

Pemberton Trail 50K  
Fountain Hills, AZ; Feb. 10, 2007

#### Dewitt Sets Desert Ablaze at Pemberton Trail 50K

Paul DeWitt, 38, screamed around the Pemberton Trail 50K two-lap course, Feb. 10th, like a jackrabbit with a bobcat on his tail. Knocking a jaw-dropping seven minutes off his own 2005 course record, DeWitt set the early time-to-beat for 2007 with a blazing 3:11:55.

The two-time Leadville 100M champ and fine furniture maker from Monument, Colo., took advantage of actually running outside to test the fitness he has been forced to develop on a treadmill this winter. Colorado's eastern slope has been buried by eight snowstorms, and Dewitt hadn't run "on dirt" in ten weeks.

"I was shooting for 3:19," Dewitt said, referring to his old course record. "The 3:11 really gives me confidence for the Umstead 100 Miler, coming up March 31." Umstead is the 10 x 10M loop race located in DeWitt's old college stomping grounds in Raleigh, No. Carolina.

Dewitt made a last-minute decision to come to Pemberton, changing his racing plans to join a group of friends heading for Arizona that included women's 50K winner Mary Ross, 40, St. Paul, Minn., 4:33:06. Ross, a spritely kindergarten teacher who incorporates running into her curriculum, was searching for a mellow winter trail run after a high-key fall road marathon. She was 15th overall.

Deborah Hemberlin, 38, Tempe, Ariz., was the second woman in , at 16th place, 4:35:54.

Scott St. John, 43, Auburn, Calif., 4:00:11, was the top master finisher, and sixth overall. Tusconian Catlow Shipek, 28, took the under-29 division in his 50K debut, 3:48:54.

In it's seventh year, the Pemberton Trail 50K has grown from a twinkle in race director Brian Wieck's eye to one of the largest 50Ks in the Southwest (135 entrants). Back in 2000, living in a Eugene flophouse with a bunch of tracksters and road racers, he thought there ought to be a 50K on this great trail outside Phoenix, where he used to live when he was playing semi-pro baseball. Being his 1000th great idea, his twinkle met with lackluster support.

Undaunted by his housemates' lack of interest, Wieck went ahead and created the Pemberton Trail 50K out of thin desert air and a pack of glow sticks. His parents, Joan and Keith Wieck, retirees in nearby Fountain Hills, serve as organizational support, caterers, and the unofficial race hostel.

Only a few miles from Phoenix's unchecked residential sprawl, the Pemberton Trail is the marquee loop around MacDowell Mountain Regional Park, a gloriously large county park that rests at the edge of current development. The same trail is home to the Javelina Jundred 100m in the fall.

Whether drawn by the fast, smooth course or the spectacular desert scenery-- complete with yipping coyotes, delicate forests of saguaros and ocotillos, and a pink sunrise over the forbidding Superstition Mountains-- the race continues to grow every year by word of mouth alone.

Wieck, 35, an accomplished 50K runner in other people's races, spends most of the year these days at home in Helena, Montana. He is delighted with the race's growth, which will max out at 150, the limit of his event permit with the park. He is especially pleased by the runners who come back year after year, such as ultra coach "Woofie" Humpage, 51, of Scottsdale, who this year ran 6:15:30 in tights.

Says Wieck, "It's the returnees that tell me I'm doing something right!"