

THE ART OF SNOWBOARDING

By Garret Ellison



...in baby steps

So, you've never learned to snowboard, eh?

Maybe you said that boards cost too much, or tried once and fell on your butt so often that you couldn't sit in the hotel bar later. Whatever the reason, it's nearing the snow season, so layer up that clothing and have a blast on the slopes this winter, armed with some tips from the pros.

"First, you have to get comfortable with the speed," said Veleška Novorolsky, a retired K2-sponsored boarder and X-Games competitor living in Chicago.

"Take baby steps—learn how to control the board and figure out how to keep the weight on your front foot going down the hill," she says.

Novorolsky, 26, hails from Traverse City Central High School. She moved to Crested Butte, Colo., as a teenager and qualified for the 1998 Winter X-Games, making the semifinals in the Snowboard Cross—or "Boarder Cross"—event.

All it takes to learn is patience and a willingness to fall, and fall again. But once you learn to balance yourself on the board, well, that's half the battle.

"The only time I had someone who couldn't get it was when they didn't try," said Tom Bartholomew, the snow sports director at Crystal

Mountain Resort in Thompsonville and a nine-year snowboard instructor.

Bartholomew said one good way to practice is simply to slide around on some ice, either at a rink or on an icy sidewalk. When you get to the hill, spend some time at the bottom practicing the "push and glide," with one foot out, like a skateboard.

Once you're on the slopes, keep your eyes up and stand tall. Not ramrod straight, but bend your knees and don't stare at your feet.

"One of the most common mistakes people make is they try to twist their body," Bartholomew said. "They always want to turn their body forward."

Also, learn your edges, said Novorolsky, and don't be scared to try different terrains.

"Once you have a pretty good feel for a hill, you can expand it," she said. "Try hitting little jumps and try dropping into the half-pipe. You know, take it slow, feel comfortable and when you feel super comfortable, keep challenging yourself." **TH**



GREAT LINKS

Hooking up with a sponsor:
<http://expn.go.com/snb/tw/s/sponsorship.html>

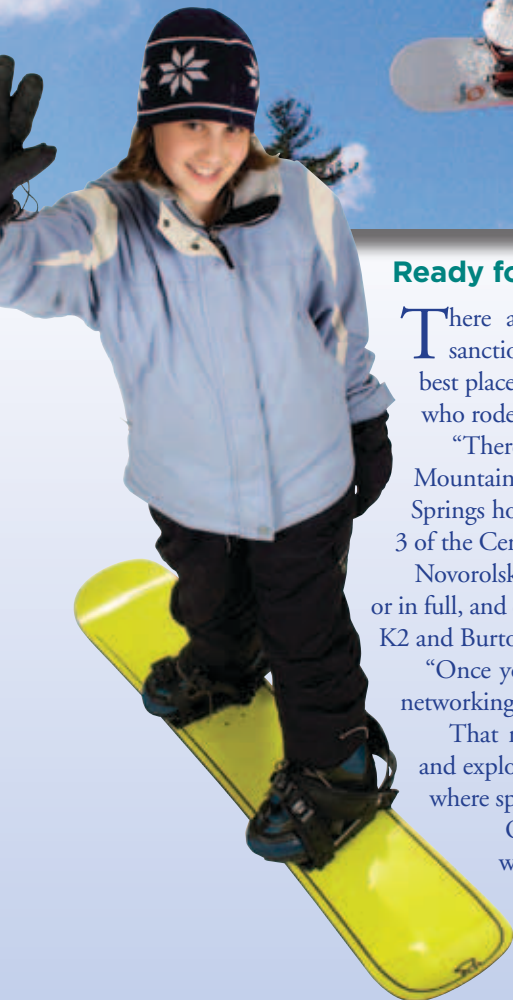
General Information:
www.snowboarding.com/

Links compilation:
www.abc-of-snowboarding.com/

Boyne:
www.boyne.com

Crystal Mountain:
www.crystallmountain.com/

Nub's Nob:
www.nubsnob.com/



Ready for a sponsor? Network, network, network

There are United States Ski and Snowboard Association (USSA)-sanctioned events nearly every weekend in Michigan, and these are the best places to get noticed by a potential sponsor, said Veleska Novorolsky, who rode for K2 in the 1998 Winter X-Games.

