

Michael Mandli

On a Friday afternoon in 1979, The Milwaukee Journal's cover story was about the next morning's 55 K American Birkiebeiner between Cable and Hayward. On a dare, Mike and his friend rented wooden skis, bamboo poles, three pin boots and made the six hour drive north to Telemark. "When I walked into the Lodge for registration, little did I know I would be overtaken by what is now known as Birkie Fever." Twenty-three Birkies and eleven Korteloppets later, Mike brings a participant's perspective, a volunteer's perspective, a parent's perspective, and a coach's perspective across all the ABSF events.

Between ski races and training, Mike worked as a Licensed Psychologist, supervising twelve psychotherapists, directing his clinic support staff and budget, and delivering psychological services to his clients. His background in behavioral medicine allowed him to deliver Medical Consultant duties to the State of Wisconsin. In the private sector he provided psychological evaluations for engineering and corporate management positions in southeastern Wisconsin. In his spare time, Mike has coached athletes from the beginner to the elite, and he currently coaches masters athletes in the US and Canada.

"A good friend taught me that cross-country skiing is a lifestyle that includes biking, running, inline skating, hiking, paddling and the building of life long relationships. The Birkiebeiner is the magnet that kept bringing us back to Hayward and Cable to play and to finally build a home where we can ski from our door onto one of the greatest trails in the World."

Mike's goal is to help insure the American Birkiebeiner Trail is sustainable, permanent, and accessible to the silent sport community. "Preserving this regional asset will not only allow others to have an excellent experience, it will help the Hayward and Cable area remain one of the best family vacation destinations in the country." Mike's desire is to have his children, grandchildren, and friends experience the rewards he found in his first Birkie Fever and how it can lead to a healthy, active, lifestyle.