

Rocky Mountain Outlook

Good snow blesses Loppet event

Jan 27, 2011 06:20 pm | Justin Brisbane

Blaine Penny and Kirk Howell crossed the finish line together to win the 2011 Banff to Lake Louise Loppet in a time of 4:44:18.

The two Calgarians are originally from Newfoundland and have been competing against one another for years. Penny won the race last year, but this year, the two crossed together hand in hand.

“We just tried to keep it steady,” Penny said. “The snow changed quite a bit over the race.”

Snow conditions were good this year for the 160 competitors, which carried them 72 kilometres from the Chateau Lake Louise to Central Park in Banff.

“We learned last year skiing on pavement is not good for skis,” Penny said. “This year was better because there was lots of snow.”

“The trails were a little soft, and that changed the way we skied,” Howell said.

Canmore’s Yvon Sevigny was close behind, finishing in a time of 4:44:47. The top three skiers stuck together for most of the race, although Howell dropped back early on due to wax issues. He caught up after the pack began to spread out.

Sevigny was pleased with his result, and plans to try more long distance races.

“This was my first long distance race – I like to skate. The longest before this was a 45 km masters race,” Sevigny said.

All three have already made plans to return to the race next year, as they complemented the laid back atmosphere surrounding the loppet.

“Cross-country skiing makes you live longer, I think,” Sevigny said. “I guess I’ll find out soon.”

Howell had his own reasons for competing. “It makes the beer taste better.”

Banffite Tom Maier finished third in the individual race as part of his ‘farewell’ tour. He’s leaving for North Carolina with his wife next month.

“I beat the Town of Banff relay team, and that was my goal,” Maier said with a smile.

He praised the conditions on the course, and said there was lots of double poling.

On the women’s side, perennial favourite Marg Fedyna won the race in a time of 5:17:36. The 2005 24-hour world solo champion dominated from start to finish.

“Leg four was the most challenging. It was along the pavement with not much room to ski,” she said.

Liz Pye finished second in the solo women’s category, followed by Jessica Stichelbout.

In the team event, Team Obsydian (Julianna and Blake Burwash, Holly and Scott Vandermeer) took top spot with a time of 5:08:02. All are well-known in local ski communities, as Scott Vandermeer used to coach in Canmore.

“It’s a fun event. The snow was good and it was just fun to get out,” Holly Vandermeer said.

Team Lifesport (Kat, Jon and Timmy Amundson) finished second in a time of 5:14:14, while the Dancing Queens (Sue Calder, Jessica Stichelbout, Jen Kaufman, Brianna Burley and Sheena Miller) finished third (5:14:28)



Justin Brisbane
Pictured left to right, Yvon Sevigny, Blaine Penny
and Kirk Howell finished in the top three at the Banff
to Lake Louise loppet on Sunday.
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