

ASPIRING TO RUN ULTRAS? POIGNANT LESSONS FROM A NEWBIE

TrailRunner

One Dirty Magazine

MAY 2006
ISSUE 39



Trails vs. Roads

WHICH SPORT WINS?

Bend to the Big Apple

- ▶ DISCOVER CENTRAL OREGON'S QUIET MECCA
- ▶ ESCAPE THE CONCRETE OF NEW YORK CITY!

MEGA
TRAIL
SHOE
TEST **16**

NEW MODELS
POUNDED

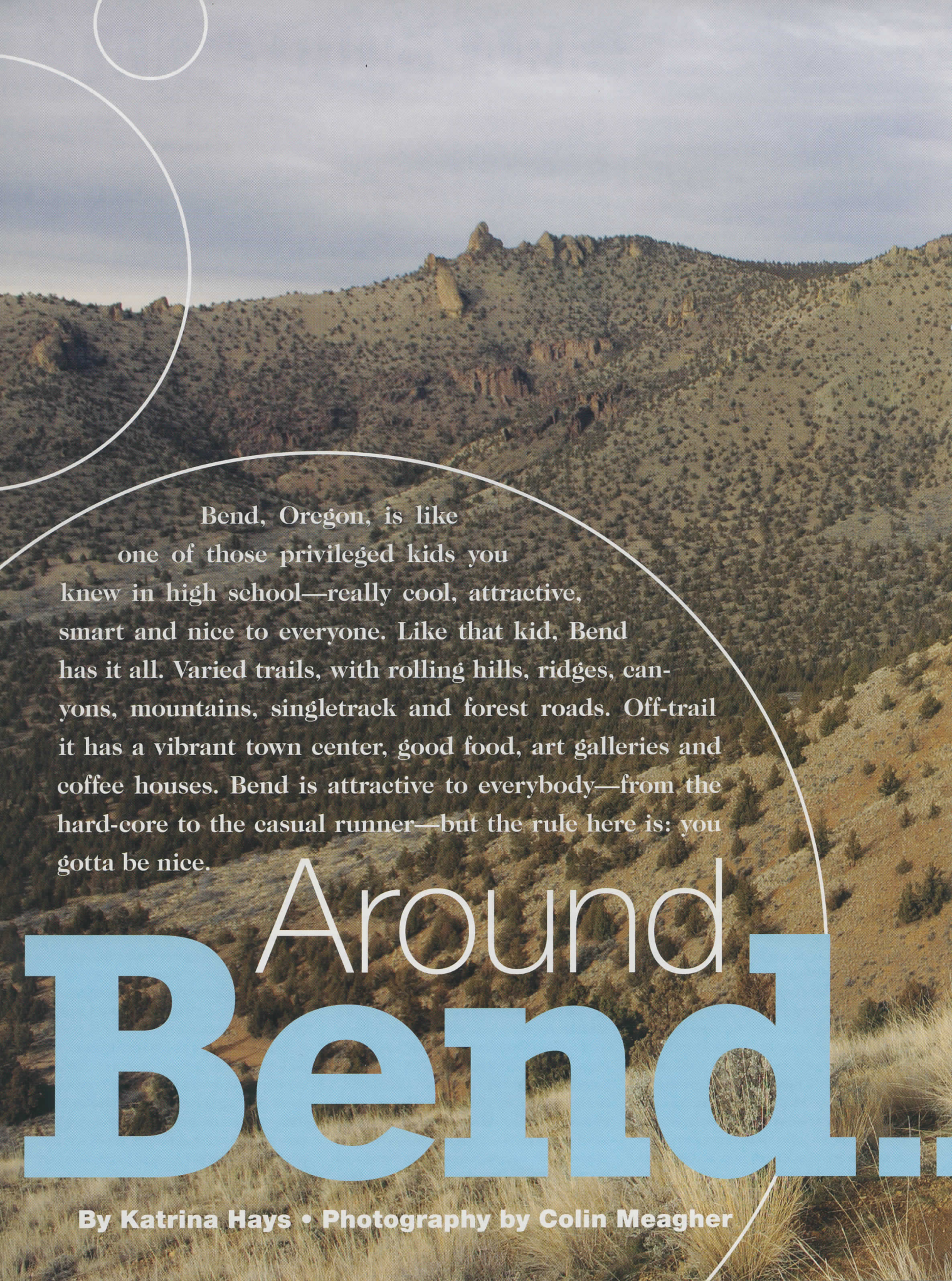
DISPLAY THRU MAY 31



\$4.99 US // \$5.99 CAN



ARE YOU ADDICTED TO RUNNING?



