



## 23 Slopes in 24 Hours

Skiing and snowboarding duo carve out world records one downhill run at a time

By Dianna Stampfler

Last winter, skier Kyle Kelly of Caledonia and snowboarder Brad Dykstra of Dorr devised a plan to hit as many of the Lower Peninsula's ski areas as they could in order to break a record for downhill snowboarding and skiing.

Twenty-four hours, 763 miles, two GoPros (with 13 batteries and six SD cards), and 23 slope stops later, the two west Michigan friends not only hit their goal, but they achieved world-record status for both skiing and snowboarding.

The previous record was set in 2017 when a Canadian and an Australian tackled 17 resorts in Japan over a 24-hour period. In 2019, two other Michigan snowboarders traveled 430 miles and hit 16 ski areas in Michigan. They broke a North American record for snowboarding, but missed out on the world record.

The geographic proximity of notable ski slopes in Michigan was critical to the success of their world-record endeavor. In an average season, Michigan attracts more than 2.4 million skiers and snowboarders to its 39 ski areas.

"No matter where you are in Michigan, you're within a two-hour drive of a ski area," says Mickey MacWilliams, president and executive director of the Michigan Snowsports Industries Association (MSIA). "When it comes to snowfall, lake-effect snow from our Great Lakes gives us an advantage over other Midwestern states."

### Hitting the Slopes

Enlisting the support of MSIA, Travel Michigan, and the ski areas, as well as family and friends, the duo started with sunny skies and temperatures around 22 degrees at noon on Saturday, Feb. 26. Their first stop was

Nub's Nob in Harbor Springs, followed by a stop at a nearby resort, The Highlands (a Boyne property).

Day one ultimately included 15 locations, from Harbor Springs to Boyne Falls, Gaylord, Grayling, Bellaire, Traverse City, Glen Arbor, Thompsonville, Cadillac (home of Caberfae Peaks, which opened in 1937 as Michigan's first destination ski resort), and Harrison. Each run had to be independently witnessed, documented, and videographed as part of the world-record requirements.

"One of the more noteworthy stops was The Homestead," says Kelly, who has been downhill skiing since he was about 7. "We got there right as the sun was setting over Lake Michigan. There was that 'golden hour' look to everything, and it was really amazing. I still get goosebumps thinking about it. It was just so beautiful. I was taken aback by that."



Well after the sun had set (6:49 p.m.), Kelly, Dykstra (who has been snowboarding for about 8 years), and their entourage made their way to the southeast part of the state, arriving at Mt. Holly in the middle of the night.

After a couple hours of sleep for Dykstra and the crew, and 30 minutes for Kelly (who had to download all of the video footage and recharge camera batteries) in the ski patrol building, they made their way back to the slopes at 4 a.m. Eight more ski areas followed throughout the morning, including Swiss Valley in Jones. The day ended one hour ahead of the 24-hour deadline at Cannonsburg Ski Area in Belmont, near Grand Rapids, where a celebration took place.

"It was really cool that we got to ride so many different ways to the top of our runs," says Kelly, noting that they were transported by ski lift, rope tow, inside a Sno-Cat groomer, on a snowmobile, behind a snowmobile, and on a Magic Carpet (like the flat escalator "sidewalks" inside airport terminals). "A T-bar was the only thing we didn't get to do."

## A Warm Welcome

Along the way, other skiers and boarders cheered them on and posed for selfies (which

thankfully didn't delay their schedule). It's this friendly, tightknit community that keeps Kelly and Dykstra active within the sport in Michigan.

"It's all about getting out and having a good time together," Kelly says. "People don't realize it, but there's just so much that Michigan has to offer for skiing and snowboarding, and winter sports in general."

Kelly's assessment sounds like an endorsement for the Pure Michigan (*michigan.org*) brand, which suits David Lorenz, vice president of Travel Michigan, just fine. "We applaud Kyle and Brad's accomplishment of breaking the world record and we look forward to another exciting Pure Michigan winter season," he says.

Now, nearly a year later, some might ask what's next for the two. Perhaps 24 ski areas in 24 hours? There are definitely enough places, if the timing is right. MacWilliams notes that 29 of the state's 39 ski areas are found in the Lower Peninsula.

"It was definitely tiresome, but well worth it. I loved finding all of the ski resorts in Michigan I've never heard of or been to before," Dykstra says. Of the 23 ski areas they rode, 14 were new to both men.



**This page:** It was fast paced for snowboarder Brad Dykstra (left) and skier Kyle Kelly. David Lorenz of Travel Michigan (below) joined the fun. **Opposite page:** The support team, Dom Garcia and Lynsey Dykstra (Brad's wife), helped to document the duo's every run.

"We'll never forget how much planning went into the day. In the end, it actually went off without a hitch. I'm glad I had supportive friends and a wife who made it all come together," he adds. ☺

## SLOPE SEQUENCE

Order of the resorts visited on Saturday, Feb. 26: Nub's Nob, Harbor Springs; The Highlands, Harbor Springs; Challenge Mountain, Boyne Falls; Boyne Mountain, Boyne Falls; Treetops Resort and Otsego Resort, Gaylord; Hanson Hills, Grayling; Shanty Creek/Schuss Mountain, Bellaire; Mt. Holiday and Hickory Hills, Traverse City; The Homestead, Glen Arbor; Crystal Mountain, Thompsonville; Caberfae Peaks, Cadillac; and Snow Snake, Harrison. On Sunday, Feb. 27, the pair skied Mt. Holly, Holly; Pine Knob, Clarkston; Alpine Valley, White Lake; Mt. Brighton, Brighton; Swiss Valley, Jones; Timber Ridge, Gobles; Bittersweet, Otsego; and Cannonsburg, Belmont.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF KYLE KELLY AND BRAD DYKSTRA