; aim for 6 to 10 grams per kilogram of body weight daily, depending on training intensity.
- **Protein for Muscle Repair:** Eggs, Greek yogurt, lean meats (chicken, fish, turkey), tofu, beans, lentils, quinoa; aim for 1.2 to 2.0 grams per kilogram of body weight daily.
- **Anti-Inflammatory Foods:** Berries, dark leafy greens (spinach, kale), turmeric, salmon, ginger.
- **Spring Hydration Boosters:** Coconut water, citrus fruits, herbal teas, electrolyte drinks (especially important if sweating heavily).
- **Micronutrients:** Micronutrients are important for bone health, muscular systems, and immune function. Focus on iron (red meat, spinach, beans), calcium (dairy, fortified plant-based milk, leafy greens), and vitamin D (sun exposure, dairy and fortified foods, orange juice).

Consider journaling your food intake and hydration habits to better understand your current fueling patterns and determine where you can make improvements.

Fueling for Training

You've taken special care to top off your energy stores, your body feels light and ready to go, and your excitement for spring racing has returned. Now you can shift your focus to fueling your spring workouts effectively.

Pre-Workout Nutrition: The purpose of pre-workout nutrition is to provide your muscles with easily accessible energy while avoiding GI distress; here, timing and type of fuel matter. The more time you have before your workout or race, the more you can consume.

- **If You Have 90 minutes to 2 Hours:** A balanced mini-meal with complex carbohydrates, lean protein, and healthy



Season change from winter to spring.

fat. While warm oatmeal may have hit the spot in the colder months, consider transitioning to an overnight oatmeal or nutrient-dense smoothie. You can load up with fresh fruit for quick energy, nut butter for satiety, and seeds for vitamins and minerals such as calcium and iron. **Example:** Overnight oats with berries, nuts, and seeds; Smoothie with spinach, banana, protein powder, and almond milk.

If You Have 30 to 60 Minutes: A quick-release carbohydrate your body can easily digest, such as a banana with honey or a granola bar. Examples: Banana with peanut butter; Rice cake with avocado.

During-Workout Nutrition: The purpose of fueling during training is to help sustain energy, delay fatigue, and maintain hydration.

- **Training Under 60 Minutes:** Water is usually sufficient. But if you are exercising in extreme heat, consider adding an electrolyte for anything over 30 minutes.
- **Training Over 60 Minutes:** Incorporating quick-release carbohydrates every 30 minutes will keep your energy stores topped off. Examples: Sports gel, energy chews, and half a banana. By doing this, you ensure that your systems are not too depleted and post-workout energy can go to replenishing glycogen stores and supporting muscle repair.

Post-Workout Nutrition: During the first 30 minutes, your body is most efficient at synthesizing glucose to rebuild energy stores and repair muscles.

- **Within 30 Minutes:** Consume a recovery snack such as chocolate milk or a protein-packed fruit smoothie.

Example: Chocolate milk; protein smoothie with fruit.

- **Within 2 hours:** A balanced meal with carbohydrates, protein, and healthy fat. Check out the Quinoa Sweet Potato Salad for a spring meal that checks all the boxes.

Hydration Adjustments for Warmer Weather

Before we dive into spring hydration, it's important to note that hydration still needs attention during your winter training. You may be less enticed to drink from your cold water bottle when it's cold out, so *be aware of the signs of dehydration listed below* and consider hydrating with warm drinks such as cider and tea.

Hydration must shift with increased sweat rates and electrolyte losses as temperatures rise. Just as with fuel, hydration needs are individual. What works for one athlete may not work for another. Genetics, training intensity, duration, and environmental conditions (heat, humidity) all play a role.

Hydration Guidelines:

- **Pre-Workout:** Drink 8 to 16 ounces of water 30 to 60 minutes before exercise.
- **During Workout:** Sip 4 to 12 ounces of fluid every 15 minutes to stay ahead of dehydration; adjust based on your sweat rate and environmental conditions.
- **Post-Workout:** Replace fluid losses by drinking about 3 cups of water per pound lost. To track sweat loss and personalize your hydration strategy, perform a sweat rate test as follows: (1) **Weigh Yourself:** Step on a scale before your workout, wearing the same clothing you'll exercise in. (2) **Exercise:** Do your workout under typical conditions (same intensity, duration, and temperature). (3) **Weigh Yourself Again:** Immediately after finishing, weigh yourself again in a consistent manner. For example, if your trainer kit is soaked with sweat, change into a dry trainer kit. (4) **Calculate Fluid Loss:** Subtract your post-workout weight from your pre-workout weight. Each pound lost = 3 cups (24 ounces) of water needed to rehydrate.

