

REPORT FROM NESCOPECK BIATHLON

By Jay Frankenfield

The 2006 Summer Biathlon season officially got underway Saturday 4/22 as 38 competitors braved rainy and windy conditions and temperatures in the 40's at Nescopeck, PA. This race served as the first race of the Pennsylvania Biathlon Club Triple Crown Series.

While many people are familiar with the winter biathlon which combines cross country skiing and target shooting, the summer biathlon combines running and shooting. I did not know what to expect when I showed up for the beginners clinic, which is required for a new competitors. The race organizer gave us a history of biathlon and then played us an instructional video showing the proper way to hold and shoot a .22 caliber rifle. Then we went out to the shooting range and fired a couple practice rounds before heading to the start.

The race was a 5K and the start was staggered. Every 1 minute a pair of runners would start. Basically you run an out and back distance of 1 mile and then enter a designated walk zone when approaching the firing range. A gun is laid out for you with a clip holding 5 rounds lying next to it. You load the clip, close the bolt and prepare to shoot. The first shooting takes place in the prone or lying down position. You get 5 shots at a 3.5 inch target 25 meters away. It sounds more difficult than it really is. I made all 5 shots and felt pretty good about not having to run any penalty loops.

For each miss you must run a 50 meter penalty loop. Mile 2 was the same out and back but this time the shooting is done from the standing position. The standing position is more difficult and since it is later in the race you are breathing much heavier. I could not hold the gun steady and proceeded to miss all 5 shots. After my 5 penalty loops I ran the out and back one more time and headed to the finish.

If anyone is interested in added a little twist to your running, there are more opportunities to try a biathlon. In Pennsylvania, there are still 4 races left in their Triple Crown Series. To be eligible to win the Triple Crown Series a competitor must complete 3 of 5 races throughout the summer.

The remaining races are 6/11 in Lancaster, 7/1 in Altoona, 7/22 Nescopeck, and 8/19 Rouseville, PA. New Jersey and New York also have Summer Biathlon series.

Webmaster Note: You knew with a name like Nescopeck, it had to be in Pennsylvania.