

Sunrise to Summit race



Suzanne King of Bend ascends Mount Bachelor on her way to victory in the women's division of the Sunrise to Summit race.

Raitter tames Summit course

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A small, hometown race became a springboard to the world for Bill Raitter. Raitter won the first three Sunrise to Summit hill climbs at Mount Bachelor from 1998 to 2000. Those victories got him thinking about bigger mountains and bigger victories.

On Saturday, after a two-year hiatus from the Mount Bachelor event, Raitter returned, this time as a member of the U.S. World Mountain Running Team. And he reclaimed his title by posting a course record. Raitter completed the climb from Sunrise Lodge to the summit of the 9,065-foot volcano in 33 minutes, 49 seconds.

"I love destination running — getting to the top of something," said Raitter, 33, a part-time Bend resident who lives in Estes Park, Colo., for the summer. "And this was the first competition where I did that. I flew in last night just to run this."

Colin Mahood, 26, of Bend was second in 36:16 and Ryan Shaffer, 35, of Bend was third in 36:30.

The event, a fund-raiser for the Mount Bachelor Ski Education Foundation sponsored by Liberty Bank, drew a record 214 participants. Racers blazed their own trail to about mid-mountain, then followed a marked trail to the top.

In the women's division, former Olympic cross country skier Suzanne King of Bend overtook defending champion Jennifer Sventek at about mid-mountain and then pulled away for her first victory. She had finished second the previous two years.

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overall. "I guess I had lower expectations this year. But I always aim for a good performance and try to do the best I can."

Kami Semick, 37, of Bend took second in 42:59 and Sventek, 32, of Bend was third in 43:22.

Raitter, who helps coach the Bend High cross country team each fall, has been spending this summer working at Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado as a biological technician.

At the park, he's able to get the training benefits that come with working out at high elevations. He regularly runs at 8,000 feet or higher, and in the last eight days jogged up two peaks at 11,000 feet.

"I've been working 10-hour days and running like an animal," he said.

Raitter won a race in Alaska — setting a course record there as well — on Aug. 9 that automatically made him one of six members of the U.S. World Mountain Running Team. The world championship for this year is on that same peak in Alaska on Oct. 2.

"I like the challenge of this," said Raitter. "I've always enjoyed the challenge of getting to the top."

For Raitter's closest rivals on Saturday, they could only watch him attaining that goal.

"I wasn't even close to trying to keep up," said Mahood. "He had a huge lead. But we had a pretty good battle for second place. I just kept a steady pace and tried to conserve energy."

Mahood managed to save enough to surge past Shaffer in the last 100 yards.

"Hill climbs are so fun," said Shaffer, "even though they hurt. It always hurts."

In the women's race, King marked Sventek for the first part of the race and then overtook her just before runners were funneled onto a trail to the top.

"I've done this race three years and I've ended with a sneezing fit every time," said King — after a series of sneezes.

She wasn't the only one sneezing at the summit, possibly because a faint tinge of smoke was in the air from the wildfires near Sisters.

Semick, whose husband, Tyson Pardue, competed with their 14-month old daughter on his back, took a cautious approach in the race. It was her first Sunrise to Summit competition.

"I started out kind of slow because I didn't know what it would be like to run it," said Semick, who caught Sventek in the last several hundred yards to move up to

"I just kept creeping up on her and passed her at the end," she said. For Sventek, it was one of those days where, for whatever inexplicable reason, top form proves as elusive as the competition.

"I didn't feel good today, but it was still fun," said Sventek. "I walked in places that I didn't last year."

Walking was not a rare occurrence for most participants, who ranged in age from 6 to over 62.

Six-year-old Max Anderson of Bend, who also competed last year at age 5, finished 158th overall in 1:19:26. He blazed up the mountain with such speed that he left his mom in his wake and finished with some other adult friends.

"I never beat her before," said Max. "Last year she beat me by an inch." At the other end of the age spectrum was Richard Arnold, 62, of Bend, who finished 145th in 1:13:31.

"When you get into the 60s, it's not the person with the most toys who wins," said Arnold. "It's the person who lives the longest. The alternative isn't very good."