

## SPORTS BARREL

# Grand Traverse reaches 10-year mark this weekend

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As the lead teams reached the final possible turnaround point at Star Pass, the final decision came: Myall and Ewert said it was clear and sent everyone over to Aspen.

Fifty-six teams ended up finishing, with Faust and O'Neill earning a full-course victory. Schroer teamed up with Erica Montgomery to take the women's title and Kristen and Penn Newhard won the coed race.

Geo Bullock and Dave Penney joined forces to win the fourth year in 2001, setting a new course record with a time of eight hours and 17 minutes.

**"Blisters are the windows to your soul."**—Chris Gray

In 2002 the race attracted the likes of professional adventure racer Mike Kloser and partner Dan Weiland. Penney and Bullock repeated as champions with Kloser and Weiland hot on their tails the entire race. Bullock and Penney utilized some hometown knowledge of the course to play cat-and-mouse with Kloser and Weiland and shattered the course record in a blistering time of seven hours and 10 minutes.

At that point, a new course was created for the sixth race to help slow down the racers and breathe fresh air into the event.

"We wanted to involve Mt. Crested Butte and make the course a little more challenging," says race organizer Runge.

That sixth race proved to be the most brutal for everyone involved as temperatures were -11 degrees at the start when 102 teams headed out onto the course.



Pat O'Neill and Jimmy Faust 2000

In the end, 61 teams finished the race while some racers were transported from the course to the hospital via helicopter with frostbite. One team took a wrong turn and spent the following night in a cabin before finishing the race the following day.

**"It was a frozen flesh-mass of humanity."**—Geo Bullock

In the end Kloser and Weiland notched their first win and Elizabeth Smith and Sue Sherman brought home the women's title, while Bob and Ruth Wade emerged as the coed champions.

Conditions proved challenging once again for the seventh race in 2004, when a dwindling snow pack had racers running portions of the course.

This time Faust and O'Neill would hold off Kloser and Weiland for the entire race to win their third race, as the two teams battled it out from start to finish.

"That year was the most exciting," said Faust. "We hardly took time to eat."

Ingrid Butts and Carol Quinn teamed up to take their second women's title and set the new course women's record of 10 hours, 26 minutes and 20 seconds. The coed title went to a new pairing of Ellen Miller and William Mattison.

**"It was tougher than a two-dollar steak."**—Pat O'Neill

But Weiland and Kloser would return for the race in 2005 determined to exact revenge, winning the race and setting a record on the new course of seven hours, 48 minutes and 30 seconds.

Pete Swenson and Monique Merrill were the coed winners and Sarah Fuld and Janae Pritchett represented Crested Butte on the



Ginny Bullock and Niki Schroer 1999

podium with the women's title.

Last year proved to be the most exciting with an unbelievable finish to the men's race.

Two teams were deadlocked at the top of Aspen Mountain with nothing but 3,000 vertical descent of groomed trails between them and the finish line.

Penney took the lead on the descent, leaving his partner Eric Sullivan and the other team of Jon Brown and Brian Smith to battle it out.

Penney crossed the finish first and Smith came in behind him, but their partners, Sullivan and Brown, were still duking it out on the final pitch. Brown stacked, then Sullivan went down, and Brown managed to pull himself up and cross the finish just in time, giving the 2006 title to him and Smith.

Andrew Hadley and Jari Kirkland set a new coed record time of eight hours, 48 minutes and 50 seconds and Carol Quinn and Rebecca Dussault crossed with the women's title.

**"Crashes? Oh yeah, we had tons of crashes, but no serious injuries."**

—Taylor Dale

This year, Faust, who has teamed up with O'Neill for the first nine races, is going through rehabilitation from hip surgery and is being forced to sit out. He feels that the level of competition has improved dramatically as the race continues to gain press coverage.

"The competition has increased as it's pulling in teams from other places," explained Faust.

In addition, Faust, who's experienced a broken ski, broken boot and a broken binding in three of the nine races, believes the race truly challenges the lightweight gear most teams are using these days.

"The gear we're on really has no business being where we go," says Faust. "You go from powder, to breakable crust to hard pack. We're all pushing the gear past where it is intended to go."

He did have some recommendations, though, for those venturing into this year's event.

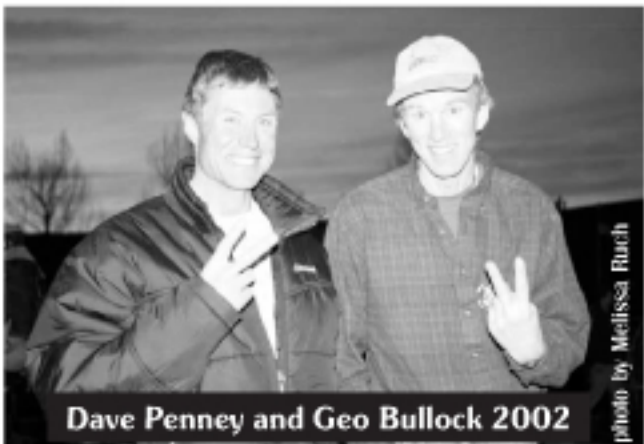
"The preparation is really important," says Faust. "Being familiar with your gear and your stuff and the course. Knowing when you're going to skin, when you're going to wax."

Runge has been involved since day one and looks forward to another successful race.

"It's been a great event that's turned into a worthwhile endeavor," says Runge.

If you're not racing, head up to this year's start at the base of Crested Butte Mountain on midnight Friday, March 30 to help send the teams off into the night.

For more information on this year's race, see related story on page 46.



Dave Penney and Geo Bullock 2002