

Out of Bounds

SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

skiing

MOST PEOPLE THINK DOWNHILL IS EXHILARATING, BUT REAL MEN AND WOMEN FAVOR CROSS-COUNTRY STYLE **BY MARK LUCE**



The weather was not delightful. There were mounds of snow already on the ground, more was falling gently from the sky, and I had nearly a mile to go. But I had managed to con my parents into the unthinkable — allowing me to ski to Adams Elementary School in Davenport, Iowa, rather than take a bus.

Granted, I was but a novice with the cross-country skis I received the previous Christmas, relegating my runs to a small slope that became the best whiffle ball/kickball field ever in the summer. I struggled at the technique to get uphill and didn't really know what I was doing. The shoes were cool, though, as were the ski poles that doubled as swords.

The extreme among us tend to think of downhill skiing as the ultimate — the speed, powder and adrenaline challenge — but those in the know understand that real men and women choose the refined, but lung-

scalding, cross-country variety to get their winter rush.

Not even trying to run the floor with high-school hoop mavens burns as many calories as hitting a cross-country trail. In one minute, a 155-pound man (does anyone know one of those?) can toast 14 calories. Do the math, couch potatoes. That's nearly a Big Mac an hour. Better yet, the sport works all the muscles groups and doesn't pound your bones and joints the way that running does. It's *the* aerobic sport, as long as there is snow.

Of course, one could tromp into the wild and ski to your heart's content, but it's easier and more practical to do some cross-country skiing on the golf course.

Now, some superintendents are wary of turning their turf to radical skiers who could potentially damage the course severely over the winter. But according to superintendent Mike Drugan of Drugan's Castle Mound in Holmen, Wis., cross-country skiers tend to follow etiquette more strictly than most golfers.

Drugan constructed nearly 10 kilometers of cross-country ski trails around his stunning course, while being careful to keep skiers off of greens. He finds that grooming the trails three times a week and not charging for skiing helps build summertime

golf business.

"We are really doing this for goodwill for the community," Drugan says. "It does help attract new golfers in the summer and gets people coming into the restaurant."

Beyond all the good-neighbor benefits, though, are some more intimate and long-lasting advantages, Drugan says.

"This is fun for the whole family," he adds. "You can learn to ski while young, and do it throughout your lifetime."

Further, he says cross-country skiing is a great way to keep fit over the chilly winter months. However, he adds with wry understatement, "It hurts."

I can attest that it does hurt — and often more than you could possibly imagine. Nevertheless, it's hard to complain too much when one feels the peace and majesty of gracefully gliding across pristine snow with no particular place to go.

Mark Luce, a free-lance writer, burns calories on his cross-country skis at an alarming rate near his home in Kansas City, Mo.

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