



MONTANA CUP

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2011 Montana Cup Hall of Fame

Tony Banovich, a man of color.



2003 Billings' old Purple



2004 Billings' Black



2007 Missoula's Maroon



2008 Kalispell's White

As a youth growing up in the Mining City, Tony Banovich's first inspirations as a runner came from the local Veteran's Day race and from the legendary Butte Central championship cross country teams of the 1970s. It wasn't long before he too became a Maroon and made his mark on the program, contributing to three podium finishes for the team and twice earning All State honors individually.

But it wasn't until enrolling in Barton County Community College (Great Bend, KS) that Tony truly began to hit his stride. As a still developing 19 year old, he posted a blazing sub-15 minute 5000m on the track. Although he was presented with offers to run at other colleges, Tony decided to move back to his native Butte to pursue a geological engineering degree at Montana Tech. While Tech had no formal running programs at the time, Tony resumed training with good friend and fellow student Jeff Thomas. The pair had previously trained together during Tony's junior and senior years of high school, when Jeff had first moved from the Capital City.

This informal training regimen clearly paid dividends. Tony knew he had "arrived" when he was able to get the best of prominent stallions like Bob Boland and Bob Stingley at the 1983 Oktoberfest run in Great Falls.

Upon graduation, Tony moved to Plains for a couple of years, followed by a four-year stint in the Palm Springs area. But, a Montanan to the core, Tony was thrilled to move to Billings in 1991, where he began his long-term tenure as a leader of the local running community and a fixture on the state racing circuit. It was during this time that Tony enjoyed the close camaraderie afforded by the "Church of the Blue Dome" -- a Sunday morning training group that included the likes of Alan King, Dave Coppock, Sam Hartpence, Kelly Fulton, Jarred Resnvold, Scott Brown, and Zach Hunter. "It was an incredible energy from a running perspective -- and, it helped solidify some long-lasting friendships."



Tony Banovich second from left with fellow Blue Dome Church goes Zach Hunter, Alan King and Kelly Fulton (L to R).

Some of his many running achievements, from the Billings era and before include:

- first and only man to win all four classic Governor's Cup events (and the Marathon Relay)
- three-time champion in the Butte Veterans' Day Race (in three different decades)
- four-time champion in the Anaconda St. Patrick's Day 6 Mile
- two-time champion in the John Colter Run
- course record holder in the Big Butte 11k (1984)
- 37:51 at Bloomsday (1986)
- 2:28 Marathon PR at age 38 (Cleveland, 2001)
- 2004 Snow Joke champion, with a masters time of 1:13:39
- 44th male in the 2004 Boston Marathon, placing 5th in his age group (40-45)

His accomplishments at the Montana Cup have been similarly impressive. He has competed in nearly every installment since 1996, despite some serious medical challenges in recent years. He has six top-ten finishes, was runner-up in 1997 and meet champion in 2000 (an excellent year for Tony, which also included a 15:35 5000m at the USATF National meet at age 38). In the masters division, he has four top-ten finishes to his name, including runner-up in 2005 and masters champion in both 2003 and 2004.



Tony Banovich at Camp Waterloo in 2005

While he was building this outstanding record of personal success, he was also making significant contributions to the event itself. Tony served as meet director for the highly successful 2003 Montana Cup, and will be reprising that role in Plains for Montana Cup XXI. Just one example of his selflessness in the cause of improving the Cup was to have the Billings club retire the "jersey debt" that had been passed from town-to-town leading up to the 2003 race. Tony is also a long-serving member of the Montana Cup Committee, and in 2005 graciously assumed the role of Secretary for Life for the committee's meetings. He was an enthusiastic participant in the committee's retreats at Camp Waterloo (2005) and Camp Vigilante (2011), and generously hosted Camp Vermillion on his family's property (2008).

Tony has been a team organizer for the Montana Cup for many years, but not always for the same region. Much like the event itself, he has taken a "tour" of the state -- at least

when it comes to jersey colors. From 2000-2003, Tony proudly donned the purple of the Billings region. In 2004, in a change Tony attributes to Ray Hunt, the color for Billings was switched to basic, bad-ass black. Tony ran masterfully in that hue until he moved back to the Plains area prior to the 2007 race. Thinking he was now part of the Missoula region, an area he clearly identifies with, Tony was able to return to the maroon of his youth. But a subsequent geographic analysis placed him slightly over the boundary into the Kalispell region, leading to his current jersey color of white. In fact, the only colors he hasn't run in are Great Falls red, Helena blue, Bozeman yellow, and (ironically) Butte green. Those teams will continue to hold out hope that this Hall of Fame runner will someday have reason to join their ranks. Bravo, Tony, for all that you've accomplished, and all that you've contributed. Here's hoping to see you on the roads, tracks, and trails for many years to come!

In his own words: "Montana Cup is about all of the good things of the sport coming together. It's competitive, it's social, it spotlights all the different geographic areas, it's created relationships ... and not just the one day, but throughout the year."

"I've been blessed to have found a sport/life activity that is so embracing. I'm constantly humbled by and thankful for the friendships that I've made over the many years in this sport."

Tony Banovich, aka "The Muddy Buzzard," shares his "Musings on the Trials of Miles in Big Sky Country" on his blog: <http://bigskymiles.blogspot.com/>

He also imparts his wisdom, experience, and competitive fire to the lucky youth of the Plains Cross Country and Track programs.

To learn more about Tony Banovich, see his January 2012 interview with 406running.com.



Tony Banovich racing through the mud in Bozeman's 2009 Cup.

Tony Banovich's Montana Cup History						
Year	Location	Ind. Place Overall	Team Place (pts)	Ind. Place Masters	Masters' Team Place (pts)	Notes
2016	Bozeman	166	2 (57)	48	3 (90)	
2015	Helena	100	1 (25)	37	3 (52)	Switched to Team Missoula and organized masters mens' team
2014	Missoula	103	2 (69)	44	5 (117)	Became <i>Run Wild</i> Missoula's Executive Director
2013	Butte	DNC				
2012	Kalispell	76	2 (63)	24	Inc	Meet Director
2011	Great Falls	88	3 (89)	26	5 (119)	
2010	Billings	73	Inc	18	Inc	Ran despite undergoing treatment for a chronic heart condition
2009	Bozeman	56	Inc	13	Inc	
2008	Helena	66	7 (211)	15	Inc	Organized MT Cup retreat at Camp Vermillion near Plains Realigned with Team Kalispell and became Team Organizer Recovering from fractured patella
2007	Missoula	93	1 (34)	31	2 (54)	Moved to Plains -- competed for Team Missoula
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2006	Butte	22	(86)	6	Inc	
2005	Kalispell	10	Inc	2	Inc	Member of Camp Waterloo where he helped form the MT Cup Committee and was elected lifetime "sexretary" of that group.
2004	Great Falls	11	Inc	1	NA	
2003	Billings	4	4 (68)	1	NA	Meet Director
2002	Bozeman	21	Inc	6	NA	
2001	Helena	DNC	NA	NA	NA	Son had race-day appendectomy
2000	Helena	1	3 (65)	NA	NA	Became Billings' team organizer
1999	Butte	4	Inc	NA	NA	
1998	Butte	DNC	NA	NA	NA	
1997	Butte	2	Inc.	NA	NA	
1996	Butte	5	3 (70)	NA	NA	Member of team Billings