

Know who (or what) you are racing



Outdoors

By John T. Unger

On the first of June, 1,619 women and men signed up to participate in the 46th annual Imogene Pass Run, coming up in two weeks.

More than once in the past, the overall winner has been a resident of Montrose, and this year twelve women and seventeen men from here have signed up.

Another thirteen people from Ouray and ten from Ridgway are entered, and the other 1,500-plus are coming from across the USA and some from all over the world.

If you were to be able to ask each person who he or she is racing against, you would surely hear more than a thousand different answers.

Similarly, if you ask a friend who entered the recent Ute Museum 5K, or last weekend's Mt. Sneffels Half-Marathon, or the 2018 Grin and Barrett Black Canyon Charity Ride, you would hear a wide range of answers.

Many participants in such events mention that they are racing primarily against themselves,

in that they know they will more often make time for their health to ride, run, or jog if they are entered into an upcoming event than if they are not.

Along with that element, the camaraderie of vigorous physical activity among friends and strangers in the mountains is frequently cited. Yet another powerful motivator is the prospect for friendly competition and for challenging oneself.

Additionally, many such events wisely give age group awards divided by gender and further subdivided by five year or ten year increments. Therefore, a female who is fifty years old can essentially be racing against the other women in her age group, rather than be racing against the males in the twenty to twenty-five year old age group.

At the Mt. Sneffels Half-Marathon last weekend, some Montrose runners won podium finishes (meaning first, second, or third place) in their individual age divisions, among a rather large field of over 450 finishers. Some of those finishers were professional Olympic-level athletes from the USA and from other continents. The chance to be at the same starting line and run with international champions understandably adds excitement for the many amateur athletes, from teenagers to retirees.

There exists a common tendency for someone to decide that they are just hoping to finish ahead of a certain group, for instance, "all of the

women," or "all of the runners older than my age group." Such an approach exists mainly among those who are young, inexperienced, and overconfident. That sets up a person for extreme disappointment in their first race, unfortunately.

No matter how fast a runner that person is, if a race has upwards of eighty or a hundred participants, they are probably going to endure a rude awakening. For instance, of the 459 finishers in last weekend's half-marathon, the first female finished fifth overall. Therefore the only four men who were faster than all of the women were men who are world-class professional athletes.

In that same event, a man who is seventy years old finished ahead of fully 85percent of all runners of any age, including those in their teens and twenties. Who are you racing against? The answer to that question may require self-examination if one's goal is to beat "all the women" or "all the older people." These days, most races have at least as many female participants as male participants. It is high time for that equaling of the gender participation numbers.

What are you racing against? This "what", rather than "who" can lead to meaningful discussion with-in one's own head.

Some people are racing against the part of themselves that is tempted to spend that week's training time on the couch watching reruns of favorite ball games on cable TV, or music videos on YouTube, ice cream in hand. Admit it, some days



The author reaches high up the side of Imogene Pass Road last Sunday, where its mass of hard-packed avalanche snow is still 100 feet long and ten feet deep. (Submitted Photo)

we each have a voice like that in our heads, whether or not we indulge it unduly.

Another common motivator puts us racing against the potentiality of the cardiovascular disease and sedentary lifestyle that shortened the life of a parent, an aunt, or an uncle. The knowledge of a genetic tendency toward developing the classic "beer belly" is what motivates more than a few ex-athletes to sign up for a local 5K with their kids, in hopes of being a good example and keeping their kids, too, from their ancestors' form of unhealthy weight gain.

I hear some say that they are racing against the necessity of a windowless workplace. Training for even a short race gets them out

into the sun and wind and rain and mountains, re-igniting memories of a childhood when they ran around playing outdoors for many hours a day.

And some of us are motivated to run regularly because we know that the morning run is the supreme highlight of the day for the family dog on his or her leash.

John T. Unger is a Diplomat of the American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians, with over twenty-five years of practice in Montrose. He loves making it up to a snowfield on foot when the temperatures in the valleys are in the mid-90 degrees. Ideas for future columns are welcomed at sportsdocunger.com.

What's in your pack?

During one of the summers of my youth, my grandmother asked me if I wanted to spend a couple weeks at summer camp. I was in the middle of baseball season, so my answer was an emphatic and resounding "NO." We compromised, and I was off to the North Woods of Wisconsin for two weeks.

I was sure that the two weeks were for my grandparents benefit and not mine, especially when my Grandmother packed for my trip. She was an early "prepper" of sorts, making sure I had everything necessary, for any type of situation that may arise.

If a hurricane blew through Wisconsin, I had a hurricane lamp. Should a freak July blizzard strike, not to worry; I had a snowsuit and snowshoes. She even sent extra food with me, just in case the camp kitchen ran out.

