



Points of Interest

Go directly to the page by clicking on the title.

- [Dyer Gap Clearing](#)
- [Dyer Gap 1/2 Complete](#)
- [Presidents Message](#)
- [Trails and Trees](#)
- [January BMTA Hikes](#)
- [TN/NC Work-Trips](#)
- [GA Work-Trips](#)
- [TN/NC Maintenance](#)
- [Curing Cabin Fever](#)
- [BMTA Makes The News](#)
- [Hike Report: Fall Branch to Weaver Creek](#)

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Suspension Bridge over the Toccoa River:
 By Ralph Heller



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DECEMBER 29, 2012

Dyer Gap Relocation Project Has Begun...

By George Owen

The Dyer Gap Relocation Construction officially began on Wednesday November 28. The forest service had finally given approval to the long awaited relocation. This will eventually allow the trail to move off of



Forest Service Road 64A and onto the other side of the ridge into the forest. This .6 miles relocation will connect the BMT with the beginning of Section 9. It is a chance of a lifetime for those fortunate to take part on this project. By the way.....there are many more work-trips needed before this project is finished. If



you haven't had a chance to join in yet, there is still time. It's a chance to see first-hand how new trail construction occurs and be a part of that---creating a new trail thousands will walk in the years ahead.

Continued On Next Page

Dyer Gap Construction Trip: Cleared!

By George Owen, Trip Leader

The trip leader sat for lunch on the Benton MacKaye Trail at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 28, and looked back in disbelief: We weren't expected to finish this job so soon. We had started at Dyer Gap later than usual and only expected to brush out a little over half of the proposed trail. Now we were FINISHED!

Roaring up right behind me were two noisy brushcutters manned by David Blount and Richard Sullivan. Not much further back was a team of some

eight folks lopping and bowsawing. Mark Yost with his chainsaw was also nearby. Yep, this group of twelve – on a weekday no less – had cleared the whole thing in less than three hours. Great workers all!

Now we had cleared the entire proposed relocation to ready it for the big December 8 regular Georgia work trip – this time to be a new trail construction trip.

The day had begun with most of the group meeting at the ol' breakfast haunt in Blue Ridge, the Village Restaurant. A few met us at the Dyer Gap Cemetery. Instruction was given at Dyer Gap and work begun. We soon were clearing a corridor over four feet wide by eight high where next the into-the-ground trail construction will take place over several winter months.

This relocation takes the trail off Forest Service Road 64A and moves it into the woods on the other side of the ridge, giving the hiker an unbroken forest walk in the area. When the BMT was first built in the 1980s through here, a couple of logging operations toward the gap, leaving a lot of slash in their wake, helped us to decide at the time to simply locate the trail down the road on the ridge northeast side. Now, over a quarter century later, it has become practical to finally relocate the trail to where we had originally hoped it would eventually go on the ridge southwest side.

We thank the twelve who came out on the 28th and really worked hard to make this first stage ready for the final, more detailed trail construction. Yes, the pin flags are out there now after the other day, awaiting the December and early 2013 crews to finish the job.

Workers: Ralph Artigliere, Scott Barker, Hank Baudet, David Blount, Bob Danziger, Dick Evans, Ralph Heller, Gene Nix, George Owen, Richard Sullivan, Del Yoder, Mark Yost

Hours: Work: 42 Travel: 32.5



[Click On This Link To View Pictures From Worktrip](#)

December Georgia Construction . . . Work Finishes Half the Relocation . .

By George Owen

December 8 was by any measure one of our best trail construction work trips ever. Twenty-five people came out for this 0.6 mile Georgia relocation effort at Dyer Gap, and we finished about halfway around the southwest side of the ridge to move the trail off Forest Service Road 64-A on the northeast side. The weather was great also, overcast but pleasantly cool and such as to pep everyone up to work hard.

Since registration for our Georgia work trips are only suggested, the trip leaders were surprised when the approximately 15 we had expected soon blossomed to 25.

As usual a goodly number of us met for breakfast at the Blue Ridge Village Restaurant. Promptly at 8:35 we all departed for Dyer Gap, where several more joined us upon our arrival about 9:15. With preliminary and safety instruction completed, we were on our way the few hundred yards from our vehicle by a little after 9:30.



Lunch near Dyer Gap in light drizzle -- Georgia Work-trip December 2012:

From left: Vic Fredlund, alert as usual; Dick Evans, lying down on the job, as usual; Mike O'Brien; Richard Sullivan; Steve Bayliss; Doug Kleiber (grey parka behind Steve); Connor Bayliss (red hood, behind tree); Darcy Douglas, standing, behind tree - shy and retiring as usual; George Owen, standing, exhorting the labor force; Kyle Atkins, first-timer - in denial that he is part of this motley crew.

Continued On Next Page

Work Finishes Half the Relocation ...