Bend, Oregon, is like one of those privileged kids you knew in high school—really cool, attractive, smart and nice to everyone. Like that kid, Bend has it all. Varied trails, with rolling hills, ridges, canyons, mountains, singletrack and forest roads. Off-trail it has a vibrant town center, good food, art galleries and coffee houses. Bend is attractive to everybody—from the hard-core to the casual runner—but the rule here is: you gotta be nice.

Around Bend...

By Katrina Hays • Photography by Colin Meagher

Rock On
2005 Trail Runner Trophy
Series Ultra Division Champ,
Kami Semick, enjoys a jaunt
at Smith Rock, Oregon.





Sweetly Soft

Cush old-growth-pine needles offer padding for Sean Meissner on the convenient Shevlin Park trails.

Carbo Reloading

When the run is over, it's time to head to the Deschutes Brewery for some local flavors.



It's just before noon on Wednesday, and time for the FootZone mid-week trail run. Trouble is, it just started snowing, and it's not just flurries. These snowflakes are the size of softballs.

"We may not get too many folks today," says store manager, Dave Thomason, wandering by with an armful of shoeboxes. "Better day for Nordic skiing. But we'll get a few."

In downtown Bend, FootZone is Central Oregon's running store. The 10-year-old shop is located in the historic Tower Theatre building, and has rough, old brick walls, bright pinewood floors and the mouth-watering, tangy smell of new shoes. Snazzy silky boxers strut their stuff next to more demure "Life is Good" T-shirts, and racks of Sugoi and Sporthill clothing meander down the center of the store.

Sean Meissner blows in, shaking off the snow. Meissner, 32, is an ultrarunner from nearby Sisters, a town 20 miles to the northwest. He swipes a sleeve across his face.

"Wow, look at this color," he says, heading straight for the wall of shoes, and picking up a screaming orange and red number. "It's like the attack of the colored shoe." He puts the shoe back and squeaks off to the solo dressing room to quickly change into his running clothes.

Chris Kraybill arrives, covered in wet snow, and receives much ribbing about his newly shaven face.



White Lines

Winter is no reason to hang up your trail shoes in Bend.



It's a Blur
Meissner pounds out a quick loop just minutes from downtown.

Trailhead **BEND, OREGON**

GETTING THERE. Bend is located in the center of Oregon on U.S. 97. Alaska Airlines and United Airlines fly into Roberts Air Field in Redmond, 15 miles north of Bend.

SEASONS. Year-round, but in late summer and fall the glorious high country is free from snow and open to trail running.

ACCOMMODATIONS. Bend has lodgings ranging from bed-and-breakfast inns to lodges to Motel 6. RV and camping sites are available during the summer and fall months. The Bend Visitor and Convention Bureau Web site has a good listing of lodgings: www.visitbend.com.

OTHER STUFF. Bike rentals: Sunnyside Sports: www.sunnysidesports.com; whitewater rafting: Sun Country Tours: www.suncountrytours.com; guided outdoor activity tours: Wanderlust Tours: www.wanderlusttours.com.

"You look twenty years younger," teases Ellen Weleker, one of the FootZone staff. Weleker ran last night at 11 p.m., so she's content to stay in the shop away from the whiteout outside.

"I got a job," says Kraybill, rubbing his jaw. He shrugs and tosses his keys behind the counter.

Storeowner Teague Hatfield is leading the run today. He pulls on a black polypro cap and calls out, "Hey, have you heard we're putting on a dirt series this year? We're adding a race in September, called the Dirty Dozen."

"Excellent," says Meissner, who puts on the Peterson Ridge Rumble, a 30K or 60K trail race held in early April. "That'll round things out."

The three men bounce on their toes for a second, pulling on light gloves, and then they're gone, trotting out the back of the store and into the snow to cruise the six-mile Footbridge Loop along the Deschutes River.

