

GRNST NEWS

DECEMBER MEETING

The December meeting will be held Wednesday Dec. 15th at 7:00 PM. The meeting location is Tim and Jill Greening's house at 2906 Memorial Drive North Muskegon. Tim Greening will again try to preview the "Perfect Skating" CD ROM. Important agenda items include planning for Pigeon Creek and Pando Ski races.

NOVEMBER MEETING NOTES

Two Citizen races were approved provided Pigeon Creek and Pando are agreeable. Pigeon Creek will be Sat. Feb 19 and Pando will be Sunday Jan 16. GRNST racers may ski in them but we will need workers as these are Citizen races designed to recruit new members. Tim Greening and Pat Perry are working on the Pigeon Creek race. Ernie Brumbaugh and Steve Smigiel are working on the Pando race. We need workers -please volunteer early. Welcome new members, Louise (Elle) Herrick and Steve Bulson.

SKI SEASON

Cannonsburg is making snow – Please no GRNST members on the hill.

Tuesday Nights – Time Trials @ Pigeon Creek.

Other Workouts are on your own. Team members regulary ski at Pando Ski Area, Rockford, Pigeon Creek – Ottawa County, Muskegon State Park – North Muskegon, Smigiel Valley, Ada (Smigiel Valley opened Thursday, Nov. 25)

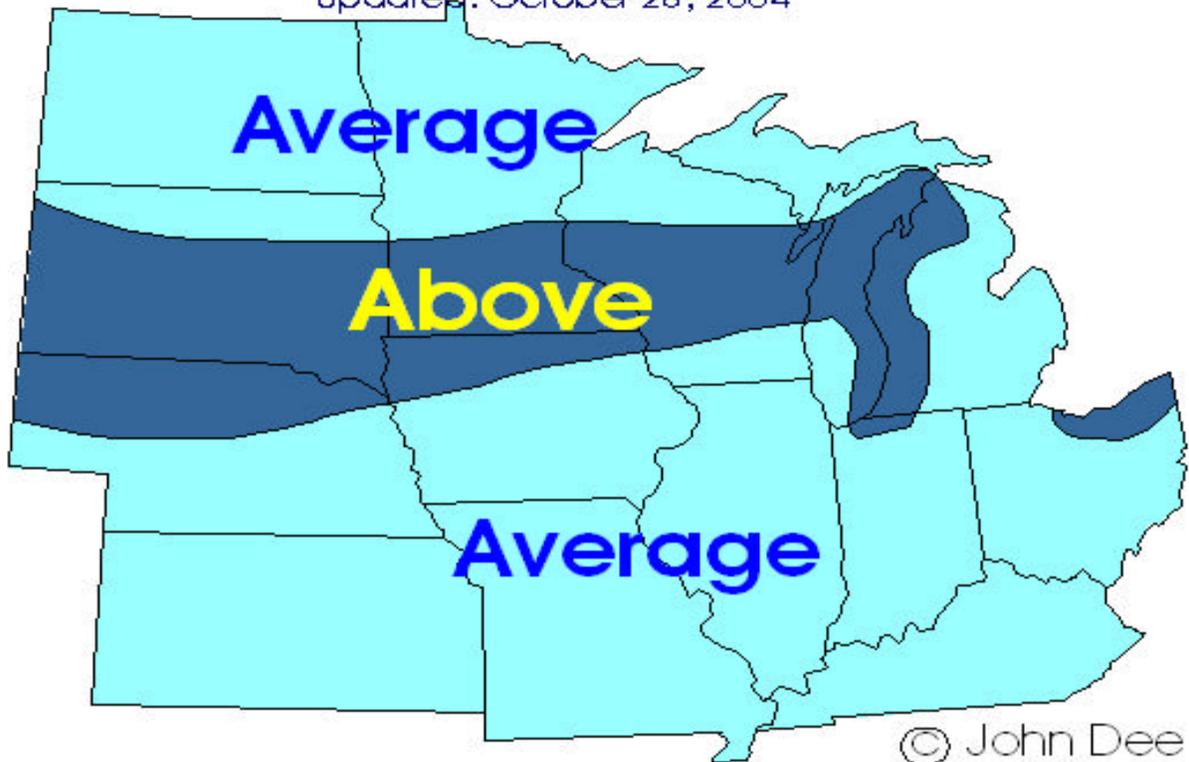
Your copy of the Michigan Cup brochure is enclosed. Pick out five races and plan on skiing. If we have 30 skiers who do five races we win the Michigan Cup. You don't have to win your class to help GRNST win, just show up. Besides, why do we train all year long – to ski in one or two races? Let's make this the year of GRNST, Team NordicSkiRacer was too close last year.

