

1973-2023 Wostawea Time Capsule Story

“2006: The Snow Stayed Home, but Wostaweans Showed Up”

Story shared by John Ball (with a little help from my friends)

What if there was a winter without snow? That hasn't happened in Wostawea's fifty-year history, but the 2006 season came close and created unwelcome challenges for the club – and the Jackrabbit program especially. I coached Level 3 that year and remember brown grass and mud around Odell Park Lodge as often as snow, which played peek-a-boo all winter and only covered the ground on three or four Saturdays.

“I learned to do the snow dance that season,” recalls Eric Luiker. It was his first year as Jackrabbit coordinator, and he spent lots of time deciding whether to cancel – back then, by voicemail from “Big Bunny” – and how to keep kids engaged and learning when they couldn't ski. Soccer games, trail walks, relay races, and orienteering were go-to options, he says, but “sometimes the kids just wanted to climb in the ‘monkey trees’ near the lodge.” Don Wright adds, “I remember working with Nathalie on a small patch of snow, maybe the size of half a pickle ball court, teaching the Bunnies simple things like how to balance on skis when standing on one foot, or when playing catch while on skis.” Sometimes a bit of snow is enough to learn on, and always better than none. Speaking of balance, Jane Hadley recalls a silver lining for experienced skiers that season: “My agility and balance on skis improved because of having to jump over or ski around numerous bare sections.”

Eric Hadley remembers a Jackrabbits soccer game in which “my face got splattered with mud every time I kicked the ball.” On that memorable day, with kids, coaches, and parents covered, Eric Luiker was impressed with “how accepting everyone was. It's the nature of cross-country skiing that conditions are always changing and we need to adapt.” Our community adapted more than usual that year, and the creativity, patience, good humour and resilience of our volunteer coaches – and our Jackrabbits and parents – was tested. We came through admirably and were rewarded with nice snow for Fun Day, with the usual zany activities followed by a family potluck and awards presentation in the lodge.

With climate challenges in our future, we'll inevitably have more such low-snow seasons to contend with. But while 2006 was a low point, it could have been much worse. The club rebounded quickly in 2007 and beyond as more regular winters returned, grooming and trails continued to improve, and Jackrabbits and coaches returned in full force knowing they could learn and have fun in a range of conditions. To adapt an old ditty, the lesson from 2006 was:

*Whether the weather be cold,
Or whether the weather be hot,
We'll weather the weather
Whatever the weather,
Whether it's snowy or not.*

Note: This is the final Time Capsule of this 50th-anniversary season. As column editor, I am immensely grateful to everyone who contributed their memories, stories and photos to capture snippets of our rich history, and to Barb Ramsay for presenting them so artfully. All Time Capsules have been posted on the club's website if you'd like to read them again or share with others.