

February 9, 2012

Vertfest 2012

It's that time of year again.

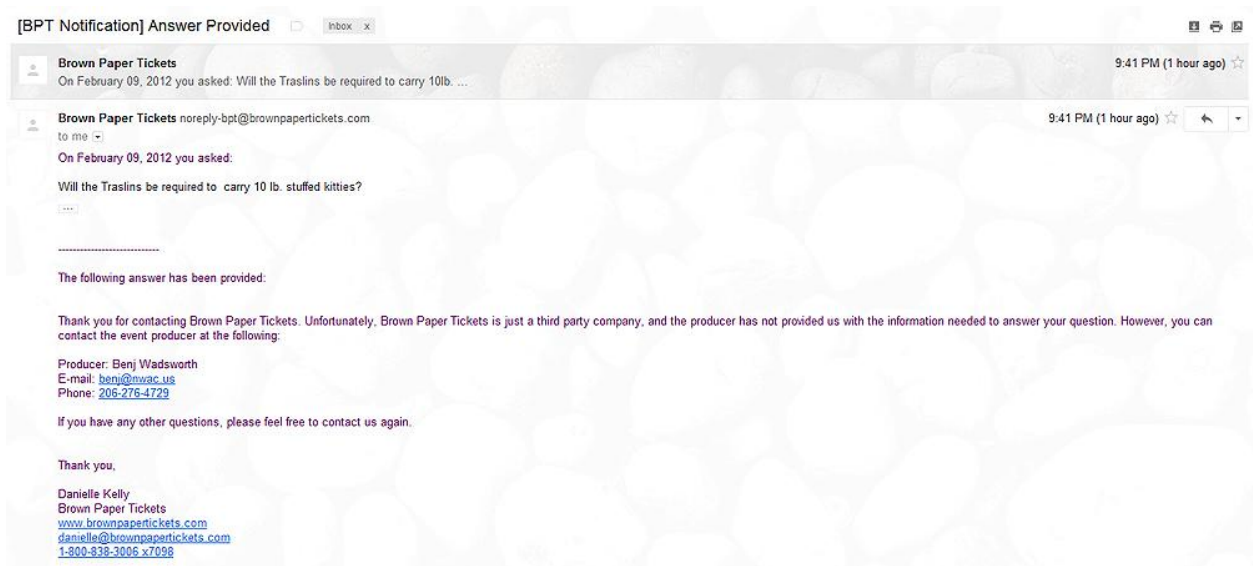
So you think you're pretty strong in the skinning department, and not bad as a skier either. Ever wonder how you stack up against other strong ski tourists around the region? Saturday, February 18th, is your chance to find out, in the Monika Johnson Memorial Rally at Alpental. Racers start in front of the Alpental lodge, follow a loosely set course up the mountain in full view of chairs #1 and #2, pass through the Rollen cliff bands, and proceed to the top lift station. From there, they de-skin and ski as quickly as possible down Upper International, out the Snakedance gate, and down Snakedance proper to the bottom. For the recreational division, that's the finish. For those looking for more of a test, the race division does another lap (usually out to the Piss Pass area) and returns to finish at the bottom.

Sound like your idea of a good time? Sign up before the event via [Brown Paper Tickets](#) and save some money (early registration is \$40 if you have a Summit-at-Snoqualmie pass, \$80 if you don't - you will need a ticket to participate, for liability reasons). By the way, all proceeds from the "Monika" and other Vertfest activities benefit the [Northwest Weather and Avalanche Center](#), a worthy recipient and essential part of our backcountry community. For those of you not interested in the "sufferfest" (maybe next year), there are numerous clinics the following day that probably won't raise your heartrate so much, including backcountry skinning workshops, companion rescue workshops, steep skiing clinics, and photography workshops with Grant Gunderson and Jason Hummel. Show up and mingle, if nothing else - you're bound to meet some interesting people and maybe some potential ski partners. Once again, we bow down to Seattle-based [Outdoor Research](#) for stepping up in a challenging economic environment and sponsoring Vertfest, none of this would happen without their involvement.

Here's a [link to Tim Tietjen's great video](#) of last year's event to get you in the mood . . .



Don't forget to strap a [stuffed kitty](#) on your pack in honor of Monika if you show up for the race!



February 18, 2012

Vertfest Goes Down With Face Shots

I missed being there due to work, but a record number of competitors (158) did show up to enjoy some true Pacific Northwest trail-breaking and pristine powder descending. Here's a summary of results I've

gotten so far via e-mail and the Web - congrats to the winners in all categories, and stoked to find friends and ski partners winning in nearly every division!

Looking over the Men's Race results, I notice a distinct trend - Seth Davis is a former Cat. 1 road biker (Broadmark Elite), the Traslin brothers are both elite MTB and road racers, #4 finisher Andrew Pinfold is currently a pro road racer with United Healthcare, Dave Brown also a former MTB racer, Brian Harder a core road racer and owner of the training blog [Getstrongergolonger](#), Ryan Larson is a Husky Cycling "A" team roadie, etc. Add to that Tyler Farrar's avowed enthusiasm for randonnéé skiing and Zach McDonald coming into the shop last week to have some Black Diamond liners cooked . . . these days the speed and endorphin junkies need at least 2 sports to get them through the year!