VARIETY IS THE SPICE

In Bend, trail running isn't some trendy sport. It's simply what you *do*. Athletes of all stripes, interests, intentions and abilities run trails here, because the trails are literally right on the doorstep. And once you take a look around, there's no reason to run anywhere else.

The town lies between the forested eastern flank of the Cascade Range and the vast Central Oregon desert. At 3629 feet, Bend sits in an area known as the "high desert," for its juniper-and-sage vegetation and sunny, dry climate. The town typically gets over 300 days of sunshine a year and just 12 inches of rain, but the Deschutes River and smaller creeks that pour out of the mountains and into town prevent the area from feeling too arid.

It is precisely this physical variety that makes Bend so blessed for the trail runner. Central Oregon has year-round access to trails—in the winter runners head east into the Badlands for miles of rolling, snow-free desert running amidst bitterbrush and ancient juniper trees. To the north, Smith Rock State Park juts massively upward in red-rocked splendor. This famous climber's destination also offers winter running *par excellence*, with trails that have plenty of vertical for relatively snow-free, early season training.

In the mid-season—late March to July—runners hit the River Trail and wind along the Deschutes River through lava flows, meadows and trees. It's easy to head up into the Forest Service lands to the immediate west of town and run in second-growth forests along old logging roads. And in the late summer and fall, the glorious high country opens up, allowing runners to take advantage of endless high-altitude runs where the mountains loom overhead.

PRIVILEGED PEOPLE

"We're really spoiled," says Roger Daniels. Daniels, 69, is a trail-running fixture in town. He usually leads the CORK (Central Oregon Running Klub) Saturday morning runs, which are almost always run on trails. Daniels holds five sub-24-hour buckles from the Western States 100, and is an age-group regional and national champion in 50-milers. A wiry, white-haired man who runs with his arms straight down by his sides (the most distinctive running style in Bend), Daniels is understated, gentle, fiercely competitive and about as nice as the day is long.

"I have a philosophy," says Daniels. "Time spent running on trails is not subtracted from your life span."

Daniels exemplifies Bend trail runners. He's nice. Not fake, nam-

Rave Runs

Take Me to the River
Kristin Jossi and Gina Miller soaking in the diverse River Trail, which follows the serene Deschutes River for 30 miles.



SHEVLIN PARK LOOP This is the classic, after-work or lunch-break run in Bend. Shevlin Park is a 650-acre parcel located just five minutes from downtown. The 4.8-mile, moderately difficult run is a scenic singletrack loop that winds through an old-growth preserve.

THE RIVER TRAIL Bend's signature trail goes for 30 miles along the Deschutes River to the town of Benham Falls, offering spectacular scenery, from lava flows to aspen groves and pristine meadows. It is easy to break up this trail into smaller chunks, or loop away from the river onto Forest Service lands along old logging roads. The River Trail is moderately difficult, and not terribly technical.

GREEN LAKES LOOP The must-do late summer-fall run in Central Oregon. Green Lakes takes you from the Green Lakes Trailhead, along the massive flank of the South Sister, past the Green Lakes, and along the wide-open high valley below Broken Top Mountain. The entire 12-mile run is a breathtaking example of mountain running. While it is not super technical, most of the run takes place above 6000 feet with typical mountain sudden weather changes.

SMITH ROCK Smith Rock State Park is located about 25 miles north of Bend on U.S. 97. Known for its world-class rock climbing, Smith Rock also offers some strenuous, technical trail running with jaw-dropping views of the mountains and high desert. Consider tackling Misery Ridge, or the 11.4-mile Burma Road loop.

TUMALO CREEK Located 10 miles up Skyliners Road west from Bend, the Tumalo Creek Trail takes runners up past several beautiful waterfalls. This trail links to several other trails that wind through forest, past high lakes and along mountain ridges. The basic Tumalo Creek run is an easy seven-mile out-and-back, but other loops can add technical, strenuous sections to a run.

MUST-HAVE MAP OF ALL THE LOCAL TRAILS *Mountain Biking and Cross-Country Skiing Map of Central Oregon*. Available at local running and biking stores, or online at www.adventuremaps.net.

by-pamby nice, but genuinely friendly. When a newbie showed up to a Saturday CORK run worried about whether she'd be able to find her way back by herself, Rogers patted her shoulder and said, "We don't leave anyone out there to die. Don't worry!" And he proceeded to introduce her to another runner with a similar pace.

