

# Love wins at Birkebeiner

By GARRY COOPER  
Special to The Sun

It was a lovely day for the loving occasion of this Valentine's Day version of the Canadian Birkebeiner Ski Festival.

And it was a special day for an Edmonton couple, Laurie Berryman and Wil Magnan, who were skewered by Dan Cupid's arrow in 1991. It was love at first sight when they met at the 1991 Birkebeiner, and they marked Valentine's Day by both skiing in yesterday's 13th annual Birkie at the Blackfoot Wilderness Centre, east of Sherwood Park.

## 'An instant spark'

Wil was registering for the 55 km Birkie in 1991 and Laurie was entered in the 30 km. She was also a Birkie volunteer, handing out racing bibs and information packages.

"He came up to get his package and I served him," recalls Laurie happily. "There was an instant spark when our eyes met."

At the end of that Birkie, the two met at the finish line. Laurie was organizing the wrap-up banquet that year, "and he met me there, and that was it."

They married on Aug. 28, 1993. Wil has skied in every Birkie since, but Laurie's activities had been restricted to volunteer work the past three years to get a family of two children started.

Wil skied the 30 km distance yesterday while Laurie went the 14 km mini Birkie. They met at the finish line, then went out for a Valentine's dinner together.

There was no danger in yesterday's Birkie of hypothermia, but watch out for sunburn as the sun beat down in something like 5 C. Officials say more than 2,000 skiers were registered, plus hundreds more in the Ole's two-bit tour 2.5 km post-entry event. An official figure will be known later, but the participation was expected to about equal to last year's

2,354.

Valentine's Day be darned. Once again this year there was no love lost among the top young male athletes competing in the 55 km Birkie Lite (without the 5.5 kg pack).

Karl Hannual of Hinton and national ski team member Davin MacIntosh of Canmore battled to a near-dead heat finish, with Hannual taking the title by a tick of a second - two hours, 54 minutes and 46 seconds to 2:54:47. Niclas Christoffersson of Calgary was third in 2:56:58.

Daniel Murray of Camrose was the fastest man over the 55 km distance, carrying the 12-pound backpack, in 3:12:11. Jamie Cathcart of Richmond, B.C., was second in 3:15:25, with Maurice Samm of Camrose third in 3:23:00. Veterans Greg Inkster and Paul Zimmerman were fourth and fifth.

Top women Birkie skier at 55 km with pack

Edmonton's Cheryl

Inkster, in 4:13:27, and

Monica Boelman, in 4:24:47.

Canmore skier

Boelman clocked 4:31:49

for third, followed by

veteran Glenda Hanna and

Susa Hawthorne.

The No. 1 Birkie Lite woman skier overall, in 3:21:37, was Tara Moran of the national ski team, Canmore, followed by another Canmore skier, Lorna Daudrich, in 3:27:04, and Calgarian Jelen Blanka in 3:33:57.

## 30-km winners

The 30 km winners were Brian McKeever of Calgary, in 1:34:24, for the men, and Edmonton's Amanda Fortier in 1:51:23 for the women. The 14 km champions were Drew Goldsack of Red Deer, in 0:48:12, and Shayla Swanson of Calgary in 0:53:48. In the five-kilometre Dow shuffle, Colin Robb of Edmonton, in 0:25:00, and Jana Lang, also of Edmonton, in 0:26:44, won titles. The Ole's two-bit tour champs were Evan Bruce of Canmore, in 0:13:38, and Rein Raudsepp in 0:15:46.

**Birkie on Valentine's Day is special for one skiing couple**



- BRENDON DLOUHY, Sun

**Daniel Murray of Camrose raises his pack and skis triumphantly yesterday at the finish line after winning the 55 km distance carrying a 5.5 kg backpack in 3:12:11.**

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