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The Stowe Derby gets a boost of energy for 2009

Stowe, VT, 11/5/08 — The Mt. Mansfield Ski and Snowboard Club is proud to announce that Pascale Savard is coming back on board to help organize and run this year's Stowe Derby, which will be held February 22nd, 2009.

"It is so exciting to be back helping out. It's one of the best events Stowe has to offer, and it will be a fun challenge for me to take on. I am charged up with new ideas and have energy to sell, so be prepared for a few new concepts and additions to this year's edition of the most infamous downhill cross-country ski race of its kind!"

History- The Stowe Derby started in 1945 as a personal challenge between two amazing skiers - Austrian, Sepp Ruschp who was hired to come to America and head the new ski school at Stowe and Erling Strom, world famous mountaineer from Norway. The challenge was the same as it is today - a race from the top of Mt. Mansfield, Vermont's highest peak to the historic village of Stowe. The catch was only one pair of skis could be used. The combination of downhill and cross-country skiing was (and still is) considered the ultimate test of a skier's ability. Ruschp was the winner of the first Stowe Derby.

Today- The race attracts around 700 competitors each year, ranging from Canadian Nordic Team members and NCAA Champions to recreational skiers looking for a thrill. While the race can be very competitive at all levels, it is also a fun race, having been chosen as one of the top sporting events in the state by readers of Vermont Sports Magazine.

On February 22nd, 2009, participants will ski over 10 miles of challenging terrain, racing down Mt. Mansfield's Toll Road (a beginner alpine ski trail) and along nearly the entire length of the Stowe Recreation Path before reaching the finish in the village. The course has a total vertical drop of over 3,000 feet. The winners will complete the course in less than 40 minutes, while recreational skiers can take a couple of hours to go the same distance.

New ideas- Savard's new ideas are translating into exciting new additions to the traditional race. "It is not about changing what works well, it's more about having the Stowe Derby moving along, and keeping it fresh and exciting for as many people as possible," (more)

says the new organizer. With the creation of dozens of cross-country ski and adventure races booming in New England and beyond, it is time to follow the trend and create more activities around the Derby.

Kids ski tour- For one, an afternoon cross-country ski tour designed especially for kids has been added for the Saturday afternoon preceding the race. "Not all kids are into intense cross-country racing, so the goal is to expose them to the sport in a manner that will be fun for all. Games, music, raffles, dog sledding, clowns, food and much more are in the works. "Plus, my feeling is that if the kids have their fun on the Saturday, both parents will have a chance to race in the Stowe Derby on Sunday. No guilt trip, everyone gets their chance for fun in the snow," adds Savard. The possibilities for the new kids event are endless and many local and area organizations are tagging along with the MMSC to pool efforts and talents and come up with fun and different activities for local, area and tourists to enjoy in Stowe.

Mark your calendars, Saturday February 21st, 12:30-3pm is "the kids' fun in the snow day" in Stowe. Sponsorship opportunities with this new family friendly event are extremely exciting and companies are welcome to contact Pascale Savard directly at stowederby@teammmsc.org.

OR Team Challenge added- As far as the Stowe Derby goes, a few additions are also in the works. The Derby will celebrate 65 years of history next year and Savard plans to use this year as a building year for what will hopefully be the biggest and best Vintage Derby ever in 2010. "I am very excited about introducing the team concept starting this year in partnership with Outdoor Research. For a nominal fee, individual racers will also be able to create their own team of four and race for bragging rights, and possibly nice prizes."

In an effort to even things out as much as possible, organizers have come up with a few criterion participants will have to follow when signing up their team. For example, each team of four needs a woman skier and all skiers must be racing in the same race, i.e., long course skating OR classical race. The teams will be split up in two categories, average age less than 40, or equal or more than 40. "The goal this year is to have people have fun with the concept and perhaps challenge friends and area businesses and ski the Stowe Derby," explains Savard. "This concept obviously could easily lead to relays, corporate challenges, and plenty more... all in the works for 2010. We will see how well the new ideas are received in 2009, and go from there. This is a building year but I can see so many opportunities. The Stowe Derby could easily become a multiple day event for families, friends, and elite racers alike. The possibilities are endless!"

Stowe Derby Fit Camp- On the community side, Savard is also trying to involve even more community businesses with this winning event. "The Swimming Hole and the Stowe Mountain Resort Cross-Country Center are teaming up to offer a Stowe Derby Fit Camp. Together, they will lead a beginner or intermediate skier into getting physically fit, as well as technically and mentally ready to tackle the Derby. It is a huge mental challenge to visualize yourself skiing down the Toll Road and managing those tights

turns on cross-country skis, but Charlotte and Scott can get interested campers all the tools necessary to achieve the task and accomplish what is often perceived as impossible for many," explains Savard. The Stowe Derby Fit Camp starts January 6th, and runs every Tuesday and Thursday from 11am to 12 noon, with the Tuesday training session held in the gym at The Swimming Hole facilities under the professional guidance of Charlotte Brynn, Executive Director and Certified Personal Trainer. The Thursday workout will be held on snow, at the Stowe Mountain Resort Cross-Country Center. Scott Dorwart, Director and Head Instructor of the facility will offer a one-hour class designed to teach participants all the technical skills and mental preparation necessary to tackle and finish the exciting race. For more information about the Stowe Derby Fit Camp, contact The Swimming Hole at 802-253-9229.

"Running the Stowe Derby is a huge community effort," says Savard. "I love seeing so many people get out there and work toward this incredible goal of making this a lasting and memorable Stowe experience. The Stowe Rotary members get their shovels out and build snow road crossings while cheering every skier. The Stowe Police monitors cars at the main road crossings and tip their hats as skiers glide by. Locals line up the trail and do the wave as you pass by. I love the feeling, it's like we are all a part of the race, so much fun. At the finish, everyone just hangs out and share stories of thrills and spills. I can't wait to ski it again!" See you there hopefully, plenty of time to get ready for Sunday, February 22nd. For more information, contact Pascale Savard at stowederby@teammmsc.org.

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