



Klondike Derby Tests Scouts With Sub-Zero Temperatures And Other Challenges

BY KENDRA BOBOWICK

A lot of cold boys were out on the fields at the Second Company Governor's Horse Guard Friday January 16.

At minus six degrees as the evening paled with Saturday morning's sunrise, the Scatacook District Boy Scouts tried to warm to this year's Klondike Derby. As sunlight pulled temperatures up to nearly 10 degrees as it washed over fields surrounding the governor's second company horse guard, one scout moved quickly past saying to himself: "It's on fire compared to last night." As many as 540 boys and 150 adults from the district's eight towns including Newtown filled the fields Saturday as they engaged in competitions and activities that put their scouting skills to the test — the first hurdle for many scouts and leaders had been sleeping through a frigid Friday night. Some groups had pitched a tent, and then zipped up sleeping bags against the cold.

Was it really below zero at minus six degrees Friday night? "They say it was," said chairman of the Scatacook District Klondike Derby Dave Barrett. He soon walked the snow-filled drive and white-washed fields filled with footprints leading to different activities where boys, young men, and leaders got their teams together to pull their ski-sled with supplies.



Enlarge image
Jeff Plate, left, and Mac Carneiro of New Fairfield pulled their team's sled filled with supplies they were going to need.

"The boys are well prepared, they know what to wear," Mr Barrett said, pointing to the bundles of equipment in one passing sled. Admitting that "some of us were cold," he noted that many groups that participated this weekend camp year-round, every month, "within safety guidelines." The derby, which rotates through the eight-town district and landed at the horse guard this year, is not only about competition. "A lot is bragging rights," Mr Barrett said, considering the weekend's extreme cold. But more importantly, he explained, "It's to apply [teamwork] skills." Offering similar ideas was Alan Page, a scout leader from Newtown who explained the vibrant spread of tents and boys in ski jackets smattering the snow-covered fields with color. Patterned after a sled race, he said teams haul

their sled from one station to another where they are met with challenges where they "demonstrate their scout skills."



Enlarge image

Adam Manes rests for a moment at a camp area set up on the sprawling fields of the Second Company Governor's Horse Guard from Friday night into Saturday, January 16–17. He looks for his brother, one of more than 540 Webelos, and Boy Scouts in the eight-town Scatacook district, which includes Newtown troops. The Scouts completed their annual Klondike Derby, a series of events testing their skills, over the weekend.—Bee Photos, Bobowick

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Stations tested the boys' fire building abilities. According to the rules, each crew gathers native tinder and firewood, lay the fire, and light it. There were chariot races where crews pull another scout around a track on a travois — a platform dragging along the ground on poles that support it. Sled lashings and a teardown must be completed and tied as specified in the scout handbook. Another station ran the scouts through a blindfolded stretcher carry where four blindfolded scouts carry a fifth around a course as he gives directions to his blindfolded teammates. Scouts must prove their knot-tying skills, animal track identification, and ability to perform an ice rescue.

Another challenge was the turkey shoot involving targets and slingshots. Another station mimics snow-blindness: all but one patrol member are snow-blind (blindfolded), the sighted scout is injured, and the group must put up its tent. Patrols need to identify standard map symbols placed along a trail, and at last is the sled race — the ultimate Klondike Derby challenge for the fastest sled.

Crushed within the crowd pushing through the main barn where Mr Page organized registrations, several scouts found a moment to talk. New Fairfield Troop 42 members Chris Smith, Jake Stoffel, and Brandon Yoho stood their ground within the moving crowd.

"It may have been hard, but trying to have fun made it easier," Chris said about his weekend. The best part of the weekend for Jake, who spent more than a month preparing for the derby, was riding downhill on a sled, while Brandon admitted he had to spend time fixing up his sled. "It was worth it!" he said.

Stepping out into the 10-degree sunny day were parents and scouts hustling their sleds and gear. Pulling were fathers Dave Stapp and John Adams with his son Ryan. Walking alongside his team's bundle of supplies was Keillor Mose wrapped beneath the hood and bulk of a blue parka. Newtown resident Adam Manes walked across the busy field using ski poles, searching for his brother who had camped at the horse guard the night before. Across the fire-pit and on the opposite side of a hay bale was Richard Lyon, a leader with Dodgintown Troop 270, packing up gear.



[Enlarge image](#)

Forrest Weatherby, Ryan McIntyre, Markus Wessel, James Craig, Luke Reppucci, Ethan Burg, Devin Peterson, and Joseph Tether are all members of Newtown Pack 70.

Heaving their team's sled along the roadway toward the main barns were young men from New Fairfield, Jeff Plate and Mac Carneiro, who had slept out in the cold. "It was kind of daring," Jeff confessed. With them were Chris Bellantuono, Nathaniel Dee, Nick Davis, and Justin Baumgarten.

Near the horse guard's main barn were groups including Newtown's Pack 70 members Forrest Weatherby, Ryan McIntyre, Markus Wessel, James Craig, Luke Reppucci, Ethan Burg, Devin Peterson, and Joseph Tether. Next-door climbing the more than 20-foot-high mounds of snow were boys from Troops 52 and 137 from Danbury and New Fairfield.

The weekend's final results, Webelos: First Place was Pack 84 Patrol 1, second Place was Pack 52 Patrol 1, and third Place went to Pack 54 Patrol 1. Boy Scouts: First Place was Troop 42 Patrol 1, second Place was Troop 5 Patrol 1, and third Place went to Troop 52 Patrol 2. Troop 370 Patrol 1 was the overall winner of the Klondike Cup.

Scatacook District expresses their appreciation for the horse guard's hospitality.