Signs of Dehydration

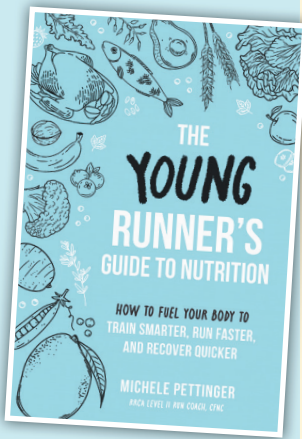
- **Urine Color Guide:** Light Yellow = Hydrated; Yellow = Acceptable Hydration;

Excerpt From: The Young Runner's Guide to Nutrition:

How to fuel your body to train smarter,
run faster, and recover quicker

The goal of nutrition and hydration timing is to provide a steady release of energy with the macronutrients your body can best utilize at different times of the day and around your workouts. Think of each meal as a building block. Your breakfast of complex carbohydrates, lean protein, and healthy fats establishes a strong base for the day, leveling up your liver and glycogen stores that were depleted overnight. If you don't do this, you begin your day depleted, creating a cascading effect that makes it difficult to fully restore after using energy in the classroom, ultimately not allowing you to be at your best for afternoon practice. Your mid-morning snack builds off breakfast, a balanced lunch prepares you for afternoon practice, and simple carbohydrates before, during, and after your workout give you the quick release of energy to use during the workout and begin to immediately restore glycogen stores after. A balanced dinner helps your muscles repair and recover and sets you up for a good night's sleep so that you're ready to go again the next day. Remember, a balanced nutrition intake of whole foods is your best ally in achieving your athletic goals. 🍌

Michele Pettinger is the author of *The Young Runner's Guide to Nutrition: How to fuel your body to train smarter, run faster, and recover quicker* (Simon and Schuster, released March 4, 2025). Available through Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble (BN.com), but please consider purchasing/ordering books through your local independent bookstore.



Dark Yellow = Likely Dehydrated;
Light Orange = Dehydrated.

- **Other Signs:** Decreased energy; Feeling faint or dizzy; Irritability.

A Story of Unintentional Underhydrating

Leah was looking forward to her first long run of the spring season; with just a mile to go, she first noticed feeling sluggish. But as she neared home, she felt faint and stopped to rest on the curb. The spring sun was stronger than she'd expected and she realized she hadn't taken in enough water, let alone electrolytes. By the time she made it home, a dull headache set in, leaving her more drained than usual. Dehydration had snuck up on her.

Back home, Leah remembered the cues from her coach. She dropped an electrolyte tablet into her water bottle and sipped steadily over the next hour. She also grabbed a handful of salty pretzels to replenish the lost sodium. She also paid attention to her urine color: dark yellow meant she still needed to hydrate. She added extra fluids to speed recovery: a smoothie in the afternoon and hydrating fruits like oranges and watermelon. By evening, her headache was gone and her energy was restored.

Lesson learned: Next time, she'd start hydrating *before* the run, *during*, and *not just after*, using electrolytes in the warmer temperatures to counterbalance her heavier sweat rate.

Practical Tips for Busy Schedules

You have a busy schedule. Maybe you're still in school in the spring and you may even be participating in more than one sport or have other extra-curricular activities. One of the keys to successful fueling and hydrating throughout the day and around your workouts is to plan ahead. Communicate with your family about what your needs are and discuss how to plan and prepare meals and snacks in advance in a way that works for your family dynamic.

- **Meal Preparation:** On weekends, prepare meals in advance. Doing



IMAGE COURTESY OF ADOBE STOCK.

so will save you time during the week and ensure you have healthy options.

- **Pack Snacks:** Stock *healthy* snacks so you're not tempted to grab unhealthy options when you're short on time. Good choices include fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, yogurt, and granola bars.
- **Hydrate Throughout the Day:** Carry a water bottle with you and take sips throughout the day.

