

Feb. 2008

This month had some ups and downs. I started off the month with a half day at work and a trip out to Northfield to set the course for the Northfield Mountain snowshoe race. I stopped along the way at Lake Dennison in Winchendon. This was one of the towns I haven't run in and Lake Dennison looked like an interesting place to go for a run. I parked and quickly changed into my running gear. Apparently while I was tying my shoes a police car pulled up and observed my "suspicious activity". The policeman came to the window with his hand on his gun asking what I was doing. I explained that I was heading out for a run, but he wanted to know what I had stuck under the front seat. I admit to giving some attitude as the cop was giving some to me. He ended up checking my license and warning me that I shouldn't "act suspiciously" when a police car pulls up. I reminded him that I wasn't doing anything illegal and never saw him pull up. I guess Winchendon will be one of the Mass towns that I won't be going back to any time soon.

I drove over to Northfield and set the course in a wintry mix of snow/sleet/rain. The snow was packed and fast, not the type of racing conditions that I like. After setting the course I had planned on bagging a couple of more towns, but the weather was not cooperating. I settled for an easy (sort of) out and back run up to the top of Sugarloaf Mountain in Deerfield. I hadn't been there since 1985 when I hiked it with Jim Sul.



Jim & me @ 100K run

That night it poured rain. I was worried about the snow levels at Northfield, but was pleasantly surprised at how well the snow had held up. Unlike the day before, the snow was heavy and slow which was much more to my liking. Cath and Rose

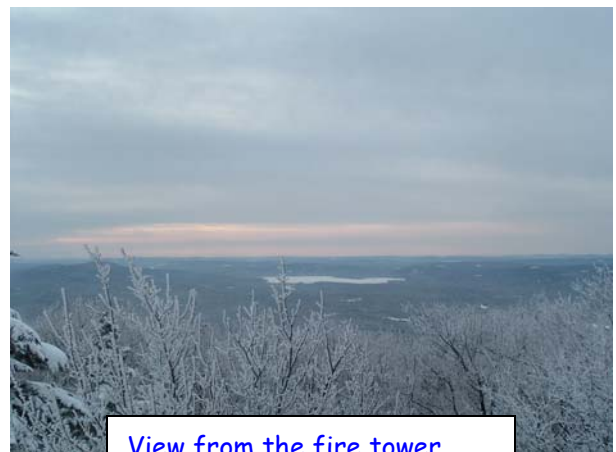


Petey is the only one smiling.

had registration under control so I got a short 10 minute warm-up on the course. The turn-out was decent with nearly 40 on the line. I stormed out to the lead early and began to regret the quick start as the climb to the viewing platform took its toll. I imagined everyone closing on me on the slow section on the upper parts of the mountain. After the viewing platform I took a long look to see who was behind me and how close they were. The downhill run was a blast! I had some hesitations as it wasn't always obvious which way the trail went. I had put out 300+ flags to mark the course, but with the many twists and turns (and the lack of footprints) made it difficult to guess where the course was going. It is amazing how different a course looks when you are racing it.

I ended up winning the race and got (mild) grief from my sister. "Pretty lame winning your own race" were the words that greeted me at the finish. The CMS group plus Ethan went out and cleared the course which was great fun. Having friends along is so much better than having to do it on my own! My lasting impression from the race was the "ice cream headache" I got from kicking slush up with my snowshoes and having it land on my head and drip down my back.

The following week was the New Hampshire snowshoe weekend with races in Sandwich (Homer says - mmmmm, sandwich) and Plaistow. I headed out before sunrise on Saturday and was surprised at how quickly the amount of snow increased. The ground was bare heading through Portsmouth, but by the time I'd passed Rochester the snow banks were quite high. My first stop wasn't the race, as I drove to Effingham to run up/down Green Mountain. The bonus is that all day I got to say "Effingham", which cracks me up (it seems like almost a curse f-ing ham). The trail up the mountain was lightly used but seemed to be packed down except for three or four inches of powder. I ran the 1.5 miles and 1,000' of climb at an easy pace, keeping something in reserve for the race. The only tricky part was ascending/descending the fire tower to



View from the fire tower

the viewing platform. The stairs are very narrow and they had 2' of snow on them. I took a couple of pictures before bounding back down to the base. The run down was a lot of fun, it was fast but not out of control and there was just enough powder to make it very low impact.

Kevin Tilton and I got in a nice easy three miles on the road then went out on snowshoes for a mile with Bob Dion. RD Paul Kirsch thought the snow would be fast, but it seemed heavy and slow despite most of the course having been snowmobiled on. Paul got the largest field yet for the Sidehiller race and we got an excellent course with some spectacular views. Kevin took off at the start and gapped me in the first $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. For the next 3 miles I would close the gap on the uphill and he would move ahead on the flats and downs. Did I mention that he skied for 9 hours the day before? I gave him everything I had, but could never quite get back up with him. We did a very short warm-down and went to the road crossing to thank the work crew. Paul got the police and a DPW crew to cover the road with snow for our crossing. It was kind of neat to see how into it they were. After a car passed they'd fix the snow and smooth out the crossing. It was great to see pretty much the entire town (including the Sandwich Sandwich shop where you could get a free Sandwich) support the race. I zipped back to Lawrence and spent until 6:00 PM working at VITA (Volunteer income tax assistant).



