

SAVAGE Pacer



Mirsch-Bernick alliance makes horseshoe history

By Tom Schardin, Staff Writer Savage Pacer, Friday, June 23, 2006

The Mirsch and Bernick families have made history in the annual Dan Patch Days horseshoe hunt.

The friendly neighborhood alliance became the first two-time winner, finding the 100th anniversary horseshoe under a small spruce tree near the site of the old Savage Depot in downtown Savage.

It's a dynasty, joked Ann Mirsch. Lee (Bernick) thought all along that it was down there. He had a hunch from the beginning. We started looking there, but the clues took us to other places. After the fourth clue, we knew it had to be there.

It's the first time since 2001 that horseshoe wasn't hidden in a park. Last year, the Mirsch-Bernick alliance found it at River Bend Park shortly after the fourth clue was published. Ann's teenage son, Ben Johnson, found it.

It took four clues again this year to find the horseshoe, which was buried under the mulch of the newly planted spruce tree in the Town Square parking lot.

When we went down there again, there were people all over the parking lot looking for it, said Lee. This time, I figured it had to be under the spruce tree, so it took all of about 30 seconds to find it. We got out of the car and went right for that little tree. It was the only spruce tree in that area.

The Mirsch-Bernick alliance also features Ann's husband, Mark, along with Lee's wife, Julie. And don't forget the kids, Jack and Patrick Bernick and Walter Mirsch.

But perhaps 2-year-old Jayne Bernick is the alliance's lucky charm. Two days before she turned one last year, the team found the horseshoe. This year, it was three days before her second birthday.

Perhaps next year, when the alliance goes for three straight wins, the team will find the horseshoe four days before Jayne's third birthday. That seems to be the trend.

I thought the clues were more difficult this year, said Ann. We were all over the place for the second and third clues. They were very tough to figure out.

The strategy for the Mirsch-Bernick alliance is to have someone on the Internet trying to decipher clues. Meanwhile, the majority of the team is out hunting. It's not always a perfect strategy. The first two clues had the word race in it, so naturally that led the team and perhaps many others to Canterbury and O'Connell Parks.

Ann said the team thought the horseshoe was hidden in Hamilton Hills after the third clue.

After the third clue, we figured it wasn't in a park, said Ann. The depot was always in the back of our mind, but we just didn't know where.

The fourth clue had the phrase spruced up and covered lightly, in it, which led to the mulch under the only spruce tree, which is a stones throw away from Highway 13.

Its pretty much the luck of the draw to find that thing, said Lee. I think we were fortunate last year to find it. We went back (to River Bend Park) one last time and Ben found it when nobody else was around. At that time, we thought it was already found. I went straight for that spruce tree when we went down there again after the fourth clue. There are a lot of people looking and digging around other areas.

Ann said the team thought there was a chance the horseshoe was hidden somewhere amid all of the construction behind Savage City Hall. Ben went for a quick look, but reported back that there was too much construction for it to be there.

Right after that, the Bernick's went straight for the depot, said Ann. Luckily, Lee found it. It was his hunch all along that it was down there. He was the hero this year.

Meanwhile, Julie serves on the Dan Patch Days Board, so one might wonder does that give her team the advantage when it comes to finding the horseshoe? There's no inside scoop, Julie said. Only the clue master himself knows where the horseshoe is hidden.

Julie said she was asked at a recent Dan Patch Days committee meeting why she hunts for the horseshoe when she's part of the board?

Its one of the activities we can participate in, she said. The board is so busy during Dan Patch Days that many of the committee member's don't get to sign up for other events. There's too much going on, so that is one of the reasons I go out and hunt with my family.

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