



The Pennsylvania Nordic Skier

The Pennsylvania Cross Country Skiers' Association

Minneapolis World Cup Party

Written by Scott Rugh

We were lucky enough to see the two xc World Cup races at Theodore Wirth Park in Minneapolis on Saturday, February 17 and Sunday, February 18. What a great event! There were at least 20,000+ spectators cheering the skiers on.

Men's and women's freestyle sprint races were on Saturday. Warmups began before 9AM. Skiers' paces started out very relaxed, but we saw some sprint speed climbs as it got close to start time. The people lining the course went crazy when Jessie Diggins skied by. She often responded with huge smiles and waves. In fact, the crowd madly cheered on all the skiers, calling out their names and waving flags from different countries. Some of the coaches skied by, taking videos of the crowd's enthusiasm and antics.

We got to the park early enough to find a prime spot to watch the race at the middle of the big uphill. There were 61 women and 71 men set to race. The race begins with a qualifier, with each skier starting individually and racing against the clock. The 30 fastest skiers move on to quarter finals. Americans Jessie Diggins, Rosie Brennan, Julia Kern and Sammie Smith were among the thirty who qualified for the quarter finals.

In each of five quarter finals, skiers race in groups of six. The top two from each of these five groups...*continued next page.*



Watch videos of these races on YouTube, or read articles online at fasterskier.com. For the serious World Cup follower, all the races can be watched online at www.skiandsnowboard.live for a fee of \$8.99/month for the Nordic events.



Top Left: Ben and Jessie with Scott

Top Right: Scott and Diane Rugh



Bottom: Rosie with Scott and Diane

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Minneapolis...Continued from cover page

Written by Scott Rugh

The top two from each of these five groups, plus two lucky losers (the two fastest times overall after the ten quarter final winners) move on to the semi-finals, in two groups of six. Unfortunately, only Jessie Diggins made it to the twelve for the semi-finals and the final. In the final, she finished fourth and did not medal.

In the men's sprints, Americans, Kevin Bolger, J.C. Schoonmaker, Gus Schumacher and Zak Ketterson qualified for the quarter finals. None of them made it to the semi-finals. We did get to watch Johannes Klaebo (Norway), Federico Pellegrino (Italy) and Lucas Chanavat (France). What a show. The sprint finals were over at about 2PM, with Klaebo taking the gold.

And the snow conditions? Like Pennsylvania, Minneapolis is having a warm winter with little or no snow. A week before the races, the course was a white strip of manmade snow about two feet deep surrounded by green grass. Mid-week before the race, Minneapolis got six inches of new snow. When we got there on Friday, we entered a winter scene. Saturday morning started at 8 degrees. The day was sunny with blue skies and the temperature warmed into the 20's in the afternoon. Sunday was warmer, with the temperature getting near freezing.

We arrived early on Sunday to see the warm-ups before the 10AM start of the men's 10K freestyle race. This course was 3.3 KM, with 3 laps completed in the race. The 76 skiers started individually at 30 second intervals. Just watching the skiers, you get a feel for who is the fastest, but split times were recorded online at 4 sites on the course. Coaches give these split times to the skiers so they know how they're competing with the rest of the field. Most of the favorites, Norwegians Klaebo, Krueger, Amundsen, and Goldberg, had bib/start numbers in the 50's and 60's. USA's Hunter Wonders started first with bib #1. Gus Schumacher started 35th. We weren't close enough to the finish line to hear the announcer, but we heard from spectators around us that Gus had the fastest finish time, with still 41 skiers on the course. In the finish area, the fastest finisher gets to immediately sit in the winner's heated chair, which looks like a throne. Gus sat through finishing skier after skier and stayed in the chair. While there, he thought that at least he might get a top three podium finish. After every skier finished, he was still in the winner's chair! Gus said that even Klaebo congratulated him on the win. What a thrill- the first American man to get a World Cup win since Bill Koch in 1982!