“There’s reps there and you meet a lot of people,” she said. Boyne Mountain in Boyne Falls and Boyne Highlands and Nub’s Nob in Harbor Springs host events every winter. Michigan’s Lower Peninsula is in Region 3 of the Central USSA.

Novorolsky recommends trying to get a local shop to sponsor you partially or in full, and often those shop owners have connections to larger sponsors like K2 and Burton.

“Once you get that first ground-level sponsorship,” she said, “you start networking your way up.”

That means being a regular at local and regional sanctioned events and exploring opportunities like snowboarding summer camps out West, where sponsors actively recruit up-and-comers.

Other recommended tactics are to hook up with a photographer who has the ability to take great pictures of you. Film footage helps as well—stuff that shows ability beyond the average.

Also, points are cumulative in USSA events and a good score could get you an invite to a national competition.

“If you do well in the nationals, you may get approached,”

Novorolsky said. “It’s kind of like building a resumé.”

There is a training weekend at Nub’s Nob on Dec. 8-9. Most events require a USSA membership to compete. Visit www.region3cussa.org for more information.—By Garret Ellison

ecoconnections

Exploring the Grand Traverse Bay Watershed

THE WATERSHED CENTER: Protecting Our Water Quality and Quality of Life

The Grand Traverse Bay watershed spans 976 square miles in Antrim, Kalkaska, Grand Traverse and Leelanau counties. Waterways in these land areas drain to Grand Traverse Bay, which holds 9.9 trillion gallons of water! The watershed shoreline stretches for 132 miles from the tip of the Leelanau peninsula to Norwood in Antrim county.

The Watershed Center advocates for clean water in Grand Traverse Bay and acts to protect and preserve the Bay's watershed. We're here to protect it for you and your loved ones. Because water quality defines our quality of life!

The following article highlights some of our favorite places to explore in the watershed. Grab your hiking boots or kayak!



www.gtbay.org

Your support empowers us to deliver vital programs that protect our water quality and quality of life. Please give today by contacting The Watershed Center at 13272 S. West Bayshore Drive, Traverse City, MI, 49684, www.gtbay.org, info@gtbay.org or 935.1514.

A beach is beautiful, but coastal wetlands and marshes with all their flora and fauna are so interesting.

Places to Explore in the Grand Traverse Bay Watershed

Ptobego Creek and Ponds

The Ptobego (pronounced “TOE-beh-go”) Creek watershed is considered one of the most beautiful wetland areas in the entire watershed. “The lower pond is a great example of a drowned river mouth wetland, geologically speaking,” says Andy Knott, Watershed Center executive director. “It’s geologically and biologically unique.”

The 400-acre Ptobego Creek Wildlife Preserve and State Game Area comprise 14 square miles of the creek’s watershed. Ptobego Creek flows into Upper Ptobego Pond, then through a wetland complex into Lower Ptobego Pond, which outlets into East Bay. The ponds are considered areas of statewide significance by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory.

Habitat consists of emergent marsh, rich conifer swamp, northern shrub thicket and meadows. You can hike along the hilly steep creek banks flanked with cedar and through open areas all the way to Lower Pond.

The Ptobego complex is a bird-watching paradise. “It’s unique in the world—there are only a

few places like it,” says Bob Carstens, environment vice chair of the Grand Traverse Audubon Club. He adds, “There are about four species found only there consistently as far as Grand Traverse County goes: Marsh Wrens, Black Terns, American Bitterns and Least Bitterns.”

Black Terns and American Bitterns are Michigan species of special concern. Marsh Wrens are rare in northern Michigan. Birders may also spy threatened Least Bitterns, Yellow-Throated Warblers and Caspian Terns, plus special concern Northern Harriers. Others include Sedge Wrens, Pied-Billed Grebes, Bald Eagles, Green Herons, Bobolinks, Whimbrels, Dunlin, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Wilson’s Phalarope, American Pippets, Virginia Rail and Flycatchers.