This is something that is a constant in the runners in the area—people have time for a friendly nod and smile on the trail. They will pause to pet your dog and ask how you are—and not bother to stop the time on their stopwatch. This friendliness makes Bend so accessible. It is also prized by the locals.

Munching on a cookie and downing some tea at Nancy P's Bakery on one of those crisp fall days, when the air around Bend seems to glow with energy, FootZone manager Dave Thomason is blunt.

"You gotta be nice here," he says. "If you're a jerk, it's gonna come back at you, and everybody will know."

Thomason, 32, is a lanky guy, with an enviable stride that he makes light of ("Hey, if you're gonna be slow, you better be efficient").

Tracy Bahr, another FootZone employee, wanders by with her own cookie and mug. Bahr has an understated, sunny personality, and she just happens to be one of the top female ultrarunners in the West. Bahr holds the course record for the Smuggler's 50-Mile, was fifth overall in the 2003 Badwater 135 and has a PR of 23:13:30 for 100 miles.

"You talkin' about some of those new people?" she asks. "Tell you what, we're gonna kill them with kindness. They'll have to succumb to our friendliness."

They both laugh.

BOOM TOWN

Bend is undergoing a population explosion. Six years ago, the inhabitants numbered around 38,000. Now, due to a recent annexation of formerly outlying areas, and a huge influx of people who have moved here for the lifestyle, the population is 70,000 and climbing fast. For the most part, people who move here slip easily into the area's relaxed vibe, but there are the oddball athletes who feel it's more important to maintain a heart rate than to offer a smile. Central Oregon's trails do a great deal to soothe the inappropriately competitive breast, but make no mistake—don't think Bend is a playground for runners who aren't serious about their running.

The area boasts a huge number of competitive athletes—from Olympians to age-group champions to recreational racers. People train rigorously here, and the town has a fleet of physical therapists, clinics and personal trainers to ease the athlete's way along the trail to individual greatness.

"Whether it's walking the dog, or doing a hard-core training session, the trails are where we go," says Justin Wadsworth, a three-time Olympic Nordic skier. He is the director of Rebound Physical Therapy in Bend, and no

"I have a philosophy," says Daniels. "Time spent running on trails is not subtracted from your life span."

(continued on page 58)

Getting Loopy

The River Trail offers a plethora of loop options, from short to mammoth.



(continued from page 45)

slouch when it comes to trail running. High-volume, high-altitude off-season running is the bailiwick of any Nordic skier, and Wadsworth mentions one of his favorite training jaunts, the “Three Sisters in a Day” run.

The Three Sisters—named Hope, Faith and Charity—tower just behind Bend in the Cascade Range. Each peak is over 10,000 feet high, and each base sits at around 6200 feet. Running them is a decent trot for anyone, and if that’s not enough, you can throw in a jog to the top of Mount Bachelor—a mere 9065-foot volcanic butte—for a little extra vertical.

But it’s not the gnarly, over-the-top type of trail running that is the heart and soul of Bend’s trail scene. It’s the river. The Deschutes River runs through the center of Bend, and many years ago the Bend Metro Park and Recreation District had the good sense to create a trail system that follows the water. Now, it’s possible to run along the Deschutes for 30 miles, through gorgeous canyons, aspen forests and lovely meadows. The River Trail is where runners often end up, heading back into town after run-

ning in the enormous Forest Service lands that sprawl along the western side of town. And soaking in the chilly Deschutes after a run is a time-honored Bend tradition—and a heck of a lot more interesting way to ice down pounded-out legs than sitting in a bathtub.

READY, SET, GO

An indication of the popularity of trail running is the healthy trail-racing scene. Thomason created the Dirty Half Marathon five years ago. The Dirty is a wonderful race that loops along the Phil’s Trail area west of Bend. This is signature Bend trail-running country: singletrack that winds along, climbing through dense ponderosa and lodgepole forest, and through dark, lava-rock canyons that are cool and slightly mysterious. The race is challenging, pretty and has the kind of vibe where every single finisher is announced over the P.A. system to mighty cheers from spectators and racers alike. And beer is served as a post-race beverage.

