

BREATHE

ADVENTURE | ENDURANCE | LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE



818KM BY FOOT & AIR

TAKING OVER:
BACKCOUNTRY
RISING/RACING

Pro MTB Turned
SNOWSHOE

Honeymoon
in (with) MOAB



Display until May 17, 2010

\$4.99 US & CDN

02



0 62825 70917 9

WWW.BREATHMAG.CA

track this

why i snow



I have been a professional mountain bike athlete since 1995, well, that was the last cup of coffee I served before venturing out into a career that has just eclipsed 20 years; 13 World Championships, 5 National Titles and the 1996 Olympic Games all came and went as the routine of exercise became business. During the winter months of those 20 years, cross training played a big part in the rehabilitation of my body and mind. During the season a pro athlete's body, doing one sport, one motion for months on end can develop serious imbalances, thus cross training is designed to re-balance, re-set and re-establish, but there is also a big component of mental rest, changing the mental picture upstairs and re-setting the mind.

Cycling has long been the

rehabilitation tool for knee surgeries and a retreat for runners with overuse injuries, it's one major way we (cycling) default recruit, but winter still poses a problem to many athletes. It's cold, it's wet, I don't like swimming, skiing's too expensive (and doesn't provide enough cardio), and I don't want to buy a whole pile of XC skiing gear. Viola, snowshoeing is the perfect crossover for anyone who wants to get out, explore, get exercise and have fun, without spending a lot of money.

A couple of years ago a friend of mine dragged me out on a blustery night on snowshoes to the top of Mt Seymour. He and his girlfriend Cheryl were aggressive hikers, runners and snowshoers. Denis was a bit of a 'wing nut' but his energy was so infectious that I committed to what I then

constituted as a crazy night time hike. From the parking lot the blustery night seemed rather mild, but as we climbed higher and higher on the mountain the storm picked up and I became less sure of Denis' directional finding ability. Cheryl assured me that we were on target and that indeed Denis did know where he was going. In my minds eye I flashed back to some conversations heard within this new group of adventure racing friends; phrases like "Whatever you do, don't follow Denis" or "Why is Denis always the nav person? He couldn't find his way out of a wet paper bag." I must also add before you think this mountainous snowshoe adventure gets to be more than you can handle, let me just remind you that Mt. Seymour is one of the three mountains located in North Vancouver and makes up the East end of the North Shore Mountains. Though



shoe

By Andreas Hestler

a local mountain with proximity to the city (it is about as close as you can get), people do get lost and injured, but that was not my biggest concern, it was the write up in the local paper that I most worried about “mountain biker lost on Mt Seymour...?” Anyway needless to say Denis and Cheryl comfortably guided me to the top and back without incident.

It was then that I set about discovering snowshoeing, its dynamics and the adventures that it could provide. A few weeks later, I was introduced to the Yeti Academy on Mt Seymour. Denis dragged me out again, this time we met Academy director Dave Howells a.k.a the “Howeller” and Yeti operator Marc Cooney-Campbell. Both of these gents had dabbled in Mountain biking so I knew them and here I was dabbling in snowshoeing, small world. Little did I know, looking back now, that it was the start of a couple of great friendships.

That night we headed out and I soon discovered that my cross training background as a hiker/swimmer and part time yoga/runner would make me uniquely qualified to put on my snorkel and blend hike/running with

uneven steps through waist deep powder on mountainous terrain – That is Snowshoeing and that second time at the Yeti was magical, like a gateway drug, I was hooked. There we all were with head lamps on, gliding through powder, soft underfoot, no impact whatsoever (these were perfect conditions). At every rest stop for the group we could look back on a line of bobbing lights making their way around the lake; it was like a Christmas fairy tale, only the sound of hoots and hollers broke the tranquility of the night air.

For a cyclist who spends a majority of his time in a non-weight bearing environment, there can be serious repercussion’s when re-introducing weight bearing activities, or of not introducing them. Bones become less dense when they are not routinely stimulated via weight bearing activities, frailty can occur, not really everyone’s problem, but something to consider after maybe 10 years of heavy cycling. When one returns to running or weights after a season off, year after year, yes the body does remember, but it also shy’s away from those first painful few sessions or weeks, this can potentially shorten

your off-season. So it was that I found myself doing less dynamic exercises and crunching my off season, from Oct to Feb (five months), into Dec and Jan just two. Not enough time to affect a rest and restructure. Snowshoeing, then with its gentle impact and magical environment offered rest from the pounding that can injure even the strongest runner or the shyest cyclist.