Key Takeaways

Be honest with yourself: If you are in need of more sleep, feel sluggish in your new sport, or struggle with motivation, give yourself time. That spark will come back! Ignoring your body's signals and staying in a state of low energy availability increases the risk of digging yourself into an energy deficit that's much harder to recover from.

Embrace the new season as an opportunity to experiment with different fuel sources and electrolytes. Remember: *Fueling your body with nutrient-dense foods is just as important as training.*

Track your food intake and hydration habits for a few days to better understand your current fueling patterns. Then, make small changes to your energy intake and hydration habits to ensure you're getting the nutrients you need to support your training and growth.

Set yourself up for success this spring with smart nutrition and hydration! 🍌

Michele's Nutrition Recommendations:

Spring-Specific Foods for Performance and Recovery:

- Berries (strawberries, blueberries): Rich in antioxidants for muscle recovery.
- Leafy Greens (spinach, arugula): High in iron for oxygen delivery to your muscles.
- Asparagus and Spring Peas: Provide essential micronutrients for inflammation control.
- Citrus Fruits (oranges, grapefruits): Aid in hydration and immune function.
- Whole Grains (quinoa, brown rice): Complex carbohydrates for sustained daily energy.

Simple Meal Ideas Using Spring Ingredients:

- Overnight oats topped with fresh blueberries and sliced almonds.
- Quiche with spring vegetables (asparagus, peas, spinach) and a side salad.

Recipe: Quinoa-Sweet Potato Power Salad

Try the Recipe out and let Michele know how it goes @ p3running.com; click on "Contact"

Description: This fresh, bright, lemony salad provides power from protein-rich quinoa and chickpeas; beautiful color from the sweet potatoes, tomatoes and spinach; and a satisfying crunch from red cabbage, cucumber, and lettuce. By leaving the skin on the sweet potato, you will save time and preserve a good source of fiber, antioxidants, and nutrients such as potassium, manganese, and vitamins A, C, and E. You can substitute the chickpeas with 2 cups of leftover roast chicken or shredded store-bought rotisserie chicken. To make it vegan, omit the cheese or substitute with plant-based cheese.

Yield: Six servings



PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHELE PETTINGER.

Calories: 312; 44g Carbohydrate, 12g Protein, 10g Fat. (This excludes the dressing, below.)

Needed Ingredients: 1 large sweet potato, scrubbed (leave skin on) and cut into uniform bite-sized pieces; Extra virgin olive oil; Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper; 1/4 teaspoon chipotle chili powder; 1/4 teaspoon paprika; 2 cups cooked quinoa, 1 can (15 ounce) chickpeas; 1 cup thinly sliced red cabbage; 1/2 cup halved grape tomatoes; 1/2 cup sliced and halved cucumber; 2/3 cup crumbled feta; 2 cups packed spinach; 2 cups chopped romaine; Zesty Chia Seed Dressing (see below).

Prep: Preheat the oven to 425°. Line a 9 x 13 baking sheet with parchment paper.

Directions:

1. Toss the sweet potatoes with olive oil, salt, pepper, chili powder and paprika. Spread in an even layer onto the baking sheet. Roast for 25 minutes or until the edges are browned.

2. Combine the cooked quinoa, chickpeas, red cabbage, tomatoes, cucumber, and feta in a large bowl. (For Meal Prep, see special instructions below.)

3. When the sweet potatoes are finished cooking, allow them to cool before adding them to the large bowl with the other salad ingredients. Add the spinach and the lettuce.

4. Drizzle with the Zesty Chia Seed Dressing and toss well to coat.

5. Divide the salad among bowls and serve immediately.

Nutrition Information Per Serving (minus the Zesty Chia Seed Dressing): Calories: 312; 44g Carbohydrate, 12g Protein, 10g Fat.

Storage: Allow the ingredients to cool completely before storing. Toss the sweet potatoes, quinoa, and chickpeas in a medium bowl. Divide this mixture into the base of meal prep containers and top with red cabbage, tomato, cucumber, feta, spinach and romaine. Store the Zesty Chia Seed dressing in small separate containers. You can store the salad in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

Recipe: Zesty Chia Seed Dressing

Needed Ingredients: 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil; 1/2 teaspoon lemon zest; 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice; 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar; 1 teaspoon stone ground mustard; 2 teaspoons agave nectar; 2 teaspoons chia seeds; Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Yield: 1/2 cup (8 - 2 tablespoon servings)

Directions: In a small jar with a tight-fitting lid, combine olive oil, lemon zest, lemon juice, apple cider vinegar, mustard, agave, and chia seeds. Close the jar tightly and shake the dressing until well combined. Season with salt and black pepper to taste. Shake again.