Dec. 18	Crystal Mountain Opener – 5, 10, 15K Freestyle – Not a Points Race
Dec. 26	Holley Cup – 10K Classic
Jan. 1	Chestnut Valley – 11K Freestyle
Jan. 2	Boyne Highlands – 12K Classic
Jan. 8	Michigan Cup Marathon – 15, 30K Freestyle
Jan. 9	Hanson Hills Classic – 6,12K Classic
Jan. 15	Crystal Mountain Highlander – 22K Freestyle or Classic
Jan. 16	Pando Ski Area – 5K Freestyle or Classic – Citizen's Race – Not a Points Race

Interested in joining the Grand Rapids Nordic Ski Team – Check us out at www.grnst.org or www.nordicskiracer.com. We aren't just Grand Rapids but most of West Michigan, even Indiana. If you want to cross country ski race there is no better place to learn and train than GRNST.

Snowfall Outlook Winter 2004-2005

Updated: October 28, 2004



WAXING IRONS

Nat Brown's article in the current issue of the "Master Skier" stated that 90% of the skis he grinds have sealed bases, due to inaccurate waxing irons and waxing at too high a temperature. I decided to test my Toko iron from the early nineties for the temperature range it controls at. I found that it varied through a range of 12 degrees F. I purchased a new Toko World Cup iron and the tested temperature range was 2 degrees F, much better! The World Cup iron can be purchased at either the Cross-Country Ski Shop or the Sports Rack in Marquette for \$99.50. It really doesn't make sense to buy the Swix digital iron at over \$200.00 for the questionable benefit of increased temperature control of less than 1 degree F.

SMIGIEL MAKES THE BIRCH SCROLL

In the current issue of the Birkebeiner Birch Scroll Charlie Dee, a skier from Wisconsin, relates his experience in 45K race at the World Masters at Lillehammer, Norway.

In the 30K, I finished in the middle of the pack, just behind a buddy, Steve Smigiel from Ada, Michigan. In the 45K, Steve and I raced almost the whole way together, chatting, trading off drafting each other, passing guys together, having a great time. It was clear we were going to have a sprint to the finish, one of those wonderful moments in sports when one respects his opponent and knows it will take everything he has to beat him.

I passed Steve with 500 meters to go, just before a tunnel under the trail. Since the tunnel was only wide enough for one person, I wanted to be first to avoid problems. It was a great plan. The only problem was that I slipped on some ice making the 90 degree turn out of the tunnel, hit the ground, cracked my head on the concrete wall, lost my hat and glasses. As he passed me, Steve said, "Aw Charlie too bad," and he meant it. (*probably with a see you later sucker smile on his face-Editor*) By the time I got up, Steve was gone, but I eased my disappointment by out-sprinting a Frenchman to the line.

SMIGIELISM OF THE MONTH

"Insanity is defined as doing the same thing over and over and expecting things to change."

