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Editors Note:

Last issue VP Robin Goodwin brought up the idea of Club uniforms, a suggestion that has garnered some enthusiasm with BRRC Board members. While I am no slave to fashion and, like many other runners, tend to wear whatever running stuff is acquired through gifts and race premiums, I do have one word of soundly advice: COMPRESSION.

Form-fitting compression apparel has become a hot trend in professional sports and it is coming to the running community -- big time! For example, the entire Stanford X-country team wears knee-length compression shorts. Charles Powell II had on compression socks as he rocketed off the start line at the Frozen Finger this year. In contrast, my socks are slow and keep getting slower each year. Compression socks can almost move on their own, while my socks require significant energy. I like to imagine how much faster I would be in compression shorts, shirts, calf-and arm guards, and (of course) socks. Better yet, if we all had new technical compression race uniforms, our Club would have a significant advantage and could save a minute or more per over others. About a 10 minute average time improvement could be expected for each BRRC runner in the Club Challenge in Columbia next year! This could be our big break.

Besides wishful thinking, there is some good science to back up the possibility of dramatic race improvements with technical compression running gear. A recent independent study at Montana State University shows that compression clothing improves running economy. Compression clothes are designed with varying degrees of muscle-specific compression that facilitates increased blood flow to the heart and a reduction in muscle vibration in large muscle groups for greater efficiency, as well as moisture- and smell- wicking

properties. Plus, they look hot and are super-legit.

Actually, while years of cross-country skiing and winter running have adjusted my psyche to accept running tights OK, there is an issue for those of us who are somewhat modest: *compression shorts can look a bit too much like tight underpants*. No offense is meant to the many Club runners who wear them, but some of us should think twice before putting a pair on, even if it is part of the uniform.

I recently failed to emerge from a dressing room wearing a pair of Under Armour compression shorts and looking too much like a Chippendale dancer who'd lost his buff body to starvation. It was not pretty. One could always wear such compression pants under conventional shorts, and I just may start..... Some shorts come with built-in compression undergarments. I have a pair and they are fast, all though they do require extra potty stops.....

Last summer Runners' World magazine showed a new-line of running skirts with built in compression. The Meyer girls were really impressed by these as a viable alternative to shorts. While I am not necessarily in favor of separate men's and women's clothing for the proposed Club uniforms, I do not particularly like seeing guys in skirts. I'm not sure it is a good idea at all.

However, Rory Jenkins was a Club member who could in fact fly in a kilt. Lightning. It may have given Rory a psychological advantage over other racers who would not pass a man in a skirt. A kilt has the added bonus of a built-in *sporrán* for gel storage and a *Dirk* that could be used to lance wounds acquired on trail runs. The warmth of wool would be key, especially on races like the Mt. Mitchell Challenge. Probably at least half the club will head down to North Carolina after reading Henry Pecks' account (pg

10). The testimonials from the winners are great stuff. Serge might even win it next year and it would be a privilege to share a common uniform with such an elite runner (pg 5). I doubt that Serge would wear a skirt. Military attire would be best for Bataan (pg 6). However, in my opinion skirts are in inappropriate for today's men's race circuit even if they are made from compression fabrics.

Reading back over this article, the rambling style may have clouded the issue at hand. SO, allow me to be perfectly clear:

1) The BRRC should consider compression apparel for the newly proposed uniforms. Men's and women's for both summer and winter running are needed.

2) If skirts are on the table for discussion, they should be short fast skirts for women only. No long slow skirts or kilts. No way, no how. Not in our Club.

Of course, I am no slave to fashion but fluorescent colors are practical for night running and for running with deer hunters. We probably should get RFID's (radio frequency identifications) sewn into the hem such that each Club member's time would be posted in real-time on our Club web site and in our Newsletter.

Speaking of which, at the April BRRC Board Meeting, the Board unanimously voted to move toward discontinuing the printed and mailed Newsletter. Cost seemed to be the main reason, while others felt that it was not green. The fact is that information can be disseminated more rapidly on our Club's web site and Face book pages. So, like the newspapers in Seattle, this Newsletter has come to an end.

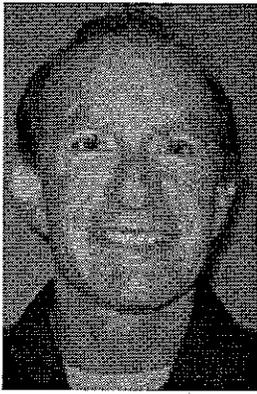
Perhaps I will see you soon in cyber space or, more preferably, on a nice shady trail or at a Club event or somewhere we can RUN!
Jerry

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Ultra Race Report The 2009 Mt. Mitchell Challenge

by Henry Peck

What is the Highest Point East of the Mississippi?!

Nope, it is not Mount Washington! That would be Mount Mitchell in North Carolina, about a 2 hour drive west of Charlotte, at an elevation of 6,684 feet. You may know that there is an annual ultramarathon to the summit. Actually, there are 2 runs on the Mountain, the Black Mountain Marathon and the Mount Mitchell Challenge. The Marathon turns around at 5,340 feet, while the Challenge is 40 miles and goes over the summit. And, fittingly, it is run in February. Check out the website @ www.blackmountain-marathon.com

Being an avid winter mountain climber and ultra runner, this race really appealed to me and I wanted to run it at some point. So this year, when registration opened in October, I entered the Challenge right away and made it on the wait list, and gained entry soon thereafter.