The women's 10K started at 12:30. Twelve Americans started in the field of 62. Our favorite, Jessie Diggins, started 58th. Again, the favorites were stacked from the 30's to the last starter at #62. At the finish, Frieda Karlsson (Sweden), #32, got to sit in the winner's chair, until Jonna Sundling (Sweden), #38, finished faster by 15.4 seconds. Jessie finished 3rd, 31.8 seconds behind Jonna. To tell you how competitive these races are, 4th place went to Lynn Svahn (Sweden), 3.2 seconds slower than Jessie, and 5th place went to Victoria Carl (Germany), 8.6 seconds slower than Lynn Svahn. Team USA had a big day to celebrate with a podium finisher in both the men's and women's races.

After the races, we went to the Utepils brew pub to hear and watch a live taping of *The Devon Kershaw Show* podcast. Devon is a retired Canadian Olympic and World Cup skier who now lives in Norway. Cohost Nat Herz of *fasterskier.com* zoomed Devon in and projected him in on a screen for all to see and hear. Special Zoom guests included Gus Schumacher, winner of that day's 10K, and Ben Ogden, a US Ski Team up and coming superstar, recuperating from mono in Vermont. It was SRO for the highly enthusiastic audience.

For us, the weekend celebration carried over to Monday for the family Share the Winter fun day. Schools were closed for President's Day and there was fun for everyone, with the race course open, kids' activities, like fun skiing and snow biking for even toddlers, and vendor booths from the weekend. Anyone could sign up to get a sprint start to compete against the World Cup times. We passed on this, but did ski on part of the course. As the photo shows, we got to hang out with Rosie Brennan, who was there to support her sponsor, Rossignol.

The last time we saw world class xc skiing was at the 1980 Lake Placid Winter Olympics. Yes, that's the year of "a miracle on ice". We didn't see "the miracle" in person, but we were among the few people getting off the shuttle bus at Mount Van Hoevenberg for the xc ski races. What an increase in the number of American xc ski spectators since then! If you can arrange to see a World Cup or an Olympic race, it's an experience you won't forget.

News from PACCSA's Board of Directors

Written by Naomi Jarvis

We welcome Scott Rugh, long time PACCSA member and one of the original Kind-a-hard racers, as our newest Board member. During the last year, most of PACCSA's Board meetings have focused on our grooming efforts at Laurel Mountain. The increased maintenance needs of the Arctic Cat snowmobile purchased in 2013 prompted us to start fundraising to purchase a replacement. Jim, Naomi and Bob made an application to the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation, and were rewarded with a generous grant of \$14,000. Since then, PACCSA members have donated a further \$5,000 - thank you so much for your contribution!

Snowmobile shopping is not as much fun or as easy as one might think. The snowmobile market is now dominated by lightweight recreational snowmobiles, which are not suitable for towing heavy equipment at low speeds, and Arctic Cat no longer manufactures the 'groomer special' that we purchased previously. Utility vehicles which can switch between tracks and tyres are now very popular, but the trails at Laurel Mountain are too narrow for a tracked utility vehicle. We decided to purchase a Polaris ProStar S4 TITAN Adventure 155, modified to make it suitable for grooming (heavy duty bumpers, high windshield, winch mount on the front, hitch on the back to attach the groomer, etc), from the local dealer in Hollidaysburg, PA. Coincidentally, the Arctic Cat broke down again on the very day that we reached our fundraising target. The grooming team, Bob Mazur, Mike Burk, Denny McDonough and Matt Weaver, is eagerly anticipating the arrival of the Polaris in December. Bob is planning to make a few more modifications to it so that it can be used for grooming, adding a stiffener for the rear suspension, a plate and ball attachment for the gooseneck hitch that connects to the Tidd-Tech groomer and a control unit for the groomer.

The Yellowjackets youth team is thriving under Jim's leadership, and we do plan to make another attempt at holding the Kind-a-hard at Laurel Mountain in February 2025, watch the website for details.