Thomason caps the entries at 500, which was met last year for the first time. “It’s just taken off,” says Thomason, smiling and shaking his head. “I



RunSmarter™

Engineered with Patented AIS: Technology

- Seamless Construction
- Natural Feel & Form Fitting
- Advanced Wicking Capability
- Internal Blister Protection System
- Enables Gripping Action
- Restriction Free Movement from heel to five toes...

Constructed with:



Website: www.injinji.com | Tel: (888) 465 - 4654

Available:



tetratsok™
Mini-Crew | Sand

don't want to turn people away, but it would ruin the experience to put any more runners out on that trail. So I tell folks to sign up early."

SERIOUS APRÈS

Bend knows that nobody can run 24/7. After the trails, this savvy town has much to offer. Shopping options abound in both downtown and at the Old Mill District, where developers have carefully refurbished Bend's old lumber mills into high-end shops.

The town is serious about its beer, boasting several excellent brewpubs. Try an Outback Ale at the Bend Brewing Company, or an Obsidian Stout at Deschutes Brewery. There are first-rate restaurants like Blue Fish and Zydeco for dinner, as well as terrific burritos at Parrilla Grill. Nancy P's bakery and the Village Baker are great for sweet treats, and the best breakfast in town is at the Victorian Café, but be prepared to wait for a table, especially on weekends.

And of course, that famed Bend lifestyle is replete with other outdoor activities—whitewater rafting, golf, canoeing, biking, rock climbing, skiing and snowshoeing.

Again, a lot of Bend's action centers on

those lovely trails. Lynn Jacobs, a part-time nurse, mother of three little boys and a runner who manages to log at least 50 miles a week, says that she became a convert soon after moving here five years ago.

"I was a total pavement pounder when I moved to Bend," she says. "After a while, a girlfriend asked, 'Why are you running on roads?' and she took me out and showed me the trails."

Jacobs pauses and thinks, trying to articulate the magic of Bend's trails.

"Before you even think about it, you're on a trail. I feel like I'm exploring, not working out."

That is the vibe, that is the lifestyle and that really is the secret. In Bend, Oregon, the outdoors gets naturally tangled up with that little thing called "living." One is inextricable from the other, and both become more beautiful as a result.

Katrina Hays is a writer who lives in Bend, Oregon. She's a slow-but-steady trail runner, Nordic ski coach and avid road cyclist, and has written about the Central Oregon sports lifestyle for SAIL, Northwest Dive News and Bend Living.

Ready to Race?

PETERSON RIDGE RUMBLE

April 9, 2006. This is a fun, low-key 30K or 60K run on and around the Peterson Ridge trail near Sisters, Oregon, 22 miles north of Bend on U.S. 20. The first third is gentle uphill, middle third is rolling with a few short "grunt" sections and the final third is gentle downhill, making for a fast finish. Mud is very likely, and snowy sections are possible.

DIRTY HALF MARATHON

June 11, 2006. The course is a 13.1-mile loop in the Phil's Trail area west of Bend. The trail is very runnable with a handful of small technical sections. The entire course has a net gain/loss of 1000 feet.

HAULIN' ASPEN TRAIL MARATHON

August 13, 2006. This marathon and half marathon heads out under the aspen trees in Shevlin Park and climbs into ponderosa pines on singletrack trails in the Cascade Mountains.

FOR COMPLETE LISTINGS OF ALL RACES, TRAILS AND INSIDER TIPS:

Fresh Air Sports: www.freshairsports.com;
FootZone: www.footzonebend.com; Central Oregon Running Klub: www.central-oregonrunningklub.org.

The Race Across the Sky

Leadville Trail 100

Training Camp June 24, 25, 26, 2006
3 organized runs to familiarize participants with the challenges of the Leadville Trail 100

Trail Marathon & 1/2 Marathon July 7, 2006
Leadville Rocky Mountain trails, summiting 13,185-foot Mosquito Pass

Leadville Trail 100 August 19-20, 2006
50 miles out-and-back in the midst of the Colorado Rockies. Low point-9,200 ft.; high point-12,600 ft.

ENTRIES AVAILABLE JANUARY 2, 2006

**HOPE PASS SUMMIT
12,600 FT.**

Photo by Scott Rafferty



Merilee O'Neal, Race Director
PO Box 487, Leadville, CO 80461
(719) 486-3502 • www.leadvilletrail100.com