(Brandon Kern (#7) and Kevin Curd (#15), on the other hand, are both Seattle firefighters and drag heavy hoses around for a workout)

Here's Seth's take on how the race unfolded:

"Once again Holly and I lined up for Alpental's Rando Rally ski race. As Lowell pointed out earlier to me, this was the 10th anniversary race for Holly and I. We originally met at the 2003 Steven's Pass Rando Rally. The course this year was similar to the last two years - from the base lodge, racers climbed up to the top of Alpental via looker's left of Chair 1, then underneath Chair 2. From the top, racers descended down Upper International, Snake Dance, and Sessel to the finish shack. For those participating in the Rec Division, their race was done. For those in the Race Division, racers then climbed looker's right of Snake Dance to Knoll 1 then down again through Snake Dance to the finish. A record 158 people entered the race this year. Given our hectic schedule these days with both of us working and Eli in Daycare, I tried to keep my expectations down. I said to myself as long as I gave it my all I would be satisfied."

"Soon after the start of the race, four guys quickly went to the front. Brad from Breckenridge wearing a USA lycra skin suit, Brian from Jackson Hole, Hyak local Brandon, and Canadian Andrew Pinfold (aka United Healthcare Pro Cyclist). I was in a group with the two Traslin brothers from Canada and local Dave Brown 50 feet or so behind the lead group. Lowell was right on our tail. Oh yeah one thing I forgot to mention, it was DUMPING snow and quickly became apparent the new snow was slowing the uber endurance guys down. Halfway up Chair 2 we were more or less a group of eight with Brian, Brad, Brandon, and Andrew taking the brunt of the trail breaking. We reached the top of

Chair 2 within seconds of each other. It was the first time in my history of doing the race that I was relatively comfortable after the first climb. In past years I would have been in the red and seeing stars by this point."

"At the top I had an OK transition taking my skins off, buckling my boots, and locking my heels to my bindings. I started skiing down in sixth position. Everyone in the lead group had skis shorter than 165cm and narrower than 70mm, and with over a foot of new snow, skiing down with such minimal skis was more survival than elegance. By the time I got into Snake Dance it was apparent my downhill skills were working pretty well. I had passed many of the guys and was in sight of the leader. The race organizers had closed Snake Dance to the public so when we entered the run it was a smooth wide open powder field. When I saw this, I leaned back and straight lined it. Not only was it super fun but it also allowed me to move into the lead and gave me a decent time gap of twenty seconds at the bottom of the first run."

"I took my time transitioning to start climbing again knowing there was a lot of trail breaking before our next turnaround gate. Not long after I started climbing again Brad, Brian, Andrew and Andy Traslin caught up to me. Lucky, because I had started climbing in the wrong direction! When we redirected I went from the front of the group to the back of the group. That was the last bit of trail breaking I did for the day. The rest of the climb to the final turnaround gate was similar to the first lap - pretty slow trail breaking. Brad, Brian, and Brandon did most of the work. Two-thirds of the way up the climb we were a group of eight again. We stayed like that until we got to Knoll 1."

"This transition was much faster for me. I was second to start skiing downhill. Unfortunately soon after I started skiing I hit a deep ridge of snow and stopped abruptly. By the time I was able to free myself and start downhill again I had dropped to fourth position, but just before we entered Snake Dance again I managed to pass two racers. Entering Snake Dance I was right behind Mike Traslin. I stayed behind him until we got to the first of two steeper sections. Mike took the wider way round and got stuck in a deep section of snow, and when I noticed him slow down I redirected down the steeper section and quickly passed him. As soon as I jumped into first position the butterflies and adrenalin started flowing. I cleaned the next steep section and kept the ugly GS turns going to the top of Sessel. Rolling over the top of Sessel the finish line came into sight. Could I actually win this thing? Halfway down Sessel . . . Holy shit I might

win this thing! Two-thirds of the way down Sessel, I pointed my skis straight to the finish. I had just won Vertfest."

"Immediately after I finished, Holly smothered me with a big hug and kiss. Wow. It was a great day for the Davis family. Holly won the Womens Rec Division. I'll let her give the details, but in summary she kept her competitors in reach on the uphill then smoked them on the downhill. I believe she beat the second place woman by about two minutes! That meant Eli got two podiums for the day!"

Brief Results

Men's Race: 1. Seth Davis 1:47.36 2. Andy Traslin 1:47.45 3. Mike Traslin 1:48.03 4. Andrew Pinfold 1:48.16 5. David Brown 1:48.45

Women's Race: 1. Olivia Cussen 2:01.50 2. Juya Ghanaie 2:12.55 3. Ainsley Close 2:30.02 4. Yvonne Kraus 2:31.53

Men's Rec: 1. Greg Ireton 54.12 2. Charlie Acheson 57.01 3. Dan Nordstrom 1:05.02 4. Karl Watt 1:08.09 5. Tom Murdin 1:08.13

Women's Rec: 1. Holly Davis 1:09.38 2. Melissa Park 1:11.24 3. Katie Poinier 1:12.56 4. Anne Marie Kessler 1:22.22 5. Holly Walker 1:22.40

Men's Over 50: 1. Lowell Skoog 55.12 2. David Britton 1:07.33 3. Scott McKinley 1:07.50 4. Tom Davies 1:13.49 5. Dan Cauthorn 1:15.27

Women's Over 50: 1. Tobae McDuff 1:46.53 2. Barbara Moeller 1:47.16 3. Jennifer Osborne 1:49.13 4. Kathy McMahon 1:54.23 5. Maura Meeha 2:01.35

Oldest Competitor: Frank Neumann 1:32.17

Youngest Competitor: Per Kordel 1:36.17

Splitboard: 1. Seth Holton 56.50 2. Ruaraidh Stenson 58.46 3. Fitz Cahall 59.43 4. Chris Tretwold 1:05.28 5. Kyle Miller 1:05.46

Women's Splitboard: 1. Laura Reed 2:22.06

(Full Results are [here](#))



Racers boot up the side of the Fan, directly in view of the Chair 2 spectators Francine Curd photo



Holly chases Melissa at the top of Chair 1 Francine Curd photo