

Wet Start to the 2009 Tree Climbing Championship

by Mike Wendt, Tree Climbing Championship Committee Chairman / Arboriculture/Horticulture Instructor at Milwaukee Area Technical College

On Friday morning, August 7, the WAA TCC set-up crew knew that rain was on the way. Appleton City Forester Mike Michlig assured me that any approaching precipitation will split and go around the city, as this trend had occurred all summer long. By late afternoon, all five preliminary events and the Masters' Challenge were set up, thanks to the hard work of Greg Good, Cory Gritzmacher, Jim Jungbluth, Russ Lewis, John Meiszner, Mike Minardi, Mike Michlig and Florim Ajda. Then the rains came.

Bands of much-needed but untimely showers soaked Erb Park all night long. With rain still falling at 7:00 am, the judging crew called a three-hour delay, and asked the 20 competitors if anyone was no longer interested in competing if the championship starts late. Not one hand raised from these dedicated climbers! Fortunately, the rain ended by 9:00, and registration and gear check began at 10:00.

Since the throwline and footlock events do not require dry trees, climbers began these events by late morning. To enhance climber safety, the head judges ordered shorter limb walks in the work climb, and a simpler and drier belayed speed-climb tree. With a light breeze and sunshine by

mid-afternoon, the trees dried enough to safely climb, and all the preliminary events finished by 5:30.

As chairman, it is a great relief to complete the five preliminary events with such weather challenges. But there would be no time to finish the Masters' Challenge event before nightfall (a serious disadvantage for the final climber)! So the judging team notified the climbers that the 2009 champion would be selected based on the point total from the preliminary events.

Three-time winner Joe House edged out Aaron Schauer by less than three points to be crowned WAA Men's Tree Climbing Champion! This is Joe's fourth championship in a row.

Many thanks go out to over 33 judges, scorekeepers, timers, belayers, tree technicians, and ground technicians. The WAA owes you a great deal of gratitude! Thank you to all the companies that supported the championship with donations of cash and prizes. Jesse Zieminski deserves thunderous applause for his tireless quest to procure prizes and sponsorship for the championship. Thanks also to Cory Gritzmacher for his generous donation of time and basement space for the competition equipment for the last 8 years.

The Results...

Foot Lock

- 1 Joe House
- 2 Aaron Schauer
- 3 Chris Ruch

Belayed Speed Climb

- 1 Chris Ruch
- 2 Joe House
- 3 Aaron Schauer

Throwline

- 1 Zac Eckberg
- 2 Mike Stanonik
- 3 Casey Selner

Aerial Rescue

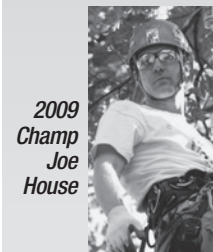
- 1 Joe House
- 2 Mark Dobbertin
- 3 Mike Stanonik

Work Climb

- 1 Jaime Remme
- 2 Aaron Schauer
- 3 Mark Dobbertin

Overall

- 1 Joe House
- 2 Aaron Schauer
- 3 Mike Stanonik
- 4 Mark Dobbertin
- 5 Jaime Remme



2009
Champ
Joe
House



The 4-man team with the most points wins the coveted Team Tree Climbing Champion hat. This year's winning team is (l to r) Andy Schieve, Gary Kohler (the new co-chairman), Joe House (4-time champion) and Mark Dobbertin (fourth overall).