Bumble-
bee

The next day I had the shortest drive to a snowshoe race that I'd have all year. Frosty's has had a sketchy history which is typical for a race near the Eastern part of the state. The first year the race was held IN a blizzard, last year there was no snow and a cross-country race was held. This year it didn't appear that there would be enough snow on the ground, but I was pleasantly surprised. There was enough (barely) to have a race. Unfortunately the course would have to be a loop with another loop that crossed over itself (more on that later). I went out on the road for three miles and felt pretty much dead on my feet. I was surprised to see Craig Fram running down the road and doubly surprised to see him wearing headphones (and Capri tights?).

The field took off at the start at what seemed a fairly easy pace. I moved to the lead and was feeling pretty good for the first mile. Then a guy in a Whirlaway shirt went flying by me, followed by an "older" looking guy. I was struggling and they just seemed to float away. By two miles I was looking back on the turns to see how close Dave Hannon and Ken Clark were. I was really surprised to see a woman running with them, until I noticed she did not have on snowshoes! I ended up in third place and for the first time this year I was not top 40+ as Todd Lagimonier took second and top 40+. Patrick Ard's winning pace was right around 6 minutes per mile, definitely out of my range. It may be the first time I was beat by two guys who were doing their first snowshoe race.

The next weekend was one of the races I'd been thinking about for the entire winter. I'd never done the Martha's Vineyard 20 mile race and never been to the Vineyard at all. I figured it would be a great way to get most of the towns (the race) and if I went a day early I could get the county high point and the remaining towns. Ken Tripp was up for racing and checking out the island, so we met on Friday morning after I put in a half-day at work (still out by 10 AM!). We took the noon ferry over and it was a very rough 45 minute crossing. The waves were huge. Most of the talk was about how windy it was and how much windier it was expected to be on race morning. We drove to the Western most point of the island and did an easy three mile run in Gay Head (heh, heh, heh). I was still a bit queasy from the ferry ride, but Ken seemed to be doing well. The wind was really fierce! We then drove to Chilmark and did another three mile run, this time stopping briefly for me to summit the Island and County (Dukes) high point on Peaked Hill. We actually hit the HP twice during our run and it was a nice change to be running off road during this very snowy winter. Our final stop of the day was West Tisbury where we attempted to find a fire tower. We were unsuccessful but during our 3-mile run did see some of the biggest goats we'd ever seen.



Peaked Hill
Dukes
County
High Point

I think Ken was slightly amazed at the pre-race dinner I had. I got a pizza that must have weighed about 10 pounds, which for the \$20 was well worth it. Ken claims to love ice cream but I made it through my pint of Ben & Jerry's and left him in the dust.

Race day was nowhere near as windy as the day before and not close to the predicted low of around 20. Our warm-up was a leisurely stroll from the car to the starting line. A couple of guys bolted out at the start and Ken & I settled in with a large group. I was kind of annoyed by all of the nonsensical talking that was going on and after a mile we pulled away and settled into 6:00 miles. I just don't understand people who talk while racing, I guess I never will. Ken pulled away from me at 4 miles but I felt the pace (sub-6) was a bit too fast. I moved into sixth place just after the five mile mark and watched Ken slowly move up on the next couple of guys. The course was really nice with stretches along the ocean including the location where Jaws was shot (<http://www.movie-locations.com/intromovies/jaws.html>). I hit 10 miles right on pace but was pretty tired from 10-15 into the wind. I kept hoping that when I got to 15 we'd be out of the wind, but it was still a cross to head wind. Ken had an excellent run (must have been the good coaching) taking fourth. I was pleased with my run, but surprised that although I was seventh I was third in the 40+.



Gay Head Light

My calf muscles were a bit sore after the race but otherwise I felt pretty good. Unfortunately two days later my right calf cramped up and I ended up with a first degree strain. I missed a day of running which broke my streak that went back to April of 2007. I then re-strained it a week later and missed another two days. This ended my plans for racing the 50K nationals and a couple of snowshoe races. I've slowly eased back and hope to be racing again at New Bedford on March 16.

Feb. Totals

289 miles with 3 days off, Best Feb. since 2002 Weeks of - 90/91/91/51

Races	Where	Dist.	Time	Place	Name
02/02/08	Northfield, MA	3.70	34:52	1	Northfield Snowshoe race
02/09/08	Sandwich, NH	4.00	33:23	2	Sidehiller Snowshoe race
02/10/08	Atkinson, NH	2.90	19:30	3	Frosty's Dash
02/16/08	Tisbury, MA	20.00	2:02:51	7	Martha's Vineyard 20m

Towns I bagged:

Winchendon, Whatley, Deerfield, Gay Head (Aquinnah), W Tisbury, Chilmark, Tisbury, Oak Bluffs, Edgartown Mass. Total = 228 of 351 (65% complete)

Feb. 29 down the years

1980 In between indoor and outdoor track didn't run.

1984 Wednesday recovering from strep throat 6 miles - 32 mile week

1988 Monday 11 miles (24 miles the day before) - 85 mile week

1992 Saturday. 16 miles with **Artie** and **big Mike** 1:56 (30 miles the next day) - 135 mile week

1996 Thursday 11 miles - 3 @ lunch 18:39 PM 8m - 53 minutes (foot killing me) - 80 mile week

2000 Tuesday 11 miles - 430 am 4m, PM out/back on river 7m - 84 mile week

2004 Sunday 13m - Recovering from pulled hamstring - 59 mile week

Looking ahead:

I'm hoping to finish March with races at New Bedford (13.1m) and Gilmanton (5km). I'm also hoping to get back on the track doing workouts again, this time on the outdoor track at PA.