



# A Walk in the Wild

## More than just the Snowshoe Shuffle

by Lori Lee

She was a snowshoer; he was a snowmobiler. But there was that sense of adventure between them as he donned his first pair of shoes, put on his big, clompy Carhart pants and they raced up the moonlit hills between shadows of Juniper together. The night made the good, first-date impression. I mean, heck, he admitted later to his snowmobile posse that he'd been on snowshoes and he even invited her to his Super Bowl party. In retrospect, Jessica admits she should have read the omens; the way that once the fun of the downhill started—running, leaning back, floating—his binding on the snowshoe had released and hung from his foot, lame and unusable. No problem. She helped him reattach it, pulled it tight, and then started out again. He got in a few more strides before he lost it again, and again, and again. That was a bad sign.

To adrenaline junkies in the northern, snow-covered parts of the world, snowshoeing may seem blasé, boring, a waste of time. But I'll let you in on a little secret: in addition to being a great way to tell if there's a future with your date, snowshoeing is a trail runner's winter dream.

Hardcore winter competitors embrace it as the lean, mean, tough way to put in a 5 or 10K while braving the elements and getting a work out that beats the heck out of a treadmill. No more surrendering fresh air and the freedom of the run to seasonal demands.

For those new to the sport, rental snowshoes are available in most local gear and ski shops and they give you a great way to try out different makes, models, and the sport itself. JC Bush from Al's Sporting Goods in Logan says that most of their snowshoe rentals go out to USU students looking for an affordable new date idea. "It's a way for them to get out and play in the snow," he said.

Being the closest relative to trail running, snowshoeing not only gets you out in the freshies, but demands a more powerful arm swing, a slower pace, maxes your heart rate.

Snowshoe racing, thanks to the U.S. Snowshoe Association, has clomped into national prominence. Trail runners, Nordic skiers, road runners, triathletes, and adventure racers comprise the field of athletes looking for their winter burn; but you don't have to be hardcore to strap on a pair. The good news:

snowmobile riders, trail runners, climbers, bikers, 4-year-olds, even couch potatoes can do the snowshoe shuffle this year.

And Adam Chase, captain of the Atlas's snowshoe team says if you learn from some other's first-race blunders and experiences you won't have to make the same mistakes. First, it's always good to have an idea of your terrain and the elements. Chase's introductory race happened after a night of snowfall. "Because of the heavy dump of fresh snow we were forced to tramp away from the starting line in single file. Breaking trail was grueling enough that after only a few minutes the leader needed to be relieved," he explained.

Wearing the appropriate clothing and preparing for a variety of conditions in case of wind-chill increase can save a lot of pain for a snowshoer. "I was wearing a pair of pants I had volunteered to test for snowshoe worthiness and, much to my chagrin, discovered an unexpected defect. The pockets, which opened at the hip for easy access, had filled with snow that I had kicked from behind as I pushed forward. My pockets soon began to swell and the weight caused the pants to pull down. To avoid embarrassment and melting, I had to constantly empty the pockets," said Chase.

Chase suggests being prepared with packets of GU or natural food energy bars since the PowerBar he took on that race froze. "Chewing was only half the battle," he said. "Before I could chew, I first had to complete the Houdini-like task of unwrapping the thing, which is damned near impossible when your hands are in mittens and frozen numb," said Chase. My water bottle had frozen up on me because I had placed it right side up in the holster. Little did I know, as a snowshoe rookie, that the squirt nozzle would freeze unless I placed it upside down."

Dating, racing, and those looking for a great winter workout are not the only ones to whom the sport appeals. Families with children of all ages are strapping up. Many snowshoe manufacturers make children's snowshoes in a selection of sizes, and even kids as small as 3 and 4 year-old dawn mini snowshoes and traipse ahead into snowball fights and snow-hiking excursions.

Karen Righthand, Marketing Director for Atlas Snowshoes, recounted her first snowshoe experience. "I started snowshoeing when I came to Atlas," she



## TRAILSIDES

said. "My family and I took a trip to Colorado to ski and after a series of delayed flights and rental car confusion the family ended up in a little sardine car. Four people, all our ski stuff. When we finally got there, we were beside ourselves. We had just had it. When we got there in the evening we threw on our warm clothes and the snowshoes and headed out in the dark with our headlamps onto the slopes near our condo. We ran out across the ski slope and into the woods and just pushed one another, made snow angles, had snow ball fights. It was a great family experience."

In Jessica's case, the first-date-snowshoe test foretold disaster. Once he (the date) managed to wrangle free of the dangling snowshoe bindings, and all that remained of the Super Bowl party were empty buffalo-wing plates and old pizza boxes, he made off with \$600 of her money; money that could have bought her three new pairs of shoes for better dates. But hey, I'm sure he'll put the money to good use in his snowmobile...and then get himself buried. **SG**

### SNOWSHOEING FOR FITNESS

Activity	Terrain	Calories Burned per Hour
Snowshoeing	Packed, flat terrain	450
Snowshoeing	Packed, hilly terrain	515
Snowshoeing	Powder on rolling terrain	700
Snowshoeing w/poles	Packed, hilly terrain	590
Snowshoeing w/poles	Powder on hilly terrain	840
Walking (15 min/mile)	Asphalt	312

Note: Caloric expenditure varies according to weight. Calories are calculated for an average person weighing 150 pounds. Source: Reebok Instructor News, Volume 4, Number 2, 1991 and American Hiker, December 2000/ January 2001 issue.

## SNOWSHOE RACES

Interested in Snowshoe racing? The following calendar lists regional comps which can also qualify you for the Sixth Annual U.S. National Snowshoe Championships at Bolton Valley Resort in Bolton Valley, Vert, March 24-26, 2006.

January 14th - Rail Trail Snowshoe Stomp  
in Park City, Utah

January 14th - Swift Skedaddle Race in  
Silverthorne, Colorado

February 11th - Gallatin Gallop Race  
in Bozeman, Montana

February 12th - Screamin Snowman Race  
in Nederland, Colorado

Also check out the Tubbs Romp to Stomp 3K or 5K Benefit Walk, at Mountain Dell Golf Course, Parley's Canyon.

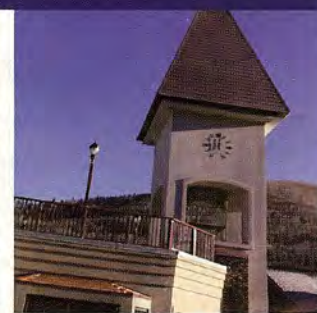
Jan. 28, 2006 – Tubbs Romp to Stomp supports the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. A limited quantity of free demo snowshoes will be available on a first-come-first-served basis. [www.tubbsromptostomp.com](http://www.tubbsromptostomp.com).

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