You can access the Ptobego area from U.S. 31 south of Elk Rapids, near Yuba. Look for a DNR sign on the east side of U.S. 31; it’s less than ½ mile north of Bates Road and ½ mile south of Town Line Road in a very small parking area immediately north of the bridge. You can walk down a two-track to the east to view the marsh

ADOPT-A-STREAM SEARCH

Do you have a favorite stream in the Grand Traverse Bay watershed? Make your own econnection! You can adopt that stream through the Watershed Center’s Adopt-A-Stream Search program. To join the bug-counting fun, call 935.1514.

flooding area, or you can cross the highway to hike to Lower Pond. Don’t forget the binoculars!

Great Lakes Wetlands

“A beach is beautiful, but coastal wetlands and marshes with all their flora and fauna are so interesting,” says John Nelson, Grand Traverse Baykeeper for the Watershed Center. “There are amphibians, fish, plant life diversity, and it’s quite beautiful. You can watch turtles, frogs, dragonflies and birds. And wetlands are very, very, very important to the ecosystem of the Great Lakes and to protect the water quality of the Bay.”

Coastal wetlands along Grand Traverse Bay are technically called Great Lakes wetlands. Here are some favorites to enjoy:

- North of Traverse City on M-22, at the DNR

boat ramp in Bingham. The boat ramp lies in the center of the wetlands, so you can kayak north or south.

- Gen’s Park, 2263 U.S. 31 N., just south of Four Mile Road. Kayak to the east. Although you can’t kayak through the wetlands because they are shallow, you can enjoy their beauty from East Bay.
- Behind the State Park in Traverse City, walking or biking east on the TART trail. You can see wetlands that are connected to East Bay and the Great Lakes wetlands mentioned above.
- Acme Township Park, just south of the intersection of M-72 and U.S. 31. Look for the Watershed Center’s coastal wetlands sign. Enjoy viewing the wetlands from the beach, or kayak south.

HEALTHY BEACH TIPS

Here are some Healthy Beaches tips from the Watershed Center to keep your favorite beach safe from E. Coli bacteria:

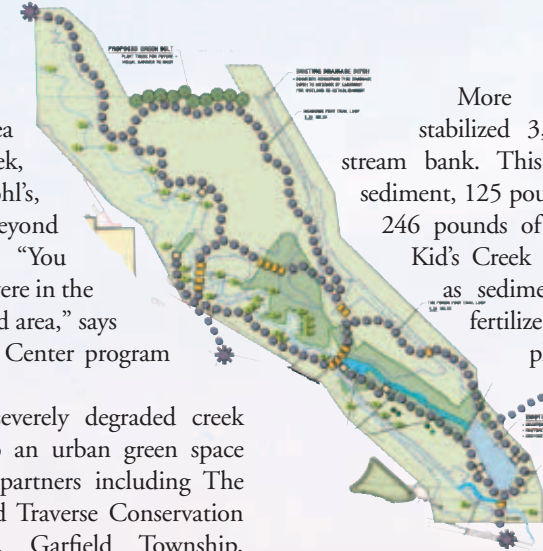
- Do not feed waterfowl. Politely encourage tourists to do the same.
- Clean up Fido's waste; place it in a trash receptacle.
- Discharge boat and RV wastewater only at approved disposal locations.
- Properly operate and maintain your septic system.
- Do not dump auto oil or other toxic chemicals on the ground or in storm drains.
- Place litter in a trash receptacle.

Have fun in the sun!

Kid's Creek

An urban natural area to explore is Kid's Creek, the 18 acres behind Kohl's, Michael's, Bed Bath & Beyond and Great Wolf Lodge. "You wouldn't know that you were in the heart of a highly urbanized area," says Sarah U'Ren, Watershed Center program director.

What was once a severely degraded creek has been transformed to an urban green space oasis, thanks to several partners including The Watershed Center, Grand Traverse Conservation District, Rotary Club, Garfield Township, Oleson Foundation, Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy and adjacent businesses.