Of course, my preparation included the usual nerding out on the internet, trolling for pictures and race reports from past years. It did not look too intimidating. The start and finish in the friendly town of Black

Mountain is typically 50-60F, and the summit would be colder, of course. The trails are well marked, and it is mostly up and back, so the risk is not high for losing the trail. And although there are accounts of needing yacktrax or sheet metal screws on your shoes (which is what I planned on), there were plenty of pictures from recent years with runners in regular gloves, shoes, knit hats, and only a couple layers on top. And, the run is so unusual in climbing, steepness, and distance, that there would be little pressure to make a certain time- i.e., no personal record to shoot for. Perfect run. Just go easy, enjoy the event, right?

This year, race day was different. Rain, wind, rain, wind, rain. The race started at predawn, temperatures of about 50 F and raining. It wasn't long before all your layers are bogged down, just laughingly wet. Slugging along, on the continuously uphill trail worked pretty well to stay warm for a couple hours. Much of the rocky, steep, foot trail was ruined from the rain. Running was a busy process of selecting a side of the trail to run, splashing through standing water and rocks, avoiding the muddy areas that were slippery. I stumbled a few times, but no blood, yet. The water and mud were very cold, and often over the tops of the shoes - very different.

As the altitude gained, it got colder and windier. The rain

changed to sleet and even snow, about 30-40 F now. Summit winds were reported at 50 mph and something to look forward to. Slowing was too cold, not good. Plodding along in icy water was taking a toll. In fact, even running pretty hard, my hands and feet were worrying me, they were very cold. And it is one of those lonely runs now, as I hadn't seen anyone for an hour (or was it 2?), so you start talking to yourself, "You really should be more careful with your only two feet. Run harder, and you will be warmer. Don't get lost (are you lost?)." The mud has turned to frozen ice and snow up here in the higher altitude- at least that brings your feet back some and they are thawing. That hurts!

The aid stations are landmarks to look forward to. I see lots of backs to the wind and sleet, huddling at the marathon turnaround. Maybe those are runners? The summit was more exposed, almost no visibility, gusts of clouds, and sleet. I hit both the great aid stations at the marathon turn around and the summit, about the same way. I had the pitifully gracious volunteers reach in my pockets, get vitamin I and Succeed for me. No way can my fingers do that. Drank, yahooped!, gued, yahooped!, thanked, gotta go, it's too cold to stand! This is very hard, at least for me, and I am thrilled. Game Day. Got what I came for. Did I mention the icy sections

you have to run around? Maybe there will be bears, or avalanches, up ahead.

Coming down was much faster, of course. Still lonely, I asked the volunteers at the 13 mile to go aid station where all the other runners were. They said many had turned back, dropped out; and, they were closing the course at the summit behind me, as the roads had been closed to the park and volunteers couldn't stay! Oh, yeah, 2009, reality.

I finished, of course. Was there ever any doubt? This is a great race. Lots of giveaways, the quality of field is outstanding, the Black Mountain community is all out embracing of the event with great food and volunteers. Kudos to Race Director Jay Curwen for allowing us to selfishly enjoy the race in tough conditions, a rarity today.

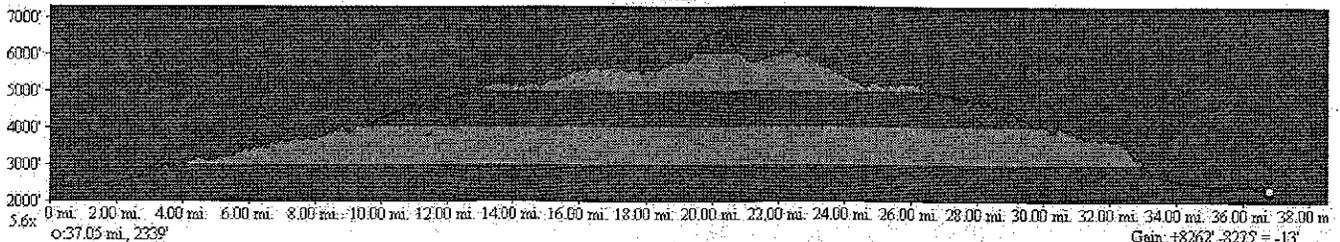
There were approximately 150 starters, and 65 finishers. Henry Peck was 30th overall in 7 hours, 1 minute.

The following are quotes from the "winners" credited to the Asheville Citizen-Times:

The winner was Mark Lundblad (2008 JFK 50 winner), in 5 hours, 10 minutes: "I got pretty hypothermic at the top. The cold rain changed to sleet going up the Mitchell trail and changed to all snow about a mile before the summit. It took a lot of energy just to try and stay warm."

The first female finisher was Cynthia Arnold in 6 hours, 5 minutes: "I felt like I was running in ice water. The race staff and volunteers helped me to keep going. I was lucky and got some hot water near the top when I felt like I was going to pass out."

Race Profile



Mt. Mitchell Challenge Race Elevation Changes