



Rich Rautenstrauch/Chieftain
Susan Parraga and her dogs practice with the sled at Salt Creek Summit in this Chieftain file photo. The team will compete in this year's Eagle Cap Extreme, which begins Jan. 19 at the Ferguson Ridge Ski Area.

To the Extreme

Mushers, huskies about to descend on county for Iditarod-qualifying race

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**
East Oregonian

The best part of the Eagle Cap Extreme sled dog race, according to organizer Troy Nave, comes half an hour before race start, when more than 200 Alaskan huskies fill the parking lot at Ferguson Ridge Ski Area with a cacophony of joyous howling.

"You have to succumb to it," said Nave, who serves on the event board of directors. "The excitement is so contagious."

Mushers from across the Northwest and Canada will head deep into the Wallowa Mountains for the 13th running of the Eagle Cap Extreme, beginning Thursday, Jan. 19. Kickoff is at noon for the 200-mile and 100-mile races, as well as the first stage of the two-day pot race, which runs 31 miles both days.

The 22-mile juniors race and second leg of the pot race will begin at noon on Friday, Jan. 20. All races leave from Ferguson Ridge, about nine miles outside of Joseph. A shuttle bus will be available at 9:45 a.m. on race days.

The public can also meet and greet mushers during a potluck at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 18 at the Joseph Community Center.

No pets are allowed at the potluck or in the race area.

Despite having no history of dog mushing in the area, Nave said the Eagle Cap Extreme has become part of the fabric of Wallowa County. It is one of only two sled dog races in the lower 48 states that serve as a qualifier for the Iditarod and Yukon Quest, the two largest mushing events in the world.

"It's kind of amazing that something like this is right here in our backyard, off the beaten path," Nave said.

Dogs and mushers will have their work cut out for them. The 200-mile course features 26,000 feet of elevation gain, running up to Salt Creek Summit and back down to the



Chieftain file photo
It's almost time for sled dog teams to once more come out of the starting gate at Ferguson Ridge Ski Area near Joseph for the 10th running of the Eagle Cap Extreme sled dog race. The race begins Jan. 19.

Ollokot Campground for a required six-hour layover. Teams then work their way out to Twin Lakes and PO Saddle overlooking Hells Canyon, before finishing back at Fergi.

Brett Bruggeman, of Great Falls, Mont., has won the 200-mile race the last two years, and returns again in 2017. In 2015, he finished the course in 30 hours and three minutes.

"He's phenomenal," Nave said. "He'll be the guy to catch, yet again."

A total of eight mushers will compete in the 200-mile race, eight in the 100-mile race and seven in the pot race — including locals Morgan Anderson, of Enterprise, and Susan Parraga, of Joseph. Parraga was the first local musher ever to enter the Eagle Cap Extreme, while Anderson previously competed in the junior race.

There is only one contestant in this year's junior race, 15-year-old Christina Gibson of Riverside, Wash.

Nave said interest in the Eagle Cap Extreme grows every year, and its reputation continues to build.

"Our purse isn't as big as some of the other races, but (mushers) are drawn back by the community support and the route," Nave said. "We're going over some of the most scenic terrain anywhere."

MEET THE MUSHERS

Twenty-four mushers will compete in four races during the 13th running of the Eagle Cap Extreme, from across the Northwest and Canada.

200-mile

- John Kunzler, Vernal, Utah
- Bryce Mumford, Preston, Idaho
- Neal Bowlen, Park City, Utah
- Laurie Warren, Council, Idaho
- Brett Bruggeman, Great Falls, Mont.
- Scott White, Snohomish, Wash.
- Mark Stamm, Riverside, Wash.
- Clayton Perry, Power, Mont.

100-mile

- Steve Madsen, Cougar, Wash.
- Adam Buch, Cranbrook, British Columbia, Canada
- David Bush, Bend, Ore.
- Gabe Dunham, Bend, Ore.
- Dina Ludd, Okanogan, Wash.
- Hugo Antonucci, Adin, Calif.
- Karen Ramstead, Perryvale, Alberta, Canada
- Bino Fowler, Bend, Ore.

Pot race

- Morgan Anderson, Enterprise, Ore.
- Scott Barber, Ramona, Calif.
- David Hassilev, Priest River, Idaho
- Linda Pierce, Okanogan, Wash.
- Connie Star, Cle Elum, Wash.
- Susan Parraga, Joseph, Ore.
- Jane Devlin, Bend, Ore.

Juniors

- Christina Gibson, Riverside, Wash.

Conditions should be in great shape for this year's races, with approximately two to three feet of snow over the course, including two feet of packed snow at Fergi. Cold weather should persist until race day, Nave said, which is good for the dogs.

An awards banquet will cap off three days of racing, starting at 5:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 21, back at the Joseph Community Center. Tickets are \$20 for the general public, including dinner and entertainment. There will also be live and silent auction fundraisers to benefit the nonprofit Eagle Cap Extreme.

Nave said the event is a labor of love for directors, volunteers and the entire community.

"We have a lot of support," he said. "It's a privilege to be around these canine athletes."

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SKI REPORT

Spout Springs
Tollgate, Ore.
CLOSED FOR SEASON

Anthony Lakes
North Powder, Ore.
New snow: 17" this week
Base depth: 57"
Conditions: Lots of powder

Ski Bluewood
Dayton, Wash.
New snow: 14" in last 48 hours
Base depth: Conditions: Groomers in great shape, the cold is keeping the snow fresh and light.

Ski Fergi
Joseph, Ore.
New snow: Few inches this week
Base depth: 25"
Conditions: Some new snow, windswept

Mt. Hood Meadows
Government Camp, Ore.
New snow: 13"
Base depth: 93"
Conditions: Groom is packed powder. Off piste is powder and ski-er-packed powder.