Since a crew of twelve had cleared the entire route of all limbs and underbrush over a week before, it was all dig, dig, dig until noon sharp, sidehilling and creating drainage dips for a new forest trail section. We then lunched together in two slightly separate groups, and soon after 12:30 we were back to work. A few people had to leave during the noon hour.

Well, your leaders just couldn't believe we had finished all but about thirty yards to the old woods roadbed where the flagged trail route turns and moves more eastward. This meant we had just about completed all the hardest sidehilling in this reroute. So next trip we will have easier work, less digging, and with a good turnout hopefully move rapidly toward completion. Already we are moving the final blazed completion, with improvements here and there, to early February instead of the originally projected March – weather permitting.

We decided to call it quits and hike out about 2:15, very satisfied and grateful for this accomplishment. We had one of the largest work crews on this in recent years. The thanks of leaders Tom Keene and me go out to all of you who came out, worked diligently, and made this a great day with also some good visiting and fun along the way.

It was also a special treat to have ol' timers Ted and Kay Reissing return for this event, and to have high school student Connor Bayliss return and new college student Jon Barker adding youth and vigor to our entourage.

In January we will be back to Dyer Gap on Saturday, [January 12](#). We hope many of you will return and others will decide to join us. **Remember: This is your chance to claim you helped construct the Benton MacKaye Trail!**

MEMBERS WORKING: Barry Allen, Kyle Atkins, Scott Barker, Hank Baudet, Connor Bayliss, Steve Bayliss, David Blount, Claire Broadwell, Wes Clounts, Walter Cook, Darcy Douglas, Steve Davis, Dick Evans, Vic Fredlund, Tom Keene, Doug Kleiber, Michael O'Brien, George Owen, Ted Reissing, Kay Reissing, Bob Ruby, Richard Sullivan, Del Yoder

VISITORS WORKING: Jeff Anderson, Jon Barker

Hours Worked: 115

Hours Traveled: 107

[Click On This Link To View Pictures From Worktrip](#)

Presidents Message – *Walk With Me a Moment.....*

Christmas is a week away as I put these thoughts to paper, and I am running behind; nothing new there. The weather has been warm and dry recently; neither of which is typical of the Holiday Season in North Georgia. Perhaps a nice artic cold snap or some frozen precipitation would help me find my “Christmas Groove.”

Another reason I am not quite in step with the season is I never achieved closure for Thanksgiving. Yes, I had quality time with my family and ate food that was fit for a king. But I never expressed the gratitude I felt at that time for those who had been a big help to me and the BMTA during the fall months. I am thinking specifically of those who worked behind the scenes to facilitate the annual meeting. Bear with me as I make one final attempt to gain closure in this area and move on. The year 2013 will be a busy year and we will need to be looking forward, not back.

I wish to thank the Hellers, Ralph and Marge, for the idea and contact information on the North Georgia Community Center. They along with George Owen made themselves quite available for phone calls, e-mails, and errands to make sure details were covered and deadlines met. Thanks to the Evans, Dick and Margaret, for their time and efforts behind the scenes to recognize and honor those who wrote and produced our trail guides. Additionally, they helped prepare the facility for the meeting and set up the “BMTA Store” so we could all begin our Christmas shopping in November. Thank you Terry Miller and Gene Nix for getting announcements on the website, in the newsletter, and mass e-mailed. A special thank you goes out to Taylor Hamilton of the USFS for giving of her time and knowledge on a weekend to enlighten us on a range of topics and to field questions from the crowd. I would like to recognize the “trail angels” who set up and served the evening meal: Margaret Meadows, Debbie Tuten, Claire Broadwell, Mary Bogue, Margaret Evans, and Linda Blount. Last but not least, I would like to express my appreciation to the owners and staff at North Georgia Medical Center for graciously granting the BMTA use of their fine facility. They were wonderful to work with and the Community Center fit our needs perfectly.



Presidents Message – *Walk With Me a Moment.....*

By the time you read this, Christmas will be in your rear view mirror. Many of us will be eating that last piece of pound cake and gnawing on that last turkey leg before we have to make good on our New Year's resolutions. Let me remind you that you have choices. You can go sign up at the local gym. They will love you for buying and pre-paying a three, six, or twelve month membership, knowing that most of us will work out hard for about 3 weeks before life becomes too busy to continue the regimen. Or, you can put that cash away for a rainy day and make plans to attend a trail work trip or fun hike! What better time than now to remind you that we have a monthly work trip every second Saturday of the month in Georgia and every fourth Saturday in Tennessee or North Carolina. Ralph Heller is the new Hiking Director and he will be announcing the fun hikes both in the newsletter and on the website. If you are not familiar with much of the trail, there is no better remedy then to participate in the work trips or hikes. If you would like to receive e-mail reminders of the work trip dates and locations, use the following link <http://www.bmta.org/ContactUs.php> and leave your contact information and briefly specify whether you would like to be on the Georgia list, the Tennessee/North Carolina list, or both. The "contact us" link is also found on the home page of the website.

