

46th Billygoat Run, Bigelow Hollow State Park, May 10, 2026: Head Goat's Report

Perhaps the most surprised people involved in the 46th edition of the Billygoat Run were involved inadvertently: the group of three people grilling their food peacefully on the shores of Bigelow Pond at 10:45 am. Their peace was rudely disturbed when suddenly their picnic area was occupied by 102 Goat and Kid participants, assorted paparazzi and hangers-on, and by a Head Goat brandishing a PA system and a box of maps. After the start, one of the paparazzi told them that they had had the rare sporting privilege of viewing the start of a Billygoat Run. I am not fully sure that they properly appreciated the honor of the experience.

In fact, the site of the start had been chosen entirely for three reasons.

- First, the comic value of having the shortest ever first leg of a Billygoat – 58 meters, straight line.
- Second, to allow the field to shout friendly comments back from the first control towards the Head Goat still standing at the start, and to allow the Head Goat to laugh back at them. Both sides of this deal seemed to appreciate it.
- And third, to make the event easier for aging goats by having the first control visible from the start.

In fact, in an attempt to make the event easier than ever before, the Head Goat also helpfully arranged to have control 7 visible from control 6, and control 16 visible from control 15. Many appreciative comments were heard from participants about how much they enjoyed this arrangement, particularly when the journey on trails around the lake proved to be rocky enough to suit the most mountainous of mountain goats. The only problem was for one racer on the Kid who never noticed number 1 on the map, went straight to 2 thinking he had not skipped yet, skipped another control later on, and was surprised to find he had DNFed. The control was visible from the start for a reason, Ken ...

The actual athletic competition turned out to be strong; stronger than the Head Goat expected. There were worries before the start that the winning time would be well over 100 minutes, but defending champion from 2025, Yury Tambasov, smoked the course and finished in just under 82 minutes. He thereby beat the field by a record margin in a mass-start Billygoat (11 minutes and 2 seconds, beating Eric Weyman's win in 1984 into the trash can of history). On the women's side, Alex Jospe added an eighth title in fine style, earning back the doorstep she had lost in 2025. And finally, 71 of the 85 Billygoat starters earned a shirt, an excellent 84% hit rate.

But enough about the actual race; let's turn to the main event.

By the time the dust had settled, there were several strong contenders for the prestigious award of the Champion Club. Before I mention those, it's appropriate to mention the losing clubs first. Scores are out of a possible 100 points.

- CSU (Score: negative infinity). CSU would seem to have an advantage, seeing that the Head Goat used to race for them, and seeing that the women's winner, Alex Jospe, represents them and was also kind enough to lend us the finish line clock for the day. And because Ari Ofsevit is also a CSU member and carried (very cutely) his son Leon around nearly the whole course. Those things both score large positive points, and without that word 'nearly' in there, CSU might even have won. But unfortunately, in the process of doing the presentation, we kindly offered to give Leon a Billygoat shirt, believing that he had successfully completed the whole course. When Ari didn't refuse the shirt on behalf of Leon, and when we learned from Attackpoint afterwards that Leon had in fact skipped controls 27, 28, AND 29(while hanging out at the parking lot with his mom) while Ari darted off to complete the last loop and earn his own shirt, CSU's fate was sealed. Billygoat shirts are not to be obtained under false pretenses, cute kid or no.
- DVOA. (Score: negative 26.7). You would think that the club that claims the three first place-getters overall and the fifth and sixth women would have a reasonable chance of being the champion club, and that might be except for the terrible style point deductions associated with the winner, Yury Tambasov, dropping his teammates for a record margin of victory. What kind of team is that? A further deduction ensued for the three leading men wearing Electric City Orienteering shirts even though they were representing DVOA. We don't want to hear anything about how NEOC had chapters back in the day. Register as DVOA-ECO, or wear a DVOA shirt, or lose massive style points for not showing the appropriate club pride required to win prestigious awards like this. Your choice.
- QOC. (Score: 65.3). Some excellent navigation work from QOC, and many happy participants. But one small flaw. One of them committed the fatal mistake of grumbling about getting stuck on the leg to number 1 behind some slow people. Part of the game, my QOC friends. Don't want to get stuck? Run faster at the beginning. Or at least don't complain about it so the Head Goat can hear.

And then the winning three clubs, in a remarkably close race.

- NEOC (Score: 97.6). NEOC did everything right. They lent WCOC the map for the day and as far as I can tell haven't actually remembered to make us pay anything; they volunteered to help pick up controls; they had 21 Billygoat finishers; they represent a healthy age range (from the Cambridge Rindge and Latin school-age crew to the, shall we say, older contingent); they provided the results crew; they claim the fourth place getter. But those are all orienteering-related, and winning the Billygoat takes more than that, as the champion club remembered. Not making mistakes is not enough to win; you have to beat your competition.
- WCOC (Score: 97.7). WCOC is a great club, and the Head Goat is proud to belong to it. Meet Director Ellen Morse and co-Director Susie DeWitt did a perfect job organizing the

day; Anna Morse created a great shirt design; and many, many people helped in so many ways. Billygoat founder Peter Gagarin even claims WCOC as home club these days. But WCOC can't win for two very important reasons. First, Bigelow Hollow State Park is not *in* Western Connecticut, so we were hosting the race under false pretenses. Also, perhaps more importantly, WCOC forgot the key step ICO implemented. Just because you're the host club doesn't mean you can forget the key step.

- ICO (Score: 97.8). Having the ICO crowd in attendance was great. They fully entered into the Billygoat spirit, not taking too seriously things that should not be taken seriously (like winning the actual race), and taking very seriously things that should be taken very seriously (like laughing at the Head Goat's jokes). And yes, like bribery. It was right there in the Goat Notes, but ICO was the only one to take the open request for bribes in the way it was intended. Not only did they give the Head Goat honorary membership of ICO, but also a club jersey to go with it, and not just any one, a 'limited edition' one (which is a much nicer way of saying that than 'the old one we're still trying to get rid of'). A clear victory by a massive margin of 0.1 point.

Congratulations to ICO; and the rest of you, take the bribery seriously next time. Particularly if they let the Head Goat do this a third time ...

Thanks not only to Ellen, Susie, and Anna (already called out by name) but also to Earl LaVallee (registrar), Jim Henderson and Rich Nietupski (veters), Rich again and Chris Parietti (aid station), Harold Ellis (food), Sue Godlewski (first aid), Mark O'Connell (NEOC) and Jim Paschetto (NEOC) (results), and Rick DeWitt, Stephen Richardson, Hayden and Jackson Morse, Megan Hardy, Betsy and Ben Therrien, Roger and Trisha Underwood (day-of help), and several much-appreciated control picker-uppers (Jon and Tori Campbell, Barbara LaMay, and the Morse family). And last, to the combined force of Peters Campbell, Gagarin, Wailes, and Zakrevski in arranging perfect weather for a Billygoat (cloudy and cool with a breeze, turning to nice warm sun by the time of the presentation).

William Hawkins, Head Goat

P.S.: the Head Goat's child read this and would like it pointed out that they also helped on the day by distributing one map at the start and collecting their favorite control. So, thanks to lo for their crucial contribution also. (And for agreeing to get to the meet early so the Head Goat could go out and make sure the actual controls were still there.)