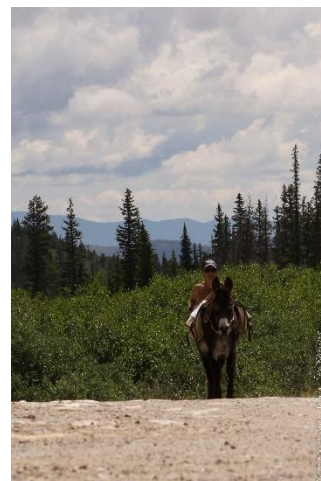


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# 2015 WPBA TRIPLE CROWN WINNER: GEORGE ZACK AND JACK

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Those that win the coveted Triple Crown of pack burro racing have literally been to the mountaintop. I thought it would be beneficial to our membership to get to know a bit of the background of the men and women who earned this coveted award and perhaps even gain some valuable insights into our sport along the way. Our first feature is on the team who won the Triple Crown in 2015, George Zack and Jack.



## ***What got you into burro racing?***

I first heard of Pack Burro Racing in the 1990s. I went to a Boulder Road Runner seminar where road racing star Jon Sinclair was going to speak. We all thought he'd discuss his training, racing, and principles of physiology. He instead gave an entertaining talk on burro racing. He had won the World Championships in Fairplay in 1977. I think half of the crowd was disappointed in his presentation but the other half was entertained. I was entertained and the seed was planted.

My wife's parents moved to Fairplay in the mid 2000s. As the town was at altitude with big hills around it, I would look to get in good training for Pikes Peak whenever we visited. One of my favorite runs was on the Mosquito Pass Road - which the Fairplay Pack Burro Race runs on. One day I actually ran into the race without even knowing it was going on. It was intriguing to see

these folks running at 6-something pace with a burro at 10,000 feet. Of course with my in-laws in Fairplay, they knew all about it and were encouraging me to do the race as they thought it would be a hoot.

Finally in 2010, Justin Mock, a local road runner in the Front Range area said he was doing it and that really lit the fire for me to get going. We had heard of Bill Lee and we made contact with him at Laughing Valley Ranch. He has several burros up there and so we made the trek to meet burros and Bill. That is what got us going in the sport. My first burro race was in Fairplay in 2010 with Jack and we placed fourth that year.

***Can you share a bit about your background / career?***

For the better part of the last decade, I have had my consulting business, working mostly with medical device manufacturing organizations around the world. I also help coach high school distance runners for Broomfield High's cross country and track programs.

***How many years have you raced?***

I started burro racing in 2010 but I have been running competitively since I was at least 13 (so 40 years now). I have raced distances from the half mile up the 100 mile distance. I ran competitively in high school but didn't run in college as I took a military path post high school. I don't race as much as I used to but I am trying in 2023 to get back to it a bit more.

***What was your burro's name that you won the Triple Crown with and tell us a bit about him.***

Jack. Arguably for just over a handful of years Jack was one of the best at Pack Burro Racing. He has won Fairplay three times, came in 2nd or 3rd a handful more. He won Leadville 6 times. Arguably he wasn't the fastest in a single sprint, but he had great endurance and a steady trot that was really tough to beat over the distance of those races. I wasn't the fastest runner either but the two of us together had a few good days together,

He is a charming fellow too. He is often a "loaner" with other burros and doesn't necessarily subscribe to much of the donkudrama. This makes him a great ambassador with people who are curious about this sport. He is gentle nearly all the time. There is more on him here:

<http://pikespeaksports.us/m/group/discussion?id=5021591%3ATopic%3A674434>

***What was your training schedule like for you and your Jack?***

When I was training in a more focused fashion in the early 2010's I was doing anywhere from 40-85 miles a week, depending on what I could get in. I tried to get as much of that as I could on hills or at altitude. Initially I'd head up to Bill's to get time in with Jack for some runs in Idaho Springs. At least one summer, I was fortunate enough to have him pastured at Mayhoffer farm near my home. That usually led to us running 2 or 3 times a week.

I have only ever raced Jack, so I am a jack of one burro so to speak. I say that because from early on, Jack and I seemed to bond easily and we figured out how to interact with each other. Between racing and training over the years, I'd guess we have at least a few hundred

miles of running with each other and we have a pretty good idea of what works for us as a team.

### ***Most memorable race***

It is tough to pick one. Our first race in Fairplay where we got fourth is memorable because we were leading and then he stopped to get some food at a picnic of some spectators on the Mosquito Pass road - and we never really got going again. Winning our first Fairplay race in 2012 was pretty memorable of course. But some of the second places are pretty memorable too because of how hard fought they were. Of course, winning the Triple Crown in Leadville on our third try. We had won 2 of the 3 races in 2012 and 2014 but didn't get it done. In 2015 we did get it and that was a pretty special day. I also think our race in Leadville in 2013 where we ended up 7th was memorable. We were not racing well, but we had a great day in the mountains as a Rocky Mountain thunderstorm blew in.

### ***Other stories***

After we had less than a great season in 2013, I went to Bill's and tried running with another burro. I was exploring perhaps racing with another donkey that might be faster. But every time I did this, Jack would walk up to me and put his head on my shoulder. I knew I really couldn't race with some other donk - he and I were meant to run together.

Of course, there is the Leadville 100 story. In 2015 after we won the TC. I had the Leadville 100 to do. When we got to Winfield, or the 50-mile mark, Tim Johnson had brought Jack out to run with me. It was a tear-jerking moment. I took the rope for a second to enjoy this moment with Jack. Jack looked at me and took off at his typical 8 min mile pace. Well, I wasn't ready to deal with that after 50 miles of running in Leadville. I had to yell for someone to help me and take his rope because I was gonna move way slower than that. It was funny (but it hurt a bit too).

### ***Any other advice***

No burro wakes up thinking they want to run to the top of a 13,000 ft foot pass. Burros don't get into all this drama we humans do about this thing we call racing. Many times, they are reflecting what we are presenting to them, as well as their desires. Enjoy your time with these great beasts, have fun and recognize it for what it is.

