



# Area Boy Scouts compete in 26th Annual Klondike Derby

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GODFREY - Roughly 150 participants competed in the 26th Annual Klondike Derby Saturday, Jan. 10 at Camp Warren Levis in Godfrey.

Sponsored by the Boy Scouts of America Lewis & Clark Council, Cahokia Mounds and Piasa Bird Districts, the Klondike Derby is an all day competition that puts Boy Scouts and other participants to the test. This year, the challenge was not only to successfully complete each mission, but doing so in the 20-30 degree weather.

“The purpose of this event is to provide an activity to teach leadership, teamwork and character,” said Mike Eschbach, District Director of Piasa Bird and Cahokia Mounds District. “And they are definitely learning come character on a cold day like this.”

A total of 33 teams participated in the derby, representing 22 different troops and two venture crews from the area. Venture crews, or venturing, is a co-ed program for 8th graders and above that focuses on youth development to help prepare them for a successful adulthood.



During the competition, each team designs and builds a sled that is hauled around the camp to different stations called “cities.” At these cities, the teams are graded on the proficiency and completion of the challenge, earning points to create an overall score at the end of the competition. The teams with the most points at the end of the day, wins the Derby.

“They are not only being tested by applying practical application but they are also being quizzed on general scout knowledge,” said Gerald Yungling, “Yukon Jack” of the Klondike Derby, assistant leader of the exercise.

Challenges at the different cities included archery proficiency, rifle qualification, first aid, ice rescue maneuvers, cooking skills, knot tying, shelter building and more.

“This is when the lessons of leadership really get put to the test,” said Yungling. “Leadership is something that they have read in books and practiced, but when you’re out here in the cold and your tired and stressed and you have a task to accomplish, you’ve got to be a leader to keep your boys motivated.”

The main goal of the exercise is for the teams to learn how to work together, pull their own weight, encourage others, and practice good sportsmanship and teamwork.





“It is a team building activity, Jeff Baer, “Klondike Pete” of the Klondike Derby, head leader. “I think the best thing the boys get out these events, like the Klondike Derby, is how to work as a unit.”

Boy Scouts participate in many activities and events throughout the year, but the Klondike Derby is something they look forward to the most.

“Out of all the activities that we do throughout the year, this is my troop’s absolute favorite,” said Mark Smith, Scout Master out of Troop 777 of East Alton. “As soon as one derby is over, they already start planning for next year.”

Several Boy Scouts shared that they enjoy putting what they know to the test and practicing their outdoorsman skills.

“I really like working on different Boy Scout skills,” said Sam Minier Assistant Patrol Leader with Troop 16 who has been training for the Derby since November. “I think my favorite part of the Klondike Derby is hanging out with the different teams and teaching the younger guys new skills.”

The teams also get judged on creativity. The teams receive points on the creativity of their team name or theme, the creativity of their sled, even the creativity of their meals that they are required to plan themselves.

Eagle Scout Joshua Studnicki is a member of “The Jamaican Klondike Team,” which inspired by the 1993 film, “Cool Runnings”. Each year, his team creates a theme and dresses up to reflect that particular theme. This year, resembling the Jamaican bobsled team in the film, each team member wore dread lock wigs on their heads, which they say has actually helped keep them warm.

Being an Eagle Scout and a little older and more knowledgeable, Studnicki is confident in his team’s success in the competition.

“Our team works really well together, we’ve got some new guys and they are really working hard,” said Studnicki. “Pulling the sled in this cold weather is probably the biggest challenge of the day.”

Though the Klondike Derby is challenging and hard work, having fun plays an important role in working with one another to overcome the obstacles at hand.

The Winners of the 26 Annual Klondike Derby are: 1st Place - "Lost Patrol" from Troop 342  
2nd Place - "Jamaican Klondike Team" from Troop 777  
3rd Place - "Da' Boys" from Troop 1035  
4th Place - Crew 222  
5th Place - Crew 2001