Trump defends L.L. Bean heiress over donations backing him

AUGUSTA, Maine (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump is urging people to buy L.L. Bean as the company faces calls for a boycott because of a family member's donations to his candidacy.

Trump on Thursday tweeted his thanks to Linda Bean, a granddaughter of the outdoors retailer's founder, and cited her "great support and courage." He ended by saying, "Buy L.L. Bean," garnering criticism from the nonpartisan money-in-politics watchdog Every Voice for "personally encouraging his supporters to boost the companies of his super PAC donors."

Bean called the backlash against her "bullying" and "un-American" during Thursday morning interviews on Fox's news and business channels and vowed that she would not step down from the company's board of directors.

"That's all they are: a small kernel of hardcore bullies out on the left coast, West Coast, in California, trying to control what we do, what we buy, what we sell in Maine," she said on Fox News Channel's "Fox and Friends."

Bean and the Freeport-based retailer have been targeted by anti-Trump groups following The Associated Press's reporting of her donations to the pro-Trump Making Maine Great Again PAC. The founders of #GrabYourWallet have called for a boycott of L.L. Bean but said it would stop if the privately held company, known for its signature waterproof rubber-bottom boots, cut formal ties with Linda Bean.

A newcomer to cross-country skiing gets hooked by the sport

By **CHADD CRIPE**
Idaho Statesman

BOISE, Idaho — The first time I tried cross-country skiing, I was in junior high in southern Minnesota wondering why anyone would want to work that hard in bitter cold when they could be downhill skiing (or hiding indoors) instead.

That remained my opinion of the sport for most of the next 25 years.

But when I became the outdoors writer at the *Idaho Statesman* nearly a year ago, I quickly identified cross-country skiing as a sport I needed to learn. With my desire for good, interesting exercise increasing as I get older, it was even an exciting prospect.

So the past two Wednesdays, I spent a couple hours learning how uncoordinated I can be (sorry, Josh), sweating profusely and enjoying the beauty of clear days at Bogus Basin Mountain Recreation Area.

The verdict: I could ski on my own quickly, though not yet efficiently; the sport's reputation as a great calorie burner is well-earned; and I think I've got another lifetime sport to pursue.

"Most people have a really positive response to it," said Josh Williams, the director of Bogus Basin's Nordic center. "A lot of people come in being a little intimidated by it and come out of it feeling like that intimidation wasn't necessary. It's a lot easier and more fun than they anticipated."

The first question we needed to settle: classic or skate style? I'd been told by several people who are better downhill skiers than I am that skate skiing could be a challenge to learn. And classic skiing, they told me, would be a fairly comfortable transition from running.

That made my decision easy: classic for now, and maybe I'll try skating later.

On our first day, Williams covered the basics of traveling across relatively flat land on the Nordic Highway. After I recovered from the shock of how light, skinny and slippery my skis were, Williams started by having me shuffle my feet to get the feel for the skis. We moved into the classic-ski tracks — the parallel lines set by groomers — that make it easier to keep your skis on the right path. The next step was a 1-2-glide pattern, learning to

let my skis do some of the work.

As Williams told me, the reason skiing is more efficient than walking or running is the ground you cover while gliding. Then he introduced poles, and that's where the day got tricky. The motion that comes so naturally when running or walking suddenly had me thinking too much — left ski forward, pull with the right pole; right ski forward, pull with the left. It wasn't until we tried a short uphill section, which requires more of a running motion, that poling finally felt natural.

After we were done, I spent another hour on my own trying to establish the rhythm required to ski for extended periods. My biggest bugaboo: I tried to go too fast rather than settling into more of a walking pace. But the extra work paid off.

When I reported for the second lesson, I was immediately more comfortable.

"It's really good when you take a lesson to take some time to practice on your own and then take another lesson to help refine your form," Williams said.

For the second lesson, we moved to the hills. Going downhill was like watching my son on his first

day of downhill skiing. You just snowplow, or wedge, or pizza — or whatever term you use — your way down the hill and around corners because the skis aren't designed for parallel turns. On the climbs, we used more of a running/stomping motion to prevent the skis from sliding backward on moderate hills and a herringbone, V-shaped walk on steep hills. The running motion takes some practice to use your weight correctly; the herringbone is pretty easy, and less taxing.

By the end, I felt like I could go out to a groomed trail anywhere in my travels and enjoy myself. The risk of injury is minimal — the equipment is more likely to break than your body, Williams said, because only the toe of the boot is attached to the ski. In five years at Bogus, the worst injury Williams has seen was a twisted ankle.

He's a former high school and college runner who was attracted to cross-country skiing for the winter workout.

"I like it because it's a full-body workout," he said. "... You're working your upper body a lot, working your core. It's also a lot lower impact. It's easier on your

joints than running."

"With classic skiing, if you feel like you're a really athletic person, you can usually get out and tool around," Williams said, "but it doesn't hurt to take a lesson. With skate skiing, it's definitely good to start off with a lesson just because sometimes the motion is not super intuitive."

Cross-country skiing includes two distinct styles: classic and skate skiing.

Classic: Classic skiing involves a more natural, running-like technique that makes it easier to learn. Usually one pole is used at a time in an alternating pattern. Parallel tracks are groomed into the trails to make this style easier; they also help keep your skis properly aligned. Classic is better suited to ungroomed trails, too.

Skate: Skate skiing generates more speed and is the preferred method for covering longer distances. It is reliant upon groomed surfaces and can be more difficult to learn because of the less-intuitive technique. "Skate skiing is a lot more like ice skating or roller blading," said Josh Williams, Bogus Basin Nordic center.