WEST YELLOWSTONE – 2004

Ernie Brumbaugh

Friday – November 19

What started as a record number of skiers wishing for an early season training session soon dwindled to four veteran GRNST skiers. Bob West, Steve Smigel and myself met at the gate in Minneapolis for a flight to Bozeman on Friday morning. In Bozeman we rented a Ford Explorer. We drove to the local Exxon Station, quickly downed a 12-inch sub, bought a six pack of Moose Drool - for passengers only - and headed up Highway 191 West Yellowstone. Driving up the Gallatin River, the beauty was only enhanced by Steve's descriptions of his many trips up Fawn Creek and every other valley along the way. Perhaps, most interesting was the tubing trip down the Gallatin River - very cold water. Somehow the thought of Smigel and Scharphorn standing on the river rocks trying to warm their bruised and chilled backsides in any ray of sunlight they could find seemed like more that we wanted to know.

By 3:30, we had checked into the Best Western Desert Inn, where we meet up with Mike Kennan, already snoozing in room 205. We changed clothes and took off for the trails for a quick 45-minute skate up Rendezvous, back down Cabin Hill and around the Biathlon shooting range. The trails were barren this year. Not much snow has fallen they opened on Oct 24th. Skiable, but bare in many spots. These trails start at 6700 feet. We hear that that the plateau is groomed and agree to drive up in the morning. For now, it is back to the hotel for a chance meeting with former GRNST member Rich Dressen and his wife, hot tub, shower and dinner at the Brew Pub. Mistake number one – terrible food and sloooooow service. The last few years have been great. Disappointment number 2 – Bullwinkle's is closed. Where else can we count on watching the Green Bay Packers.

Saturday – November 20

Sleeping was easy. Saturday morning starts with a big breakfast at Laurie's Café, then up to the first trailhead on the Plateau. We are not above tree line, but 7500 feet is plenty high. The snow is deep and grooming excellent. An ominous omen, we start on a long gradual downhill, go over a bump and continue down. Then we climb a long ways. The trail levels off

and starts a series of gradual ups and down before another long downhill run. Then we climb a long, long way to the first gate, where the trail levels a bit but continues to climb gradually to the second gate and parking lot. Out of breath and 1 hour and 30 minutes for Mike and I. Steve and Bob were somewhat faster. Team Rossignol was also out skiing the plateau. I thought I saw Brooke Baughman cruising along with a lot of red ski suits. Just before the end of the ski, we ran across Andy Gerlach filming the Fischer/Subaru Marathon Ski Team and skied a little with Caitlin Compton. At the parking lot, we noticed that there was more trail up above. Alas, the altitude had taken its' toll, not a twinkle in anyone's eye. Then a skier said the road was skiable and that was enough. Fifteen minutes down and we back to the truck ready for lunch and a nap.

Lesson one about altitude and ski camps in general - Eat light for lunch. Even a moderate lunch makes the afternoon ski sluggish at best. We headed back up to the Plateau in the afternoon to skate the new trail we had seen that morning. This trail was a joy to ski. It climbs gradually to 7800 feet but the terrain is much more moderate than the lower plateau. 25 minutes out to an overlook, 5 minutes to enjoy and 20 minutes back and we are done! License plates at the gates are from Alaska, Washington, Maine, New Hampshire, Minnesota, Colorado, Idaho, Utah and Montana. This is where the US XC Ski community convenes to begin each new ski season. On the way down, we were stopped a 15 Passenger Van broadside in the road. Who else but the Montana State Ski Team. You'd think they would know better. We calmly watch as the youngsters push and rock the van back to a downhill position and drive off to make another attempt at reaching the Plateau. Apparently the Fischer Subaru's coming down had forced the van to the side of the road and sealed its fate. We thought about helping but being in the 50-60 crowd opted for the more difficult job of sharing our hard-earned experience with the Fischer Subaru skier, who seemed to be directing the effort.

Back to the hotel, hot tub, shower and dinner at Stromboli's. We walk in the door and there is Eli Brown, Fischer Nordic, and the Swix crew. Stromboli's is a local favorite pizza joint, site of Dick Fultz's Jalapeno Calzone fiasco several years ago. Bob and Steve ordered a pizza – definitely tastier and cheaper than the night before. Mike opts for the “local favorite” lasagna and I have my eye on spaghetti and meatballs. Stuffed, we go over to the Holiday Inn and check out the Ski Show. Not much set up yet – opening is scheduled for Tuesday. Back to the hotel and watch movies. Sleeping is good Saturday night as well.