My night time magical experience was soon followed up with a day time adventure and then a combo twilight hike, this was another amazing clincher. In the short few weeks I had been on snowshoes, I was able to snowshoe regardless of day or night, regardless of condition –clear or snowy. Imagine heading out for 45 minutes before dark and planning to hit high point and watch the sun dip down over a frozen wonderland, then like a completely different experience on a completely different day, hike back to the lodge. The twilight hike was highlighted by watching the sun set from the top of a mountain, something that none of us have enough of in our lives. Enabling night activities during the short daylight hours was the key to getting out. A simple 2-5 bulb LED headlamp can

sufficiently light the way for the speed of a snowshoer, a reasonable purchase at 40 dollars. This is how snowshoeing came to be my winter staple, my 'go to' for cross training.

Once I got going on the shoes, discovering the versatility and the go anywhere experience that was possible, that was when things really opened up for me. The next step was taking my new found wonder-sport and my sweet new Atlas Dual-Tracks on the road. Trips and sports to me are one amazing way to travel, stay in touch with friends, make new friends and 'road trip'; that mythical adventure that seems to only happen when one sets out 'boldly' with a buddy, in a car on a 'mission'. Mt Washington was the next stop on the Yeti race circuit, I loved the shoes and an opportunity to race sounded appealing, heck 5 or 10k wouldn't even take that long. So Dean Payne, 'El Presedente' of the BC Bike Race and I packed up the car and headed via the BC Ferries to Mt. Washington on Vancouver Island. Now we needed a volunteer to help. Dean and Marc have been friends for a long time and as everyone knows, events depend a lot on volunteer/

friend support, Dean's number one volly was Marc so off we went. We spent Friday night in Cumberland at the Riding Fool Hostel located at the base of Mt Washington. We went there because one of the local bands "Sons of Guns" is a bit of a tradition for us whenever we visit the island. The next day dawned crystal clear blue and the view south from the Nordic center of Mt Washington was amazing. It is hard to stay in a straight line when you are capturing the incredible scenery. With my heart pumping, fresh snow on the ground and an amazing course laid out by Dave Howells it was simply pure athletic pleasure. I floated around the 10k completely blown away, not even feeling my legs as this whole new World, this whole new sport opened up and embraced me. A road trip is about an adventure, the beginning, the departure and the excitement of 'going somewhere'. We saw music, we sported, but no adventure, no journey is complete without the celebration. This is actually also something coaches instill in athletes, to accomplish a goal or achieve something merits recognition of that accomplishment, so it was the Yeti 'after party' at Fat Teddy's on the Top

of Mt. Washington that truly sent this first snowshoe road trip into orbit and gave me a big respect for this sport.

Three years later, I always have an extra pair of snowshoes lying around the house and am the biggest advocate of getting people out stomping around; out of the rain, off their bikes and up onto the mountains. I have not seen many activities that can make anyone laugh and have so much fun as simply stepping off into a pile of powder snow. Your heart and lungs will love the exercise, they don't know if they are running, swimming or biking, your mind will love the change of scenery, the magical environment, the versatility to go anywhere and it won't be expensive, it won't be technical and anyone can do it. Events like the Yeti (www.theyeti.ca) provide shoes and a guide to get you and your friends out onto the snow and into one of the best all around winter sport out there. See you out there on snowshoes.



GOMOTION®

TRAIL RUNNER LITEVEST

EXTEND THE DAY™

A New way to See in the Dark

Wearable hi-output lighting

www.GOMOTIONGEAR.COM

Photo by: Pattiucci Photo

One Pod Covers it All

Once-A-Day Multivitamin Packs

Every Pod includes Vitamins, Minerals, Energy Enhancers, Immune Supportives, Enzymes, Omega 3's, Trace Elements, Greens And much more!

NUTRISTART
get it naturally!

A Vancouver Island Company

www.NUTRISTART.com

1-800-813-4233