

## Jenkins Returns to Mount Hood Nine Years Later to Win Again

After a two year hiatus, the former Assault on Mount Hood race resumed on December 10 with a new name, “The Mount Hood Nutcracker Challenge”, and former winner Nate Jenkins returned to take the crown.

The 3.5M XC race is run at the Mount Hood Golf Course, a scenic but hilly venue at the eastern end of Melrose. The race is unique in the Greater Boston area in that the course is changed every year. It is also one of the few opportunities north of Boston for local runners to test their mettle on a true cross-country course. A large number of participants return year after year for these reasons. In addition to the individual race, there is a vigorous team competition, with 3-person single gender and 4-person coed teams. Prize awards are holiday nutcrackers, which are highly prized by the award winners. This was the 16<sup>th</sup> edition of the race.

Nate Jenkins, 42, from the Central Mass Striders took the overall win in 19:47 (5:38/mi), ten seconds ahead of Leif Anderson from the Cambridge Running Club, with Patrick Daly of Malden 5 seconds further back. Jenkins – 7<sup>th</sup> in the 2007 Olympic Marathon Trials – had previously entered this race just once before in 2013. While there is no official course record due to the changing route every year, his 17:47 from that year stands as the fastest time over a 3.5M distance at this event.

Jenkins admitted after this year’s race that he is only now really getting back into a racing rhythm after having undergone hip surgery in 2018. While the course is predominately on fairways, a cumulative 0.5 mile was on cart paths or roadway stretches. Jenkins did not race in spikes, a decision he favored, stating “I took over the lead shortly before the 1 mile point on a steep downhill. That stretch is a cart path and the other two were wearing spikes so I had an advantage there. I figured they would roll me up in the tough second mile but I had a lot more in the tank than I realized.”

He still wasn’t confident of the win at that point. “I am only good on uphills when I do a lot of hill work and I haven’t been doing any recently. I just raced for the first time a few weeks ago – since a one-off in January of 2020 – and it didn’t go well. But as the 2nd mile went on I realized each time I would crest a hill I would get my lungs and legs right back. Honestly it felt like the old days. I knew the flatter 3rd mile favored me so when I got there still in the lead I knew I had it. I knew if one of them caught me I would be able to take it up a few notches. As it was they never came back.”

The women’s race was won by Alexandra Mindel in 23:45 (6:46/mi). Kara Haas placed second in 24:26 while Heather Cirka finished in 25:02. The standout performance among age group winners was Greg Putnam, 53, in 20:54.

Special nutcracker awards were presented to the three runners who have run all 16 of the Mount Hood races: Amy Fallon from (Worcester) (entered as Amy Paquette in early years), Jim Gallant from Medford, and Robert Schrater from Salem.

—Mark Rosenblum

### Top results: (203 Finishers – Timing by Second Wind Race Timing)

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**Men (Overall):** 1. Nate Jenkins, 19:47; 2. Leif Anderson, 19:57; 3. Patrick Daly, 20:02; 4. Dan Chebot, 20:38; 5. Patrick Bugbee, 20:50; 6. Scott Leslie, 20:52; 7. Gregory Putnam, 20:54; 8. Patrick Ward, 20:57; 9. Wesley Mather, 20:58; 10. Jason Varney, 21:10. **(19-under):** 1. Dashiell Martin, 21:50; 2. Adam Lessard, 23:27; 3. Finn Hayden, 33:36. **(Masters):** 1. Nate Jenkins, 19:47; 2. Scott Leslie, 20:52; 3. Neil Martin, 21:32. **(Seniors):** 1. Gregory Putnam, 20:54; 2. Kevin Delaney, 23:27; 3. Dave Hannon, 23:53. **(Veterans):** 1. Theo Kindermans, 27:02; 2. John Pajer, 27:06; 3. Patrick McVeigh, 28:00. **(70+):** 1. Marshall Randolph, 29:35; 2. Rick Hersey, 33:19; 3. Robert Schrater, 34:37.

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**Women (Overall):** 1. Alexandra Mindel, 23:45; 2. Kara Haas, 24:26; 3. Heather Cirka, 25:02; 4. Jennifer Pajer, 25:30; 5. Laura Santoski, 25:37; 6. Bridget Kelley, 25:41; 7. Hannah Buchsbaum, 26:02; 8. Jennifer Boshco, 26:07; 9. Olivia Juneau, 26:53; 10. Reena Zhang, 27:04. **(19-under):** 1. Sara Lessard, 27:42; 2. Zoe Tubinis, 33:54; 3. Chloe Arnold, 34:11. **(Masters):** 1. Abby McCabe, 29:00; 2. Amy Fallon, 33:10; 3. Christine Durden, 33:34. **(Seniors):** 1. Kara Haas, 24:26; 2. Katherine Hahn, 29:11; 3. Pamela Lucci, 32:39. **(Veterans):** 1. Valerie Smith, 39:06; 2. Susan Richardson, 44:31; 3. Mary DiMaria, 45:30.

### Photos:



**Lead runners shortly after the start.** Heading the charge are Patrick Daly (83), who finished third, Dan Chebot (211), fourth, Leif Anderson (153), second, and Nate Jenkins (2), first.

*Photo by Lesley Moss/MRC*





**Lead runners midway along the course.** Front to back are Nate Jenkins (winner), Patrick Daly (third), and Leif Anderson (second). *Photo by Paul Locke/MRC*



**Future award winners? Determined local youth midway into the race.** Nathan Beintum (bib 96) and Ben O'Donoghue (147), from Melrose, 12 and 11 years old respectively.  
*Photo by Paul Locke/MRC*





**Chase pack, with Slayton Tower in the background.** Front to back are Scott Leslie, Patrick Bugbee, Wesley Mather, Greg Putnam (89), and Patrick Ward. *Photo by Scott Noddin/MRC*





Woman's winner Alexandra Mindel, followed by Ari Ofsevit. *Photo by Scott Noddin/MRC*





**Nate Jenkins all alone charging up the last major hill. Photo by Lesley Moss/MRC**



**Nutcrackers on full display prior to the awards ceremony. Photo by Scott Noddin/MRC**





**Nate Jenkins receiving the Overall Male Winner's nutcracker award** inside the historic Mount Hood clubhouse, with a holiday salute from Rowena Hakkaoui of the Melrose Running Club. *Photo by Scott Noddin/MRC*





**The three runners who have run all 16 Mount Hood races: Amy Fallon, Jim Gallant, and Robert Schrater. Schrater also placed third in the 70+ age division.**  
*Photo by Scott Noddin/MRC*