



BIRCHLEGGINGS CLUB

*Recognizing skiers who have completed
twenty or more American Birkebeiner races*

Supporting the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation

www.birchleggings.com



Greetings Birchleggers,

February 2022

As we approach the 48th skiing of the American Birkebeiner and Birkie Week 2022 festivities, it gives me great pleasure to update you on the exciting growth and accomplishments of our Birchleggings Club (BLC) and plans for this winter and beyond.

First the important facts:

1. There will be no Birchleggings breakfast, program, or awards celebration this year. The board discussed this at length and chose to cancel the event due to the unpredictable nature of the current Omicron virus. Disappointed? So are we, but your health and wellbeing is foremost and the breakfast seemed too risky to pull off in a safe manner. It will be back in 2023!!
2. If you are completing your 20th, 30th or 40th Birkie this year **CONGRATULATIONS** on this accomplishment. There are 2 options for you to receive your award:
 - Open Track Skiers can pick up newly designed awards at the Celebration Tent 10am-5pm Thursday/Friday.
 - All Skiers (Birkie and Open Track) can pick up newly designed Birchlegger Awards on Saturday 10am-5pm or Sunday 9am-1pm.
 - The second option is to have the award mailed to you at your expense.
3. We will be hosting a booth at the Birkie Expo on Thursday 10am-8 pm and Friday 9am-8pm in the commons area of the high school. Please visit the club booth after you collect your race packet to say hi, pay your membership dues and find out about how you can participate in club activities. If you can spare an hour or two to help staff our booth please reach out to Jim Tenorio at TenorioJ@uwstout.edu to sign up for a shift.



About Our Club:

Founded by John Kotar, and assisted by Dave Balsiger in 1992, the Birchleggings Club is growing and we want your involvement. There are 1760 Birchleggers (20 + Birkies completed) to date, the Birchleggings club is exclusive to those participants. We would love to have you as an active member.

[Why join our club?](#)



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Our Accomplishments:

We are small but mighty organizing board of mostly old-timer Birkie skiers and we get stuff done. Besides organizing the annual BLC breakfast and awards ceremony and staffing our booth at the Expo, here's a partial list of our recent accomplishments:

- The BLC has formalized an agreement with the ABSF clarifying our partnership.
- Donating \$3,000 to the Becker Law Bridge over Hwy 77.
- Designed and installed the Birchleggings Club Bell at the classic-skate split .5 km from the start line. Listen for the bell this year on Saturday.
- Helped create awareness and ultimately endorsed the ABSF's [Birkie Green initiative](#).
- [As our new banner states](#), the BLC exists to honor 20+ year Birkie finishers and to preserve and support the legacy of the American Birkebeiner
- Become part of our club to share your Birkie story, meet other Birkie Warriors and share your ideas for improving the Birkie experience



Future plans:

Nordic skiing is more popular than ever at all age and ability levels. Our sport is also more dependent on machine made snow every winter. That dependency comes with a high cost of energy and increased carbon emissions. As the ABSF and other organizers struggle to keep their trails maintained and groomed to skier expectations, can we be part of the solution?

The BLC is aware that to keep our sport and the ABSF healthy we must take an active role in lowering our carbon emissions. Meeting the aggressive goals of [Birkie Green](#) to build a Birkie organization that is carbon neutral by 2026 will take a "all hands-on deck" effort.



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To that effort the BLC is creating three member/ community working groups to grow our club and our effectiveness

1. Membership- increasing our active member base and support club activities. BLC Board member Steve Carmazon (45 Birkies) will chair this working group.
2. Fundraising- tasked with increasing our budget to continue our awards program, current donation programs (see website) and work with the ABSF to generate funds for Birkie Green. BLC VP Bob Britz (44 Birkies) will chair this working group.
3. Birkie Green – building awareness and action to support the ABSF in Birkie Green initiatives. Also, to educate the Birkie community to take environmental actions in their home communities. BLC President Paul Thompson (40 Birkies) will chair this working group.

Interested in taking action? Contact me at paul@coolplanetmn.org or 612-810-4664 or visit our web site www.birchleggingsclub.org and share your ideas, questions, and stories.

From my four plus decades with the Birkebeiner from the early days with Tony Wise to being an active member of the BLC, the connecting link for all of us is the friendships and stories. The active Birkie lifestyle keeps us fit, healthy and hopeful for that next perfect snow season.

You are an important part of this legacy. If you are a 20-, 30- or 40-year award winner this year, CONGRATULATIONS, and for all Birchleggers, good work on another year of skiing. Please consider getting involved with our club, especially more women and young Birchleggers, time is coming to pass the baton to the younger generation.

Hope to see you at the Expo or as you pass me in the Open Track on Wednesday.

Stay Safe and Upright.

Paul Thompson- Birchlegger #256
BLC President for our fantastic Board of Directors

