

Bee-Quick[®] 500

*Beelining The Way
It Is Today . . .*

James **Fischer**

While pests and diseases have made feral hives a rarity for the last decade, there is a way to keep the art and science of lining bees alive.

EAS 2004 will be the site of this year's Bee-Quick 500 international bee-lining championship.

You may have never heard of the Bee-Quick 500, so we thought we should explain.

In recent years, bee-lining has been used to locate feral hives for hiving or eradication to prevent the spread of pests and diseases. Few people know that bee-lining has also been an actual organized professional sport, as this is the sort of thing one only sees on ESPN at 2 am, and competitive bee-liners have been unwilling to encourage others to compete for the fabulous cash prizes awarded.

One of the lesser-known recreational features of the Seven Springs Resort is an NCAA-approved bee-lining course.

The course has been played in the past by such celebrities as Lazlo Langstroth, Mark Twain, Harry Truman, and Frank Zappa.

Never played before? Don't worry. All required equipment is provided, short instructional workshops will be offered, and there is no entry fee charged by the NCAA (the "National Collegiums of Apiary Athletics", a group with no connection to that other NCAA that does college football and basketball and has problems with steroid use.)

The goal is to find a hive that is hidden in a secret location, starting out from a feeding station that is being visited by bees from the hidden hive. The person who finds the hive in the shortest time and with the minimum number of bee releases from their bee-lining box wins.

Complete rules are available online at www.bee-quick.com/bee-quick/500 or via postal mail by sending a self-stamped, self-addressed #10 envelope to the attention of the editor (attach two first-class stamps).

Overall, the sport is much like golf, except that

one is releasing bees and watching them fly off into the rough as opposed to hitting a ball and watching it fly off into the rough.

The rules are also similar to golf, in that contestants may not leave the "green." If one loses sight of a bee in "the rough," one must release another bee, which is taking another "shot."

The only skill that bee-lining requires is a keen eye. Contestants release bees from their bee-lining boxes one at a time, and watch them as they first circle a few times, and then fly off in what is hoped to be a "bee-line" for their hive. By releasing bees from different points on the course, contestants can narrow down the hive location.

This is, of course, not as easy as it sounds.

Those who wish can attempt to estimate the distance to the hidden hive by marking a bee, releasing it, and timing how long it takes for the bee to return, but there is a maximum time limit on the course, as other contestants will want their turn.

Physical strength and speed won't help anyone win, as bee-lining is not physically challenging. Running is discouraged. Any breathing contestant can win.

Performing-enhancing drugs won't help either. In fact, NCAA rules not only permit, but actively encourage playing while consuming alcohol, tobacco, and whatever else you might have, just so long as you share.

Technology won't help you in the least either, so feel free to bring anything you can carry. Compasses, range-finders, computers, binoculars, whatever. If backpack radar units were possible, they would be legal.

Own an antique bee-lining box? Bring it and make use of it.

The Bee-Quick 500 is sponsored by Fischer Alchemy, the makers of Fischer's Bee-Quick. Who else would come up with an idea so completely bizarre as "competitive professional bee-lining?" **BC**