Thanks to all of our volunteers who keep PACCSA in business - Board members, Grooming team, Yellowjackets coaches, Lesson teachers and Coordinators, Trail conditions reporters, Nordic Challenge Czar, Social Media and Newsletter editors. We could really use one or more Events Coordinators ("events" can be low-key, eg organising a hike or ski meet-up), an extra person on the Social Media team, and Lesson teachers and Coordinators, so if you'd like to help out with any of the above, or have another idea, [please get in touch](#).



Eagle Scout Project Brings New Hill #1 Bypass Trail to Laurel Ridge

Written by Matthew South

I have always loved skiing, and our photo albums include pictures of my father teaching me how to ski when I was just a toddler. Not long after that, I joined PACCSA's Yellowjackets and learned how fun it was to ski with other kids in my age group. Eventually, I learned how to skate ski and roller ski. Some of my fondest memories are the winter kid's races I competed in.



The author in 2015 as a Yellowjacket, and more recently as a young adult.

Another passion of mine has been Scouting. I started off as a Cub Scout in grade school, earned the Arrow of Light award as a Webelo, and ultimately became a Boy Scout. Throughout my middle and high school years, I rose through the ranks of Scouting and reached the point where I had met all of the requirements for Eagle Scout. However, before I could actually become an Eagle Scout, I had to first plan and complete a complex community service project: the Eagle Project.

DCNR's Laurel Ridge XC Ski Center was a natural choice for my Eagle Project since I literally grew up skiing there. My favorite trail is the Red Loop, which is one of the only trails groomed for skate skiing in the Laurel Highlands. In the spring of 2023, my dad put me in contact with PACCSA's Bob Mazur and the Laurel Ridge Ski Concession's Bob Ruppel. These two gentlemen probably know more about XC ski trails than anyone in Pennsylvania. They were nice enough to meet with me at Laurel Ridge where we toured the trails and talked about different project ideas.

The idea that really stuck with me was creating a new, more accessible bypass trail for Hill #1, which is located half-way around Laurel Ridge's 5k Red Loop. Fans of Laurel Ridge know that there are several steep downhill on the Red Loop. Each steep hill has an alternate "Bypass Trail" that provides an easier route around the more difficult downhill. However, the Red Loop's Hill #1 bypass trail was nearly as difficult as the main downhill due to the fact that it was quite steep and included a hard-to-negotiate "S" turn...*continued on next page.*

Eagle Scout Project Brings New Hill #1 Bypass Trail to Laurel Ridge...Continued

Written by Matthew South

My plan was to create a new, more accessible bypass trail for Hill #1 that traversed a much gentler route between the top of Hill #1 and the top of Hill #2. Using GPS, Mr. Mazur and Mr. Ruppel helped me mark out the most natural course for the new trail. The part that concerned me the most during this early phase was the presence of rocky areas that would likely need excavating with heavy equipment.

The next step for the Project was obtaining approval from DCNR. I met with Mike Mumau, the Park Manager for Laurel Ridge, who was very supportive of the project. However, he explained that before any work could be done, an environmental and archaeological review had to be completed. Thankfully, the results of this review indicated no endangered species or sensitive landmarks would be disturbed by the new trail. Mr. Mumau approved my project idea and also pledged to provide a heavy equipment operator and tractor from DCNR to deal with the concerning rocky areas.

While planning the project, I realized that funds would be needed for materials such as lumber and paint for new trail signs, and grass seed to cover the new trail and make it resistant to erosion. After creating a budget, I met with PACCSA's Board of Directors which pledged to not only provide financial assistance for the project, but also to provide volunteer workers to help me build the new trail. I can't thank PACCSA and its members enough for the help they provided to me.

