

February 17, 2014

Vertfest Alpental 2014 - The Monika Johnson Challenge

The first race of the three-race Vertfest Series (the others are Bend, Oregon and Brighton, Utah) went off Saturday in a full snowstorm, with up and downhill skiers from all walks of life bringing the customary level of high stoke to the event.

Grip, if not visibility, was good and the 2014 race was wide open with several of the traditional favorites not on the start line. 2012 winner Seth Davis had injured his knee in a City League crash the week before, and the perennial podium-finishing Traslin brothers from Vancouver seemed not to be in attendance. Brandon Gough had mentioned last week that Dynafit was bringing in two of their sponsored athletes, Marshall Thomson and Eric Carter, and they proved to be ringers, taking the top two spots in Men's Elite. Ex-national teamer and current Vancouver resident Stano Faban edged out Hyak local Brandon Kern for fifth spot, while local powerhouse Dave Brown took the eighth spot. For the women, young moms and training partners Holly Davis and Heather Kern showed off their hemoglobin levels, coming home strong in first and second places in Women's Elite. I spent the day at the office, but Kevin represented well, coming home in 1:58.29 for 19th in the Elite group.

Here's the top 10 in Elite: 1. J Marshall Thomson - 1:19.57, 2. Eric Carter - 1:21.29, 3. Nick Elson - 1:22.29, 4. Max King - 1:32.31, 5. Stano Faban - 1:32.48, 6. Brandon Kern - 1:33.37, 7. Bruno Bagneres - 1:37.11, 8. David Brown - 1:39.51, 9. Allen Taylor - 1:41.36, 10. Cameron Charles - 1:44.20

Full results [here](#)



Kevin, just getting going - wet enough to wear the softshell! Charlie Hagedorn photo



Holly and Heather lead the women (and most of the guys) up the bootpack . . . Charlie Hagedorn photo



Brandon puts some daylight between him and the next guy Charlie Hagedorn photo



Dave Brown rocks the kitty for Monika Charlie Hagedorn photo

February 22, 2014

Vertfest Bachelor 2014

The second leg of the 2014 Vertfest series took place yesterday in Bend, Oregon - this is a town full of world-class endurance athletes and a great ski/bike/fly fishing destination. I know several people who've gone there on vacation and never left. All this means it's a natural venue for something like a rando race.

Brandon had this to say about the race: *"My race day started at 3 am when I left for Bachelor from the pass for a one day trip. With all the recent snow, and the bluebird conditions Mt Bachelor was very busy, which I discovered on the drive from Bend. I barely made it to the race, pulling into the parking lot at 9:40 for a 10 am race wearing street clothes was cutting it close. The next 20 minutes consisted of me frantically gathering my gear, running to check in/get my bib, partially changing in the bathroom, then fully dressing in the middle of the lodge (i.e. squeezing into skin suit) putting skins on skis, wax on skins, helmet, goggles, gloves, poles, forgot the hat and sunglasses in the car (crap!), choking down a GU, drinking a couple swigs of H2o, running to the start line, confirming the course hadn't changed since last year, and lining up with 5 minutes to spare! Needless to say this is not a preferred method of starting a race for me.*

At the start line there were 4 or 5 guys in speed suits, and a few others in light gear. Right next to me was Aaron Talbott, who reintroduced himself, we'd met last year at the race and he raced at Alpy this year. Aaron placed 3rd last year at Bachelor, and recently bought a really light racing setup. Aaron has been training quite a bit this year and had a disappointing showing at Alpental Vertfest due to a skin blowout. Missing from this years race was Jason Moyer (last years winner) and Max King (fourth at Alpy Vertfest, Bend local, and Ultra Running Legend).

The start was fast as they always are, and I pushed the pace to see if anyone was going to hang, to my dismay and discomfort three or four guys hung on a lot longer than I expected. After the second transition the race was pretty much between me and Aaron, with him just behind me on the ups and then him charging past on the descents. On the last climb I knew since Aaron was skiing so much faster I needed to try and distance myself a bit, but to Aaron's credit and my lungs lack of cooperation I couldn't get much more than a 20' gap on him. The last descent Aaron took the lead and I couldn't catch him, so 2nd place for the 2nd year at Bachelor for me. The surprising thing about the race is how much time I took off from last year, almost 20 minutes! The

course was exactly the same, and I wasn't feeling 100%, baffling.

After the race I bought a discounted ticket and rode lifts for a few hours on the upper mtn and found really nice packed powder conditions. Then I grabbed a beer and a brat and hung out for the awards, which were by the way very generous. Then back in the car to hit the road and back home by 9. All in all, it was a great day! I hope to maybe get a bigger contingent from Washington to go down there next year, as their turnout for the race was only 50 people. They put on a good race, and it's a cool mtn, not to mention the close proximity to a very cool hangout town in Bend!"

Here's the top ten in the elite race: 1. Aaron Talbott - 1:13.39, 2. Brandon Kern - 1:14.26, 3. Patrick Fink - 1:17.09, 4. Tosch Roy - 1:18.28, 5. Terry O'Conner - 1:19.55, 6. Barry Wicks - 1:26.06, 7. Sather Ekblad - 1:32.13, 8. Jonas Tralen - 1:33.12, 9. Zach Violet - 1:33.40, 10. Henry Abel - 1:34.17

On the women's side Molly Grove came home 11th overall and 1st in Women's Elite in 1:36.13 with Hailey Garside second in 1:49.51 and Laurel Manville third in 2:01.55. Cool to see local hero Brandon Kern on the podium and mountain bike/cyclocross legend Barry Wicks in 6th
. . .

Full results [here](#)