

2019 Phenom Profile: The DCR, a Draft Institution

A local runners draft has formed relay teams to take on the hilly forest roads of the Tussey mOUntaiNBACk 50 Mile Relay and Ultramarathon later this month.

The Draft Challenge Relay, better known by locals as “the DCR,” started in 2006 as the brainchild of local runner John Sheakoski. Many of the runners who regularly take part in the Tussey mOUntaiNBACk race had run the race for several years, often on the same sized team, with many of the same people. Sheakoski thought of the DCR as a way of mixing things up, getting new people involved, and having an interesting “competition within a competition.”

The 2019 DCR draft was held on Oct. 8 at Champs, in State College. Joel Niemann, coordinator of this year’s draft, was pleased with the results.

“The draft went well. A lot of new faces, along with many of the old guard,” said Niemann. “Meira (Minard) is the true ironwoman of the draft, having been in every single DCR. Meira and Tom (Cali) helped me out so much, not just last night but with the whole recruiting process.”

The goal of the DCR is to create multiple teams of the same size and equal running ability. These teams then compete against each other within the rules of the Tussey mOUntaiNBACk race. According to the DCR website, pace is not an issue. “In the past, the range of abilities has been great, but since the talent is spread among teams, the race is competitive and fun.”

All interested runners submit a bio with their recent running history to provide an idea of their running ability. The fastest runners become team captains and then choose runners in an effort to make their teams as competitive as possible. This also spells friendly and energetic competition: “Equally matched drafted teams will keep us aligned during the race for plenty of head to head racing as well as lots of trash talking.”

This year the DCR fielded six teams of six runners each for the Oct. 27 race. With the draft successfully completed, Niemann summarized the feeling: “Looking forward to another great time out in the woods!”

Proceeds of this year’s event will support Centre Volunteers in Medicine, a State College based medical and dental clinic that provides access to primary and preventive care for qualifying individuals living or working in Centre County who live in surrounding counties.

Photo: The DCR team rosters were nearly complete when the draft night concluded.