Sunday – November 21

Breakfast at the Holiday Inn – French Toast - ate too much, again. After the altitude yesterday, we opt to tour the perimeter of the Rendezvous Trails down below in classic style. We start late – 10:30. The tracks are glazed, temps in the upper teens and Extra Blue works well, but we should have used base binder as it stripped off easily. This is not really a problem though, because the waxing breaks were a welcome respite from the altitude skiing. The snow is thin on Rendezvous, Steve and I walk up Hill 191 – our old friend. While recovering at the top, John Bauer skies up – remember the first leg of the 2002 Olympic relays. He's still skiing for Rossignol and has a daughter now. I heard all about her for about 10 k in the Birkie last year from her grandfather father, Bill Bauer. The snow is thinner on the Dead Dog Trail but I seem to be going pretty good here. Once we get to Hill 191 again, I'm pretty much done going good. Cabin Hill is the counterpart of Hill 191, longer, downer and funner!! The challenge is to stay in the tracks. Takes some confidence. We turn left at full speed and head

up Déjà vu. The snow is better. Once you climb two hills, it's pretty much downhill for about 4 k. Red with white stitching proved to be the best looking tights of the week (from Bridger Ski Foundation in Bozeman) or at least one particular pair of them. Two hours and we are ready for a light lunch – PBJ's at the hotel.

Afternoon session is skating on the Rendezvous trails. Atomic is the only ski rep out at the trailhead with demo skis. Maybe the most dedicated of the ski reps. Legs are pretty much toast from the AM session and yesterday. We ski for 1:10, it's getting dark. Back to the hotel, hot tub, shower and back to Stromboli's. We are in luck, only one other couple there. Bob and Steve opt for another pizza, Mike for the "local favorite" Lasagna and I for the "world renowned" Mac and Cheese – recommended by four young ladies from East Duluth High School. As we are being served, Team Toko floods the joint and later another 20 plus group arrives. Without Bullwinkle's, this is the feed trough of choice. Not as stuffed, but, feeling satiated, we all head for the Holiday Inn bar. Again, not much set up at the expo. Mike opts out of the weeklong ski clinic as it is \$365 for 5 days and he isn't staying that long. Rich and his wife show up and we play pool. She has the quote of the day after a break in which no balls fell. "It's a woman's break", she said, "all bust and no balls." Not bad for a rocket scientist.

Monday – November 22

Breakfast of muffins and fruit juice at the hotel and we are off to the Plateau. Smigiel wants to ski it all – what a surprise. Upper and Lower and back all the way down. The three of us are skating, Mike is classic. Mike, having undergone knee surgery this fall, stuck to classic all week long. We are late and there aren't many skiers going up. The US Disabled Team was out practicing. There were four sleds and I am here to tell you they have my respect. We just couldn't get away from the sleds on the long climbs. They prove Smigiel's theory that you can double pole everything if you train for it. After an hour and nineteen we are at the top of the first leg. Rest a little and head out on the upper section. There is John Bauer skiing classic with no poles as fast as any of us with poles. Would that we could all ski with that much technique! Would that we were all in good enough shape to ski that well! The trip up was hard. On the way back the downhill leaves us feeling deceptively energetic. Bob feels a cold coming on and opts to ski down the road to the truck. Mike doesn't want to ski the road so Steve and I decide to take the trail back. There were 13 hills coming up and I remembered every one of them. Two uphill on the way back would prove decisive. "But, it's downhill all the way!", said Mike. On the big uphill, Brooke Baughman came by cruising – cruising hard. Steve and Rich Dressen were skiing up ahead. Rich decided to go with her. He was close enough to see her take a very deep breath at the top before continuing on, not missing a step. Rich took a deep breathe too, but, decided to miss a step or two. Quite impressive! That hill was the end of me. Nevertheless we made it back in 50 minutes, whereas it was 1:19 on the way up. Must have been mostly downhill. 3:01 total and time for lunch.

