Race Recap: The 2011 Grand Traverse

Contributed by Tyler Cohen

Last weekend, the 14th annual Elk Mountains Grand Traverse wrapped up as snowy skies turned sunny at Aspen Mountain's Ajax Gondola Plaza. Crested Butte's own Ethan Passant and Travis Scheefer took home gold, finishing in 9 hours, 14 minutes and 50 seconds.

Last weekend, the 14th annual Elk Mountains Grand Traverse wrapped up as snowy skies turned sunny at Aspen Mountain's Ajax Gondola Plaza. Crested Butte's own Ethan Passant and Travis Scheefer took home gold, finishing in 9 hours, 14 minutes and 50 seconds.

"This feels awesome, especially after coming so close before," Scheefer told The Aspen Times following the race. He and Passant placed second in both 2009 and 2010.

Each spring, the 40-mile Grand Traverse spans the Elk Mountains, connecting Crested Butte to Aspen. The race starts at midnight, when 100 pairs of racers leave Mt. Crested Butte Ski Resort and ascend two mountain passes for Aspen Mountain. According to elkmountaintraverse.org, the course roughly follows an 1880s mail route that connected the then mining towns.

In this year's race, about 20 teams dueled for the lead heading to Star Pass, the course's high point at 12,303 feet. Skin issues plagued all the top contenders, as they broke trail through the night. Finally with four miles to go, Passant and Scheefer broke free from the competition and finished less than two minutes in front of the coed duo of Stevie Kremer and Marshall Thomson. In all, the top ten teams finished within 30 minutes of one another with two co-ed teams placing in the top three.

For complete results from the Elk Mountains Grand Traverse, visit elkmountaintraverse.org.

Source: The Aspen Times, Crested Butte News, elkmountaintraverse.org