



BIRKIE XXXVI

Greetings fellow Birchleggers;

Can you believe that Birkie XXXVI is upon us? This means that the Birchleggings Club has been in existence for 16 years. Some of you will recall the early years when we were struggling to build a large enough membership to organize a meaningful gathering and design and fund the Club award. In our second year (1993) we only added four new Birchleggers, but by last year our number approached 800 and this year we have 87 skiers registered for their 20th Birkie. This also means that we are now strong enough as an organization to act upon some of our goals that we set for ourselves when the Birchleggings Club was formed. Below I will outline some plans that can move us in that direction.

FIRST SOME UPDATES:

We will again hold our **Annual Birchleggings Awards Breakfast** on Sunday Feb. 22, at the **Lumberjack Steakhouse**, next to Ramada Inn on Highway 27 in Hayward. Upon requests from many of you we will keep the **9AM** time. The arrangements are similar as in the past, i.e. buffet style breakfast (at \$10.00 per person - tickets purchased at the door), followed by award presentations and a short business meeting.

BJORN DAEHLIE to attend Awards Breakfast

We are also excited to announce a very special guest. Norwegian skier **BJORN DAEHLIE**, generally considered the greatest cross country ski racer of all time, will be skiing the Birkie and attending our Awards Breakfast, as part of the Ski for Cure program on behalf of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. We hope to see many of you there, particularly the new inductees and those of you who missed us last year.

MORE GOOD NEWS for classic technique enthusiasts: As you probably know by now, the new classic only trail, paralleling the original course, has been extended all the way to Highway OO. The trail is receiving high praise from skiers who have tied it. We are also seeing a marked increase in the number of classical skiers registering for the race.

AND NOW IT IS TIME TO SWING INTO ACTION

When the Birchleggings Club was conceived it charted a much deeper purpose than simply recognizing individuals for their continued participation in the American Birkebeiner. Referring to our statement of purpose (found on our web page) we find the following:

"The Founders felt that the Birchleggings Club would be a strong promoter of continued participation in the American Birkebeiner and would contribute toward enhancement of the rich traditions that mark the Birkie as a unique skiing event in not only North America but the world! "

Over the years many ideas have been offered, but no concrete action has been forthcoming. Last year, at our Awards Breakfast we encouraged contributions to Tony Wise Legacy Fund, a long-term fund raising program, initiated some years ago by a small number of original donors. The idea is to grow the fund and use

the interest earned for a range of needs for running the race and nurturing the sport of cross country skiing. Unfortunately, the fund has not grown, simply because no effective mechanism has been created to run it. I propose that the Birchleggings Club assumes this role. In consultation with many Birchleggers we came up with the following proposal. Instead of the current \$10 membership fee we have been requesting for covering our basic expenses (mainly awards and mailing) we establish a \$25 annual fee and use the funds to 1) continue funding the Birchleggings awards, 2) endow the Tony Wise Legacy Fund (TWLF) and 3) establish several scholarships and/or grants for young skiers. With our current number of over 800 Birchleggers we could bring in \$20,000 this year and the amount would grow as the number of Birchleggers grows. While the major portion of this amount would go into TWLF, the memorial scholarships would promote young skier participation and also honor important personalities that have made a mark on the race. Initially, we propose the following names for memorial scholarships: Tony Wise (Birkie founder), Sven Wiik (designer of the original Birkie trail, who also skied the first race as the oldest participant at age 50) and Marty Hall (former U.S. Olympic coach and designer of the current Birkie trail). The nature and mechanism for granting these awards need to be developed and your input is solicited. Please keep an eye on the Birchleggings web site for new information.

IF THIS WILL BE YOUR 20TH BIRKEBEINER please read on:

Dear Birkebeiner Veteran,

Upon completion of this year's Birkebeiner you will have earned the privilege to become a member of the Birchleggings Club, an informal but prestigious organization of people who have 20 Birkebeiners. We congratulate you for your achievement and welcome you to our group, now numbering over 800 committed Birkie veterans.

Starting with this year's race you will have a privilege of wearing a special purple and gold Birchleggings race bib. You will also receive a classy award. If you have not seen one, it consists of 4.5" x 5.5" clear acrylic plate (looks like glass) with attached brushed-gold coin with a multilevel die image of our logo. A brass plate on the walnut base includes your name and the year of your 20th finish.

We cordially invite you to attend our Annual Birchleggings Award breakfast where you will be individually recognized. The awards will be mailed to those who could not attend our Sunday event.

The Birchleggings Club is a group of enthusiastic and creative skiers. You will learn more about our goals and projects at our Hayward event and in future newsletters.

We are looking forward to seeing you at the race and our awards event.

Wishing you lots of joyful skiing and will see you at Birkie XXXVI

John Kotar, Birchleggings Club President

IN MEMORIAM

LEONARD GIBBS

Fellow Birchlegger and best friend Leonard Gibbs (No. 178) passed away in June 2009 after a long fight with cancer.

On his suggestion and insistence, Len and I skied our first Birkie together in 1976. Len completed 27 Birkies, but more significantly, he was responsible for leading numerous others to the challenge of this great skiing event.

Our traditional Birkie group of 11 skiers (includes 6 Birchleggers) has now skied a total of 199 Birkies.

This is the legacy for which we thank him. We know he is with us any time our skis are on the snow.

— Dave Balsiger

2009 BIRCHLEGGINGS CLUB ANNUAL FEE *just* \$25

BIRCHLEGGER _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE (S) _____

EMAIL _____

SEND DUES TO:

Dave Balsiger 5703 Lincoln Rd, Oregon, WI 53575 or see *Dave at the Awards Breakfast on Sunday*

AMERICAN BIRKEBEINER BIRCHLEGGINGS CLUB

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