"Is there a Subway in town", someone asks? "Yes", said I, "at the Conoco". Subway it was – six inches this time and wouldn't you know a local menu – bison subs. Tatanka, and as chance would have it the sub maker was a history buff and spoke some Cheyenne. Mike is of Native American ancestry, spent several summers on the Rosebud reservation and studied Lakotah. After a delightful lunch – I should have stuck with the sub and forgotten the chili – we learn that Old Dog in the Lakotah language to Shunka tunkaska and Crazy Dog is Shunka wiatka. At the airline check in in Grand Rapids the ticket agent addressed Old Dog as

“Professor”. Now which name will stick for the winter? Back to the hotel, hot tub, nap, wrapped in burial shrouds and no more skiing for the day. Supper was also out of the question and we went back to the Holiday Inn where we met a just arrived, Mike Muha, Randy Kessler and Greg Worrel of Team Nordic Ski Racer. John Aalberg walked up outside the bar.

Tuesday – November 23

Bob definitely has a cold this morning and decides to take the day off. Mike has been skiing two longer than us and plans to continue three days after us so he takes the day off as well. For Steve and I it's **“Demo Days”**. Fischer, Rossignol, Atomic, Madschus, Swix, Toko and Saloman are ready and waiting to fit us with skis, boots and poles. Please try my stuff, please. I have an ankle problem and last year it got so painful that skating was difficult and classic was impossible. A visit to the doctor, podiatrist, MRAs, much physical therapy and drugs have resulted in a pain free ankle. The Saloman skating boots still hurt a little on the roller skis so I bought a pair of the new Fischer skating boots. I was eager to try them at West Yellowstone. 13 hours of pretty much pain free skiing. They feel great. I really don't miss the cuff for stability. This morning, I wanted to try the Fischer Classical boots. They felt good, but not as good as the skating boots. I might buy a pair this year. This is not a knock on Saloman. I think it is just that my injury and the skating boot may not be compatible.

I tried Atomic skate skis next. Atomic fits skis with a soft camber. These were 71 kg and 2.9 mm at 35 kg. They felt good, cornered well and road a good edge. They even felt springy which is a good sign. By normal standards, I should have a ski that is 100 kg or most optimally at 115 kg. I was pleasantly surprised with this pair. I tried the Fischer next. I tried the stiffest pair they had left, 99 kg. They bottomed out at my weight, seemed slower, they tended to catch an edge in turns and seemed squirrely. Rossignol was better but the camber was not quite right. The skis felt fast, cornered well and felt very springy. The F2 is normally recommended for all round ski racing. I got a chance to talk with the ski reps and some Rossi team members. They ski mostly on the F3, a softer snow version. Rossi recommends that the camber be 115% of body weight. Last, I tried Madschus. The rep did not have my camber and like Atomic, Madschus fits skis softer than Rossi or Fischer. I tried the stiffest, Hard Snow pair he had. Camber read 69 kg. They skied really nice and fast, cornered well but certainly did not feel springy. I went back to the tent and spoke with Peter Hale, long time Bozeman resident, US Biathlon Team member and Madschus rep. He pulled out his skis, labeled 61 kg and with the soft tip. My first thought was, why bother, but tried them anyway. They skied fast, cornered well and felt really stable. Steve was out on the trail with a pair of Atomics with a stiff camber, 74 kg and 3.5 mm at 35 kg. If they were too stiff for me they should have been way to stiff for Steve. He liked them and they skied fast. We exchanged skis and our impression were similar, we liked them both.