After obtaining support from DCNR and PACCSA, I created a detailed project proposal which included GPS maps, photographs, an estimated budget, and a three-phase work plan. Phase-1 included removing trees, foliage, and small rocks to make a rough cut of the new trail. Phase-2 involved a tractor and heavy equipment operator from DCNR to excavate large rocks and level off the new trail. Finally, Phase-3 would finish off the trail with grass seed, fertilizer, straw, and the placement of new signs. In June of 2023 – after four months of planning – I met with my Eagle Project Counselor from the Boy Scouts of America for final approval of the project. At that point, all of my planning pointed to the project being completed in October of 2023. My counselor was impressed with the thorough proposal I had created, but also concerned at how much work the project would require. After I reassured him that I would have plenty of help from DCNR and PACCSA volunteers, he granted final approval for my Eagle Project.

Phase-1 of the project took place on August 5, 2023. In addition to family members and my fellow Boy Scouts from Troop 623 in Uniontown, over a dozen PACCSA volunteers showed up with tools to help clear trees, rocks and debris from the new trail. We then used the debris we cleared from the new trail to close off the old, preexisting bypass trail. It was a hot day, but DCNR allowed us to use one of the John Deere Gator UTV's to help transport tools, water and snacks to and from the work site. After only a few hours of hard work, I became excited as the new trail finally began to take shape!



Some of the Phase 1 Volunteers

Unfortunately, shortly after completing Phase-1, strong summer storms and a tornado wreaked havoc upon several DNCR parks in the Laurel Highlands, including Laurel Ridge, Laurel Hill, Ohiopele, and the Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail. As a result, DCNR resources were tied up clearing downed trees and repairing structures damaged by the storms. This delayed Phase-2 of the project (which was originally planned for late-August of 2023) as DCNR's tractor and heavy equipment operator were needed elsewhere for storm clean-up. As a result, Phase-2 was not completed until mid-November of 2023. DCNR did a fantastic job of excavating the massive boulders in the path of the trail. As a bonus, the huge rocks were arranged on the side of the trail in a manner that makes them perfect for a place to sit and take a rest while skiing the Red Loop. DCNR also used the tractor to grade the new trail as flat as possible...*continued*

Eagle Scout Project Brings New Hill #1 Bypass Trail to Laurel Ridge...Continued

Written by Matthew South

Phase-3 of the project occurred on December 3, 2023. Once again, there was a great turnout of PACCSA volunteers who helped with the final tuning of the new trail. An unanticipated complication came in the form of several large rocks that needed to be moved from the path of the new trail at its mid-point. The most stubborn rock proved “immovable” with pry bars. Thankfully, my friend Annelise Hug, saved the day with an idea to use chains and a come-along device. I’ll never forget how relieved I felt when finally, as a team, we were able to move that stubborn rock from the trail. We then moved a ton of dirt to smooth out the trail before calling it a day. Two weeks later on December 17, 2023, I returned to Laurel Ridge with a smaller group of volunteers to install posts for the new signs. It was too late in the year to lay down grass seed for the new bypass trail, so that didn’t take place until the spring.



Phase 3 “Immovable Rock” and those who conquered it!



Eagle Scout and PACCSA Member, Matthew South



Laying seed and straw on the new trail and installing signs.

In total, creating the new trail took nearly 200 man-hours from start to finish. I learned a lot during this project, including the intricacies of planning, leadership, and how to deal with unanticipated delays and difficulties. Overall, I’m grateful for the opportunity to build a new, better Hill #1 bypass trail for our region’s skiers to enjoy. Most of all, I’m proud that in earning the rank of Eagle Scout, I was able to give back to the skiing community that has given me so much enjoyment over the years.

Yellowjackets Youth Program Registration is OPEN!

Written by Jim South

For the past 15 years, PACCSA has been teaching children how to cross-country ski through the Yellowjackets youth development program. Kids between the ages of 5 and 16 can take advantage of the program, which teaches skiing skills through fun activities and games. Skill sessions are held on most Saturdays in January and February at the Laurel Ridge State Park XC Skiing Center. Experienced coaches guide beginners through basic skills such as falling and rising, diagonal stride skiing, turning, and hill-climbing techniques. Older kids will learn more advanced skills, including the skating technique. Fun competition opportunities are also available with neighboring youth programs in Erie and Cleveland.

