

2006 Big Butte Challenge

Saturday, 15 April – Big Names Grace Big Butte.

In response to last year's all-time low number of runners (26), Race Sponsor Dan Harrington, DDS reported that the directors of the Big Butte Challenge are establishing a new tradition of holding the event on the day before Easter to increase registration totals by making it possible for holiday visitors to participate, and a 70% increase in registration did happen this year.

Although not in town due to the holiday, two of the new runners who attended were noteworthy because of their backgrounds as national class professional runners. Bozeman's Nikki Kimball is an ultra-marathoner who has won some of the United States' most prestigious ultras, including the 2004 Western States 100 Mile Endurance Run in California where she won in 18 hours, 43 minutes (the Western States record is 17:37:51). Kimball is in the habit of using local races like today's 11K as training for her goal race, which at this time is a repeat performance at this year's Western States. To paint Kimball with regional colors, she holds the Bridger Ridge Run course record for women from 2004 when she ran 3:53:13.

Coincidentally, Kimball showed for today's Big Butte 11K the same day that Deer Lodge's Nicole Hunt did. Hunt placed 18th at the 2004 USA Olympic Marathon Trials in 2:40, and she is currently in training for Spokane's Bloomsday 12K where she is a perennial sub-42 minute finisher. More locally, Hunt may be known for setting the course record at Helena's Governors' Cup 10K at 36:10, which is a whole minute faster than any other women has ever completed the course.

In today's 11K, Hunt aggressively charged up the face of Big Butte, immediately opening what would be an insurmountable gap between herself and the cautious start of Kimball. Hunt then used free-wheeling downhill cadence to breeze past the men's leaders on Oro Fino Road, before eventually settling back behind the first two men during the latter rolling section of the course. Hunt's finish time of 47:56 cut 3 minutes and 15 seconds off the existing women's 11K course record (51:11) which was set in 1993 by Butte's legendary runner, Mary Dean who won the event eleven times. Kimball gained steadily and also finished well under the previous record with a superfast time of 49:09.

The day was good for fast running, with cool temperatures and with the course mostly free of mud and ice.

Breakdown of Race Finishers				
Race	5K	11K	1M	Total
Females	13	11		24
Males	7	13		20
Total	20	24	?	44

5K Females Overall: 1, Meghan Hicks, 23:42; 2, Brooke Hueftle, 24:39; 3, Sherry Vogel, 24:46.

13-18: 1, Brooke Hueftle, Butte, 24:39.

19-29: 1, Meghan Hicks, 23:42; 2, Mallory Novack, Butte, 28:50; 3, Katy Pezzimenti, 34:51; 4, Stephanie Knisley, 35:29.

30-39: 1, Jacqueline Philpot, 39:19.

50-59: 1, Sherry Vogel, Butte, 24:46; 2, Eddi Walker, Butte, 26:12; 3, Carolyn Twidwell, 29:29; 4, Sheila Franey, Butte, 30:51; 5, Debbie Smith, 31:06; 6, Kristen Hueftle, Butte, 32:16.

60+: 1, Kriss Douglass, Butte, 39:18.

5K Males Overall: 1, Jay Armstrong, 22:19; 2, Peter Johnson, 22:56; 3, Michael Swimley, 23:11.

19-29: 1, Jay Armstrong, 22:19; 2, Michael Swimley, 23:11.

30-39: 1, Peter Johnson, 22:56; 2, Travis Chiotti, 27:19.

40-49: 1, Dan Harrington, Butte, 29:54.

60+: 1, Bruce Robinson, Butte, 27:55; 2, George Parrett, Butte, 38:23.

11K Females Overall: 1, Nicole Hunt, 47:56; 2, Nikki Kimball, 49:09; 3, Michele Bazzanella, 53:41.

19-29: 1, Teal Joy Lavelle, Butte, 1:13:17

30-39: 1, Nicole Hunt, Deer Lodge, 47:56; 2, Nikki Kimball, Bozeman, 49:09; 3, Michelle Bazzanella, Helena, 53:41; 4, Becky Bjork, Wyoming, 54:51; 5, Tanya Connole, Butte, 57:52. 6, Valerie Pallister, 1:05:04; 7, Angela Bechtell, Butte, 1:05:43; 8, Amy Gunderson, 1:10:39.

40-49: 1, Maggie Smith, Butte, 1:01:21.

50-59: 2, Karen Hueftle, Butte, 1:11:20.

11K Males Overall: 1, Ray Hunt, 45:03; 2, Marvin Speece, 46:47; 3, Don Sundberg, 50:04.

40-49: 1, Ray Hunt, Deer Lodge, 45:03; 2, Marvin Speece, Butte, 46:47; 3, Jim Ryan, Jr., Butte, 54:10; 4, Chris Tippett, Butte, 56:15; 5, Larry Driscoll, Butte, 1:03:43.

50-59: 1, Don Sundberg, Butte, 50:04; 2, Rande Farrow, Butte, 54:39; 3, Jim Hueftle, Butte, 1:08:48; 4, Dan Mueller, Butte, 1:09:57; 5, Dave Mueller, Butte, 1:09:57; 6, Roy Nonnenmann, 1:13:00.

60+: 1, Pete Madison, Butte, 1:19:10; 2, John Wulf, Butte, 1:33:25.