We did a glide test on each pair. The results for me were as follows: Madschus Soft Tip > Madschus Hard Tip > Atomic = Rossignol > Fischer. The fastness of the soft tip Madschus was surprising to me since this was hard pack boiler plate skiing. Maybe a tip with a long pressure distribution is a better choice for skiers of our ability – certainly it would be for the Birkie in the soft sugar snow. A word of caution about these evaluations – you really need a ski that fits well and is waxed the same to really judge performance. I think any of these skis would be excellent, if fitted properly. These are my impression after three hours of skiing on everyone's skis.

Boots – Atomic, Madschus and Rossignol make their own boots that fit the NNN binding system. I am a Saloman skier, so the choices are Saloman and Fischer. I can't say enough about the Fischer boot. It was new. I took out the liners and replaced them with arch supports. They felt really good. I definitely did not miss the supporting cuff. I did not try Saloman – tired of broken eyelets and zippers, frankly. The NNN boots felt really good. For the first time the Rossignol boot felt good when I first put them. They also felt real good skiing. I think I liked the Atomic boot better than the Madschus, but both were good.

Three hours of skiing on different equipment and we are tired. Altitude is taking its toll. That and we couldn't get an easy day in Yellowstone Park like previous years due to low snow levels. We round up the crowd at the hotel and head out for lunch as a local 50's café place. Should have stuck with the chili and left off the tater tots. Stuffed again. Back to the hotel for naps and movies. I never realized that I was traveling with three Wizard of Oz affeciantos. "My little pretty..."

Tonight is the opening of the Ski Expo. Doors open at 7 PM and Thomas Alsgaard speaks at 8 PM. Hoards of teenagers mob the Atomic booth where Aubrey Smith and Patrick Weaver are signing autographs – last year it was Justin Wadsworth. Didn't see much new – but Swix has an extreme cold wax LF3 selling for about \$30 as a powder. Last year I converted from Start Green to Swix LF4 and CH3 and was really pleased. Swix says LF3 is better. Then a full auditorium for Thomas Alsgaard who is making the transition from skier to public speaker. He talked about his life up to that point, which he said was short so hopefully this won't take too long. It was an insightful talk and certainly inspirational for all the young talent there. He's getting married next month. Who sits down next to us but Jeanne Wadsworth and the Bend Oregon crowd. Russ Barkman was due in the next day. Dick Hunt is working on Steve for a Giro d'Italia next fall, or is Steve working on Dick.

Wednesday – November 24

Change of plans says Smigiel at 7 AM. It has snowed. Let's ski our own stuff and get out there early, be the first one's on the trail. We weren't first but passed a group of Alaskans skiing classical in about 3K. It was all to ourselves and the skiing was excellent. We climb Hill 191 and Smigiel starts sneaking off down Dead Dog hoping I'll follow. That's not the plan but I follow anyway. We are done with Dead Dog in 50 minutes. Down Cabin Hill, a quick left and up Déjà vu. It's snowing harder, but the trail is ours. The snow is like little ball bearings. This is why we ski. The sun is rising, no views today then, all of sudden, we ski back to life at the biathalon range. Plenty of teaching sessions going on, then at the trailhead the world is alive and colorful again. We hop into the truck, drive back to the hotel, pack our skis, change clothes, pay up, say goodbye to Mike and drive back to Bozeman. Eat subs at 12:00 and check in at 12:30 for a 1:55 flight. In Minneapolis, they list the flights as on time but a call from Carole says the GR airport is closed. I ask the clerk and he says it doesn't look good. We wait. Finally the cloud layer lifts and we take off. Bob, going to South Bend, isn't so lucky – he spends the night in Minneapolis. We get home to 12 inches of icy snow. No one wants to pick us up so we rent an SUV and drive home – not that bad driving. In bed by 12 – wake up around 11 – another West Yellowstone adventure in the books.

"Piss on a bush and no one knows" – Smigiel

"A dog that shits fast doesn't shit long" – Kennan

“Some days you’re the pigeon and some days you’re the statue” – Road sign by Airport.