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Winter 2011 - 2012

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OUTDOOR RECREATION



Melting Worries Away

Undaunted by winter, hardy runners say icy treks clear the mind

by James Askew

There is, perhaps, no more peaceful time in Vermont than the predawn hours of a midwinter day, when the air is light and clean, the sky is clear and the density of a three-foot snowpack seems to dampen the noise.

It is 5:30 on just such a morning, and Tim Noonan of Montpelier is up and out of the house, running the

ice-slicked streets of the capital. The occasional car eases past. The odd window light of an early riser stretches out across the snow. It is cold and dark, and echoing off the house fronts is the plodding thump of Noonan's footfalls on the road -- a rhythm he has set for more than 35 years.

Noonan, 55, is a long-distance runner and about as serious a runner as one might imagine. He took up the sport in college and has rarely since missed an opportunity to train. He has run 67 marathons, including 14 at Boston -- the preeminent race for any runner -- and, all told, he has clocked an estimated 70,000 miles in his lifetime, the equivalent of nearly three times around the Earth.

Bundled in multiple layers, ski gloves and often wearing a facemask, Noonan defies the worst of Vermont's winter weather to keep up on the sport he loves. Boston looms in early spring, and