More than 100 volunteers stabilized 3,000 linear feet of the stream bank. This prevents 145 tons of sediment, 125 pounds of phosphorous, and 246 pounds of nitrogen from entering Kid's Creek every year. This is vital, as sediment plus nutrients from fertilizers, including phosphorous and nitrogen, are the top threats to Grand Traverse Bay. You can park in the Kohl's, Michael's or Bed Bath & Beyond parking lot. The trailhead is near Kohl's; look for the sign. The 1/3-mile trail follows Kid's Creek and meanders around its marshes and pond. It also offers elevated bridges, sitting areas and educational signs. More foot trail segments are still to come! This is a great place to unwind after several hours of errand-running or after a day at the office. **TH**



LEAVE YOUR BEER COOLER AT HOME

By Garret Ellison

The annual AuSable River Canoe Marathon hits 61 this summer. It's the local river festival's crowning event ... and it's not for pansies

Photo by Charles Curro

Here's the game plan: sleep in, get up, eat, grab a canoe and a partner, paddle overnight at 60 to 90 strokes per minute along a 120-mile winding Michigan river course with numerous portages for the next 16 hours ...

... and then lose in the morning to the guys with shoulders that look like they're carved out of steel.

Sound like fun? If not, then you'd better plan on *watching* the flotilla of canoes in the 61st annual Weyerhaeuser AuSable River Canoe Marathon from shore—if you can.

"Canoe racing isn't the easiest spectator sport," said marathon spokesperson Tim Zigila. "You have to go location to location to see the event."

Nonetheless, throngs of competitors, support teams and spectators alike converge on Grayling every July for the yearly paddle battle. The 2008 marathon takes place July 26-27 and capstones the annual Milltown Festival.

The marathon is North America's longest nonstop canoe-only race and the second of three races that make up the Triple Crown of Canoe Racing. Racers begin at 9 p.m., carrying their boats in a footrace through downtown Grayling.

Once they reach the river, it's an all-night sprint past six hydroelectric dams and several more portages and checkpoints to the finish line in Oscoda. Support teams and spectators scramble ahead along back roads to designated meeting spots.

"Try to put that all into perspective and you'll see it's not your run-of-the-mill canoe race," said Zigila.

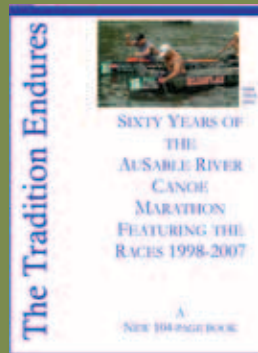
To have a fighting chance at winning requires year-round training. Sloughing on the push-ups and sit-ups won't get you far. Racers often spend the winter months cross-country skiing. The summer canoe race and winter events like the VASA and White Pine Stampede regularly share similar registration lists.

In 2007, Andy Triebold and Matt Rimer took first place by finishing in 14 hours, 48 minutes and 55 seconds. That's 50 minutes and 47 seconds off the marathon record of 13:58:08 set by Serge Corbin of Quebec and Solomon Carriere of Saskatchewan in 1994.

"We basically went into the race as the favorites," said Rimer, 24, of Roscommon. "We had a really good race at New York in the first leg of the Triple Crown. That's a pretty good confidence booster."

The first race of the Triple Crown is the General Clinton Canoe Regatta, a one-day non-stop 70-mile race on the Susquehanna River from Cooperstown to Bainbridge, N.Y., over Memorial Day weekend. The final leg is La Classique de Canots de La Maurice, a three-day, three-stage race starting in La Tuque, Quebec, over Labor Day weekend.

Rimer and Triebold duelled Steve Corlew of Grayling and Matt Streib of Bristol, Ind., to the finish line, winning by 35 seconds. Rimer and Triebold took an early lead until the Mio Dam portage, where Corlew and Streib closed the gap. The two boats traded the lead back and forth through the timing checkpoints.



NEED TO KNOW MORE?

Then buy the book. The second volume of the 50th Anniversary book on the AuSable Canoe Marathon was released last year for the 60th Anniversary.

“The Tradition Endures, Sixty Years of the AuSable River Canoe Marathon, featuring the Races 1998-2007,” by John B. Cook, Nancy Lemmen, Jon Thompson & Pam Williams.

It features statistics, summaries, photographs

and training stories from the last 10 years of the marathon. The book is available through the race offices, the marathon Web site and select locations in Grayling.



