

## Missoula Men and Kalispell Women Claim Titles

University of Montana Golf Course, Missoula - What started as a frosty morning at the University of Montana Golf Course, turned into a beautiful fall day with little wind and lots of sunshine to warm the runners, spectators, and MR&TC regulars who made the event happen. The hot competition at this USATF sanctioned team event warmed the day too, as 21 females and 49 males competed over a 5.3 K course that included grass and dirt paths over hills and log jumps.

The men's race went first, at noon with full teams from Butte, Great Falls, Helena, Kalispell, and Missoula. A torrid early pace set by River Bank Run winner, Mark Wimmer of Great Falls, strung the race out and played to the strength of Missoula's top man, Ted Zderic. Zderic has stated that he likes a fast start, and he has previously shown the stamina to hold his form in a race's late stages. Hold form late is just what he did to surge ahead at mid-race and then to fend off a late charge by Kalispell's 42 year old master's phenomenon, Pete Metzmaker, capturing the individual title by two seconds in 17:11 and leading Missoula to its fourth consecutive team championship by a narrow two point margin over Great Falls. Wimmer placed third in 17:18.

Zderic is a graduate student at the University of Montana, and he primarily competes in triathlons throughout the region as part of Missoula's powerful *Team Stampede*, whose other members also helped form the nucleus of today's Missoula team. Missoula placed its second through fifth runners, (Philip Clark, Robert Sowers, John Hartpence, & Matt Seeley) in the top 14 spots, continuing their domination of this event. And the outspoken Sowers proudly announced "the traveling cup won't be traveling again this year".

At 12:40 p.m., the ladies started their race, which was mostly composed of Helena and Kalispell women. Sadly, Missoula had only four runners enter the race, not enough to form a team to defend their two consecutive titles. But Missoula's runners did provide a great deal of excitement in the race. Almost from the start, a pack of four runners broke away from the rest, with Montana high school's fastest harrier, Elizabeth Roodell, leading. Elizabeth's Kalispell teammate, Vonda Garcia, along with Missoula's Mary Thane and Nicole Murray all ran together for 3k. At that point, Roodell faltered, losing contact with the other three, who traded leads all the way to the 5k mark, which they crossed running three astride, and it became a 300m dash to the finish. Spectators' eyes fixed on the three as they sprinted for glory. Garcia, The University of Montana's all time greatest female miler, showed how she earned that distinction by bolting to a 5 second victory ahead of Thane and then Murray, who are also known as fast finishers. Roodell held fourth place, and together with Garcia, paced Kalispell to a team victory over Helena by a 16 to 39 score, sending the traveling cup to Kalispell for the next year.

Both Garcia and Zderic won a \$100 pair of shoes from High Country Sports of Missoula. High Country once again showed their support for MR&TC events with this generous donation. They deserve great thanks for their sponsorship.

Great thanks are also extended to MR&TC members: Bob Correll who did his usual efficient job organizing the finish and timing; Joe Harlan, course monitor; Gary Hellenga, finish line; Nicole Murray, registration; Robert Sowers, trouble shooting & technical advice; Kennie Weiler, results; Also university runners: Cameron Hardy, results; Bob Miller, registration; Andy Pierce, timing; Donovan Shanahan, starter; Jesse Zentz, timing; and Stampeder: Tony Sabia, course monitor! These wonderful people made the day special for many runners.

And also thank you to the runners from Butte for agreeing to host next year's meet. It will be the first time that the races have been held outside of Missoula, and I expect it will be a move that stimulates growth for the meet. Hope to see you there!

- Ray Hunt, Meet Director