

# Local mountain biker fuels Crankfire Racing team

By Nick Carroll  
The Plainville Citizen

Roland "Duffy" Dufresne was a college student when mountain biking surged in popularity in the 1990s. And like countless other thrill-seeking Generation Xers, Dufresne found himself drawn to the rugged sport. "It was very appealing to me from the very first ride I took," he said.

The past decade has only solidified Dufresne's love of mountain biking and the off-the-beaten-path adventures that come along with it.

For the past four years Dufresne has managed a team of local downhill mountain bikers — the Crankfire Racing team.

"Mountain biking has always been a catharsis for me," said Dufresne, a Plainville resident. "It's a fun, mentally non-destructive way of temporarily escaping problems."

The fact that the sport keeps the 33 year-old in good shape is just an added bonus. "On the terrain that we typically ride around here, or when I race downhill, the sport takes lots of focus and strength," Dufresne said. "I think that mountain biking is as much mentally, as it is physically demanding."

"Mountain biking, as well as skateboarding and snowboarding, have been really fun ways of spending time with friends and positively channeling what could be negative energy into something that is personally very rewarding," added Dufresne, who is employed as a chemist/engineer at Sikorsky Aircraft.

Dufresne and his Crankfire Racing teammates have traveled to races throughout the Northeast and beyond. Dufresne and Crankfire's Pete Scannell even navigated trails in British Columbia.

Currently, the Crankfire Racing team is comprised of five riders. In 2008, the roster will expand to 10.

The Crankfire Racing team takes its name from the "Connecticut Mountain Biking Community" website, crankfire.com, which is run by a friend of Dufresne's, Nathan Chmura.

Chmura's love of mountain biking and mapping led to the creation of crankfire.com. Chmura began collecting Global Positioning System data while mountain biking. He then uploaded the information to his Web site.



Plainville resident Roland "Duffy" Dufresne, second from left, pictured with his Crankfire Racing teammates Daryl Deprey, Pete Scannell, Chris Scannell and Dan Phillips.

Crankfire.com has become a popular online meeting place for mountain biking enthusiast. The site includes pictures, trail descriptions and maps and allows visitors to plan rides via a "Ride Board."

According to the website: "The idea behind Crankfire is to create a concise, organized, community-driven, completely free and easy to use repository for everything mountain bike."

Crankfire.com averages 40,000 visits per month and boasts more than 1,300 members.

Dufresne's Team Crankfire has helped draw traffic to the site.

"I would encourage someone who might be on the fence about buying a mountain bike to do it," Dufresne said. "Then get on crankfire.com and get familiar with the site. Make it known that you are interested in starting to ride and you will end up finding people who may be in the same situation as yourself."

"Get on the 'Ride Board'; having people to ride with makes all the difference in the world. Riding with other people also teaches you trail etiquette and how to ride, as well," he said.

And there is no shortage of trails to discover in the Nutmeg State.

"Connecticut is a very good state for the sport of mountain biking," Dufresne said. "Within 40 minutes of Hartford, there are in excess of 20 different areas to ride. The terrain is very rocky and rooty, but this makes it challenging. We call the difficult terrain 'technical.' These technical sections make riding really fun for most of us."

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