Photo by Mark Bialek



Photo by Mark Bialek

“We’d pull each other back and forth, kind of like drafting in NASCAR,” Rimer said.

Rimer and Triebold pushed the pace at the portages, each being a strong runner. The strategy seemed to work.

“We’d end up ahead of them at most of the portages,” he said. “From there we’d go hard for 10 minutes or so. So, for them to keep up, they’d have to go hard again. We did that several times through the night, to try and burn some of their energy.”

Corlew took a spill at the race start, resulting in the team having to paddle furiously early on to make up the deficit.

“Towards the end of the race, we’re talking

with them—they basically said that they were pretty much shot,” Rimer said.

The win was Triebold’s second, and Rimer’s first. It underscores the strategy involved in canoe racing, where training and stamina go a long way, but knowing your opponent can be the final ingredient in a win.

Rimer and Triebold are not racing together this year. But you can bet they’ll be close on the river. Paddlers often arrange canoe partners months in advance.

“There’s things that I know that will help me, as far as strategy against him, because I’ve paddled with him,” Rimer said. “I know things that are

hard for him and things that he does well.

“It’s hard to say because the way he trains could change this year, so he could change everything all together,” he said.

Paddlers looking for a partner often check the Michigan Canoe Racing Association Web site, www.miracing.com, or check bulletin boards in sporting goods stores like the Cross Country Ski Shop in Grayling.

Robert N. Smith, owner of the Bicycle Shop in Grayling, also manages the ski shop. He’s competed in the canoe marathon 10 times since moving to Roscommon from Grand Haven in the ’90s.

“I realized these guys were my heroes,” said Smith, “anyone who could paddle that long—120 miles. I could barely follow it in my car. I had to take a nap.”

Nevertheless, Smith decided to start canoe racing.

“Basically it’s mental toughness,” he said. “I think a lot of people can do it if they can tolerate pain.

“Actually, boredom sets in a little bit for me. I can’t even sit on the couch for 16 and a half hours. It’s hard, just on your butt,” Smith said.

For the beginning racer, the marathon Web site boasts a trove of information, statistics, timing charts, course maps, and a very helpful guidebook by Dave Foley, written in 1990, but still relevant today.

At night on the water, he writes that you’re navigating as much by instinct as knowledge. Rocks and stumps and branches appear out of nowhere. Running lights make seeing into the water difficult.

“The first three hours of the night run will put you through masses of insect hatches,” he writes. “Especially a bow man sitting just behind the light. Some wear goggles, most just pull their hat down and eat the bugs.”

He details materials to bring in the canoe—goggles, compass, flares, watch, etc.—and suggests having a topographic map to chart the course.

His guidebook also sports advice on when to sprint, where to cut corners, where to skip the shortcuts and suggestions for a bank runner’s (support crew) supply kit.

And it’s got a little inspiration thrown in for good measure.

“(The) marathon seems to go on forever,” he writes. “Emotionally, it is draining and thoughts of quitting come to everyone. Yet those who drop out often regret their decision. Mentally, you and your partner must be determined to finish and work together to get your canoe to Oscoda.”

Amen, Dave. See you on the river. **TH**

For more information on the AuSable River Canoe Marathon, call 989-348-4425, or visit www.ausablecanoeamarathon.org/

AUSABLE SPECTATOR’S GUIDE

Watching the entire race takes 19 nonstop hours and covers 120 miles (one way). The race starts at 9 p.m. in downtown Grayling on Saturday and ends Sunday afternoon in Oscoda.

Suggestions for what to bring:

- A Marathon Program
- Wireless laptop to check canoe position updates
- Portable Scanner (tuned to Mio Repeater on 146.70 for updates)
- Road map & GPS Navigator
- Lawn Chair
- Binoculars
- Bug spray
- Camera

- Pillow
- Alarm Clock
- Rain Gear
- Change of clothing
- Cooler with food
- Thermos
- Money
- Flashlight for finding your way to river in middle of night
- Sunglasses

Spectators should locate viewing spots on the banks of Ray’s Canoe Livery in Grayling six hours before the start. Pre-race activities begin at 6:30 p.m.