My grandmother packed so much stuff for me that I was convinced she was moving me out. I just knew I would return to an empty house. My grandfather dropped me off at camp in a U-Haul to carry my stuff. I was the only kid to arrive at Camp Long Lake with five duffel bags, three suitcases and a double hernia, but I was ready for anything.

Regular readers of this column know that I annually write about the importance of a survival pack. The pack is mentioned as standard equipment for just about all outdoor excursions and activities. It astonishes me, that every year, people are stranded in the woods without equipment or skills to stay alive, even though it is preached at them endlessly ad nauseum.

The survival pack that I preach about endlessly does not have to be overwhelming. Mainly, I try to convince people to carry some things in their packs for that "just in case moment." These items should be geared for the time of year you are heading up into the woods.

Most of these items will fit in the side pockets or a separate small bag to be carried in your pack. This leaves plenty of room in the pack for the other things, like extra clothes, fishing tackle, binoculars, hunting gear, lunch, snacks, drinks, and all the other things needed for the days activities. The emergency stuff is in there, just in case you have a Murphy moment, from my old buddy from Murphy's Law fame.

I change packs throughout the year to match the conditions and the type of trip or hunt I am going on. My winter pack is obviously larger, and has much more stuff, because of the harsher environment I will be in, compared to my summer daypack I use for a hike with the wife.

Admittedly, I am one of those

people who will constantly add new items to their pack. Every time I see something that will be useful, someday, it gets added to the pack. This gets out of hand when the pack gets too heavy to lift, and I am forced to remove all the contents and reassess their importance. Sometimes, the pack gets so heavy it arrives at camp 20 minutes after I do, that's how I know it is time to clean it out.

What I have assembled here is a list of the things you should start with. Feel free to add other things as you see fit. Medications, extra prescription glasses, dry clothes and many other things can be added for the type of trip, and the possible emergencies you may face.

The truth is, the woods are not the place to give Murphy's Law a test. Mother Nature has no sense of humor. She will change the weather in an instant, hide your visual reference points, and partner with Murphy to throw an injury at you. While you are fighting for your life, the two of them are laughing themselves silly and eating the last of the cookies in your pack.

Here is a list to get you started:

- Compass and GPS - It is most important to take a waypoint for your starting place on the GPS. This way, you always have a Lat/Lon number to head home to.
- Signal mirror and whistle - these are great for helping searchers locate you in the event of an emergency
- Knife and Leatherman tool
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Waterproof matches, lighter, fire starter-fire can be used for signaling and warmth
- Drinking water-some packs come with a hydration bladder built in.
- Food - power bars, trail mix, jerky etc. High energy snacks with protein.
- Cell phone - keep power off to save battery. The battery power will run out quickly searching for service. Carry a portable battery pack to recharge the phone.
- Small first aid kit - carry only essential items, such as a tourniquet, Israeli Bandage, couple band-aids, etc. keeping weight in mind. Be sure that you have any essential prescription drugs you may require.
- Some other items you may consider if space allows:
 - Rain poncho
 - Solar blanket bivy. You can crawl in one of these to keep warm.
 - Toilet paper, a must
 - Duct tape - for first aid and repairs, wrap some around an old credit card
 - Pencil and paper, pens never work outdoors when you want them to
- Carry extra ammunition for your firearm. I have seen many cases where a hunter was able to signal for help firing the universal three well-spaced shots, and we were able to respond.
- One other item that you should carry is extra warm clothing. In the mountains,



(Top) We all head out on a hunt, expecting things to go right. Do you have some items in your pack, in case things go wrong? Randy Howrigan, Tanner Creel and Mike Mott (L to R) have hunted Colorado for many years and always come prepared. (Above) Before you head out this hunting season, be sure to carry some of the basic survival equipment in your pack, just in case something goes wrong. (Submitted photo/Mark Rackay)

the temperature can drop 30 or more degrees in a matter of minutes. Having some dry clothes along will help in case you get wet.

According to the Mountain Rescue Association, search and rescue personnel conduct over 3,000 operations each year in the Rocky Mountains of the United States. Over 2,000 people lose their lives annually in those same mountains. Many would be alive today had they been better prepared.

This year let's all build a survival pack and spend some time training/practicing the use of the items contained therein. Try and visualize any emergency you may encounter, and what your response will be. There is no such thing as over preparing or over training.

Most people, who are lost or stranded, are rescued within 24 to 36 hours. It

is not necessary to pack enough equipment to survive the 100-year war, as my Grandmother did, just enough to see you through the emergency. I don't want another double hernia, so I really lightened up my packs.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press and avid hunter who travels across North and South America in search of adventure and serves as a Director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org

For outdoors or survival related questions or comments, feel free to contact him directly at his email elkhunter77@bresnan.net