Nutrition Information Per Serving: Calories: 71; 2g Carbohydrate, 0g Protein, 7g Fat

Storage: Store in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks. ☼

A River Runs Through It, For life!

When my son, Jay, invited me to join him on his annual flyfishing trip to the Driftless in southwest Wisconsin, I balked. Yes, even after he described the pine-paneled Airbnb with drip coffee maker, heater, A/C units in each room, and front porch with chairs for reading and table for writing.

Because, at 75, I'm losing it.

No, not my mind, although recalling movie titles and where I put my coffee down has become an issue. It's my balance I'm losing.

Instead of dreaming of hooking a large Brown or Brook Trout on a #16 Elk Hair Caddis, I had nightmares of Big Bluestem or Marsh Bluegrass catching my hiking boot's toe; of creek-bottom rocks slipperier than a trout's belly; of dun-colored mud swallowing my boot sole deeper than a mountain crevasse. Because I've suffered a few falls, I know the penalties that often follow: a trip to the hospital; physical therapy; or, yes, procedures involving anesthesia, sharp-toothed instruments, and stitches. Oh, yeah, and the family stress associated with exorbitant costs.

Once while trying to stand up from the gym floor, I put my hand on a stretching device that looked sturdy, but the seat collapsed and took me with it; my head banged into a post and cut my ear. After a visit to a convenient care facility, purple glue held my ear together along with a deep humiliation for being careless.

Falls happen unexpectedly and do not forgive, especially as we age. So, I exercise.

Besides using gym machines, I walk three or four times a week; my go-to place: Gray Willows Farm in my hometown of Campton Hills, Illinois. Its prairie, full of Sweet William, White Snakeroot, Lilac Fireweed, Yellow Pimpernel, and Jacob's Ladder changes from month to month like a newly knit throw.

As with many my age, I sometimes lack the motivation to do more, leading to my (technically) obese shape: the seemingly irreversible overhangs, disappearing chin, and thighs that now prefer Relaxed Fit pants. Such weight has required two hip replacements, the first before I was fifty years old. Afterward, physical therapists urged my legs into positions unfamiliar and uncared for, but the exercises have paid off with stronger muscles and ease of movement. Online balance exercises have also helped, such as walking heel-to-toe; occasionally making the Leaning Tower of Pisa look upright, I'll grab a chair to stay vertical.

Armed with bionic hips and what balance and muscle I could muster, on a gorgeous, blue-sky fall afternoon, a motley ochre, crimson, and amethyst arboreal quilt rising above the creek valley, Jay and I started flyfishing. On a rural road, our guide, Kevin, watched, then corrected, my casting. When he thought I could at least hit the water with a beaded fly attached to a dry fly, we



Balance issues at 75? Nah ... Well, maybe a little. Still, writer and this managing editor's longtime friend has got what it takes, showing graceful and well-balanced artisitic flair with his cast.

PHOTO BY JAY HOLINGER.

tramped (I slid) down the bank and headed downstream.

"I'm sinking only an inch or two," Kevin said, standing near the bank. "Jay and I will head upstream. Rick, slowly make your way forward. The mud shouldn't be a problem. Watch your back cast."

Once they were out of sight, I stepped into the stream and tried to step again—nearly falling forward as the mud sucked hard at my boots.

S-l-o-w-l-y, I extricated myself and crawled up the bank. Checking over my shoulder for branches eager to pick off my fly like ravenous bats, I took a few false casts then laid the line down, not where I wanted, but close enough. What I caught that day isn't important (I landed a nice 12-inch Brown and several orange and pink sunset-bellied brookies, just for the record). My point is that I adapted to what I could handle. Farther upstream, I waded through clear water, the rock and pebble bottom cement firm.

Balance not only figures in keeping oneself vertical, but also in how seniors live. We balance what we could do in our youth with what our bodies can manage today. We may not be able to flyfish the Colorado's swift currents or cold depths, but the Kickapoo River? Its Algonquian name means, "One who goes here, then there," and that's what we all, at any age, want to continue doing for as long as we endure. ♡



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