Registration for the Yellowjackets is open NOW! The program fee is very reasonable (\$40 for ages 5-6, \$50 for ages 7-16) and includes a Yellowjackets team hat, an instructional workbook with stickers, and hot chocolate after each session. Registration closes on January 2nd, so don't miss out on this opportunity to introduce your children to the joys of cross-country skiing!



PACCSA Chatter Announcement

Did you know that we have a 'chatter' email list for PACCSA members? You can join in the membership form (if you missed it, [just ask](#)).

Changes at North Woods

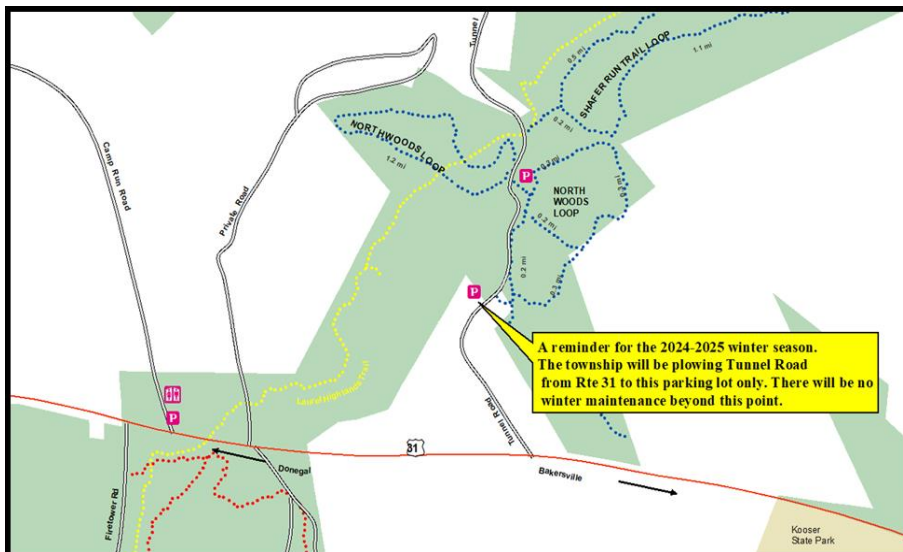
Written by Naomi Jarvis

Ed Callahan, DCNR's District Forester for Forbes State Forest (Laurel Mountain Division), informed us of some changes to the winter parking arrangements for North Woods. These are the new options:

1. The southern parking lot off Tunnel Rd, on the left. DCNR has widened this lot and will keep it open. The township will plow Tunnel Rd from Rte 31 up to the entrance to this parking lot *and no further*.
2. A new parking lot on Shafer Run Rd, which DCNR will also keep open. Shafer Run Rd is reached via Bakersville, using Bakersville-Edie Rd. This lot is at the start of the only flat ski trail leading to the warming hut.

The northern 'telephone pole' lot at the top of the hill on Tunnel Rd, on the right, will also be kept open by DCNR, but *there will be no winter maintenance on Tunnel Rd along the long and steep hill between this lot and the lower parking lot closer to Rte 31.*

Finally, we're sure that skiers will be relieved to learn that there's a new convenience near the warming hut (thanks to Laurel Highlands Nordic Ski Patrol for the photo taken last summer).



PACCSA Gear Orders Announcement

PACCSA jackets, race suits, and hats can be ordered direct from [Borah](#), using our codeword PA.PACCSA.



**Pennsylvania Cross Country
Skiers Association**

PACCSA
309 W. Marion St
Munhall, PA 15120

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You can contact PACCSA via
www.PACCSA.org/contact-us

PACCSA Membership Form

You can also renew your membership online!

Visit www.paccca.org/join-us

Single (\$6/yr) / Family (\$9/yr) / Donation Only

Number of Adults: _____ Number of Children: _____

Please indicate if you are interested in volunteering any of your skills:

Would you like to join PACCSA's e-mail chat group? Yes / No

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