



MONTANA CUP

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2005 Montana Cup Hall of Fame

John Hartpence

John Hartpence was a serious soccer player starting in the third grade. Soccer was hugely popular and highly competitive where Hartpence grew up about three hours drive upstate from New York City. During his freshman year in high school in Burnt Hills, NY, Hartpence joined his school's track team as a means of improve his running for soccer.

Hartpence's success in running track led him to adopt it as his primary sport after his sophomore year. Training for track at Burnt Hills High School was light. Hartpence listed his longest training run for indoor track as twelve minutes. He mostly did fast running in his school's hallways, and that regimen helped him produce a time of 4:33 for 1600 meters, which qualified him for his indoor track state championship.

In outdoor track, Hartpence specialized in the 400 meters (52.7 PR) and the 800 meters (2:02), and he also ran cross-country, but a combination of low training volume and a hodge-podge of different coaches, limited his team's success in that sport.

Limited coaching would not be an issue for Hartpence in college. During his senior season of high school track, Hartpence was investigating affordable colleges that offered excellent degree programs for physical education. Cortland State University of New York rose to the top of Hartpence's list after he telephoned the university's track/cross country coach. The coach assured Hartpence that he could compete for the school's track and cross-country teams, and that was all Hartpence needed to hear to enroll there.

The Cortland State coach was the world-famous running coach, Jack Daniels, and Daniels' university team was loaded with well-trained runners. During Hartpence's freshman year, he was only the seventeenth fastest man on the cross-country squad and he did not get to travel to meets, but that did not discourage him. Hartpence soon caught on to the "[Daniels' Running Formula](#)" and by the next year he had cut three minutes off his 8K time, and he had moved up to third man on the team.

Also during Hartpence's freshman year, a whim carried him back to his hometown to compete in a triathlon. And with very little triathlon-specific training Hartpence won the tri and set a new course record. That event lit a fire in Hartpence that smoldered for four years before he would stoke the flame in his second triathlon.

John Hartpence awaiting the starter's gun at the first Montana Cup in 1992 in Missoula.



Hartpence was a "Clydesdale" type runner. He stood 1.85 meters and weighed 84 kilos while he was in college, so his body wasn't suited for running the higher training volumes that small runners might. His endurance for running was good, but it would be his power production on a bike that would eventually contribute to Hartpences' greatest physical achievements.

When Hartpence's senior year of college was coming to a close, he understood that he would need a master's degree in order to secure a teaching job, so he went to the library and did a cross-reference search for good Physical Education graduate programs located in outdoor settings with opportunities for training. Coach Daniels' alma mater, the University of Montana, soon became Hartpence's top choice despite his having never been any where near Montana before.

Graduate school pulled Hartpence into Missoula in the fall of 1992, just in time for the first Montana Cup. He was not in his best running condition, but he was soon

back to training. Shortly thereafter Hartpence collaborated with two other UM grad. students to form Missoula's triathlon club, [Team Stampede](#), and members of *Team Stampede* would form the nucleus of Missoula's undefeated Montana Cup team for the next seven years.

John Hartpence's Montana Cup History				
Year	Location	Ind. Place	Team Place (pts)	Notes
1992	Missoula	15	1 (8)	Only 3 runners counted in scoring.
1993	Missoula	4	1 (29)	Joined Robert Sowers as Missoula's co-team organizer
1994	Missoula	6	1 (25)	
1995	Missoula	14	1 (40)	Beat Great Falls by 2 points
1996	Butte	4	1 (22)	Arrived at meet with "MOTANA CUP DREAM TEAM" advertised on the side of Hartpence's team van.

1997	Butte	14	1 (34)	Sole Missoula team organizer after Robert Sowers moved to Alaska.
1998	Butte	13	1 (54)	

In the pre-Internet era, Hartpence and friends promoted membership in and sponsorship for *Team Stampede* by word-of-mouth. As the team grew, Hartpence's home came to be known in Missoula as the "Tri-pad" because many of the "Stampeders" either lived there or they visited there often. The Montana Cup traveling trophy also stayed at the Tri-pad for 364 days per year. Hartpence was often overheard telling other Montana Cup teams that the Cup was theirs to view for one day each year, but that the rest of the time it stayed at his house.

Hartpence was an extraordinary recruiter. He and co-team organizer Robert Sowers scouted the best Missoula runners each year and then they sold those runners with the importance of winning the Montana Cup.

At the zenith of Missoula's Montana Cup dominance in 1996, Hartpence drove his van into Butte for the meet with a big banner on the side that read "MONTANA CUP DREAM TEAM." That team included defending champ Ted Zderic, two-time former champ Robert Sowers, Hartpence, Andy Pierce, Matt Seeley, Gabe Gilmore, and Jeff Stratton. All seven of those runners placed in the top ten on Butte's momentum-enhancing course that lost 120 meters altitude in just 6K.

Hartpence achieved what he considered to be his greatest athletic feat in 1998, when he left June's dry Montana climate for the triathlon amateur national championships in Clearmont, Florida. The mid-summer tropical heat and steam of Florida was nothing like Montana, but Hartpence still excelled in the Olympic distance triathlon (1500m swim, 40K bike, & 10K run) by riding the fastest bike split of the day to a fourth place overall finish in 2:01:41.

Hartpence remained in Missoula through the 1998 Montana Cup, after most of his "Dream Team" had moved away, and that year Hartpence led Missoula to what may have been its most **hard-fought victory** over Kalispell's outstanding high school team. Hartpence's team had just a single runner finish in the top ten, and only eleven points separated the top four teams, but once again Missoula walked away with the Cup.

1999 finally saw Hartpence lose his grasp on the Cup when he relocated back to New York to work as an assistant track and cross-country coach at Hamilton College. A year later he moved again to Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania where he is now the men's and women's **head track and field coach**. Hartpence specializes in training his team's jumpers at the Division III school. His teams have won six conference titles and he has twice been named as his region's "Coach of the Year". Hartpence does not coach cross-country, and he is content to remain in that capacity because it frees his fall weekends for his own racing schedule.



John Hartpence, Dickinson College's Head Track & Field Coach.

In his own words: "The Montana Cup was always my favorite race while I lived in Montana. I was fortunate to run in the first seven editions of the race with the first being part of my original comeback to running. As time passed, my focus became more on triathlon and cycling but each fall I looked forward to moving our workouts from the track to the University Golf Course for XC workouts in preparation for the Montana Cup.

"The greatest part of the Montana Cup was the team aspect of the race. Having to recruit and assemble all the local "greats" on one day to do battle with the other teams from across the state: Robert Sowers, Steve Simpson, Matt Seeley, Ted Zderic battling man-for-man. Every year it seemed like a new challenger and every year we somehow found a way to win.

"I was also fortunate to be the "holder" of the Cup, since the house I lived in usually was home to the most active participants on the team each year. It was a trophy we held in great regard. I left Montana after being on the winning team for the first seven years of the Cup's existence. When Missoula finally lost the title I was very angry. I still think it was because the team "sold out" and recruited HS runners for the first time... but that's a whole other issue!

"I want to thank Ray [Hunt] for getting the Montana Cup going and keeping this race alive over many years and in many venues, with my favorite being the original [1996] **downhill course** in Butte. The quad pounding course and significant elevation loss certainly contributed to this 190lb triathlete matching his best MT Cup finish (4th).

"Long live the Montana Cup... and Missoula, please bring the title back home!"