Your participation is also welcome and encouraged in other capacities within the BMTA. If you would like to be involved with the work of administering the Association, there are opportunities to serve on committees. If you have an interest in assisting with the newsletter, publicity, work trips, fun hikes, etc., use the "contact us" link to let us know of your interests and talents and we will put you in contact with the appropriate Director.

Membership renewals are coming in at a good pace since the reminder was e-mailed a few weeks ago. Most of you who renewed in December have not received an e-mail confirmation yet. Please be patient as the acknowledgement letters are being revised. You should be receiving a confirmation of your renewal via e-mail very soon. If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2013, please do so soon and "beat the rush." This is your Association and your participation and feedback is important to us. If you have questions, comments, or concerns, drop us a line to the PO Box or send a message via the aforementioned "contact us" link on the website.

I hope your 2012 Holiday Season has been the best yet. I wish to each of you a safe, prosperous, and productive New Year!

David Blount

BMTA President

Much More Than Trails and Trees...



By Gene Nix

The BMT is known by most as a wilderness trail. One can hike miles without seeing a solitary soul. For this reason, the chance of spotting a bear, deer, and other woodland creature is much greater than spotting them on some of our other more heavily populated trails. However, as you hike into many of these remote areas, my suggestion is to not only look far and wide, but at times, try looking low and deep; deep in the moss and leaves that is.

I have found, as have many others, that the diversity of our Appalachian forests is astounding. Steve Bayliss and his son Connor, recently were working on the trail relocation on Section 8, when they came across a *Plethodon glutinosus*. I was hiking Section 6 last week with my sons, James and John, when we found a *Eurycea quadridigitata*. Oh my.....Dinosaurs on the Benton MacKaye you might ask, no, salamanders.

Steve and Connor provided us with a picture, and we also have one of the salamanders we found. You will find a short description of each on the following pages.

If you come across anything of interest on your hikes, take a picture and send me an email. Insects, salamanders, animals, plants, flowers, etc I'd love to post it in our Monthly Newsletter.

Steve Bayliss and Connor's find...

Plethodon glutinosus, commonly known as the northern slimy salamander, is a species of terrestrial plethodontid salamander found through much of the eastern two thirds of the United States, from New York, west to Illinois, south to Texas, and east to Florida, with an isolated population in southern New Hampshire. It is called *slimy* because it is capable of excreting a sticky glue-like substance from its skin. It is also sometimes referred



to as the blue-spotted salamander, viscid salamander, grey-spotted salamander, or sticky salamander depending on which source is consulted. Due to its large geographic range, some taxonomic researchers have suggested splitting *Plethodon glutinosus* into several distinct species, but this is not widely accepted.

Description

The slimy salamander is typically an overall black in color, with numerous silvery spots or gold spots across its back. They are usually 12-17 cm (4¾-6¾ inches) in length, but can grow to 20.6 cm (8¼ inches).^[1] Males are not easily distinguished from females, though females tend to be slightly larger. They have 15-17 costal grooves.

Behavior

All Plethodontid salamanders are territorial, and will fight aggressively for territory. Their preferred habitat is in moist soil or leaf litter beneath stones, rotting logs or other debris near a permanent water source. They will sometimes make use of other animal's burrows. Their diet consists primarily of ants, beetles, sow bugs, and earthworms, but they will consume most kinds of insect.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plethodon_glutinosus

Gene, James, and John's find ...

The Dwarf Salamander (*Eurycea quadridigitata*) is a species of salamander native to the southern United States, from North Carolina to Oklahoma, south to Texas along the Gulf of Mexico states to northern Florida. Some sources refer to it as the Four-fingered Manculus, Dwarf Four-toed Salamander, or the Florida Dwarf Salamander.



Description

The Dwarf Salamander grows from 2 to 3.5 inches in length. It has a slender body and a long tail. It is typically yellow-brown in color with darker brown blotching and dark stripes down each side, but the pattern and coloration can vary widely. The epithet *quadridigitata* is to denote that each of its feet has four toes.

Behavior

The Dwarf Salamander prefers habitats of swampy pine woods. It is nocturnal and spends most of its time under leaf litter, or forest floor debris. Breeding occurs in the fall, with 12 to 48 eggs being laid singly or in small clutches attached to submerged debris in shallow, slow moving or still water.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurycea_quadridigitata

January BMTA Hikes ...

By Ralph Heller – Hiking Director

We are ready to kick off the hiking program for 2013. Since the first part of the year, the weather can be extreme, and hard to predict many days in advance, we will be having easier hikes in more accessible locations. If we get some nice weather, on short notice, we may schedule a hike on a week day. Check the activities section of the web site for short notice hikes.

The January's hike is scheduled for Jan. 19th and will take place on Section 7b &c in the Sisson Cherry Log Mountain development. This will be an easy hike out to Patterson Mountain and back, covering about four miles round trip. The hike leader is Mona Street. Contact Mona at monastreet007@hotmail.com for meeting place and time. Be sure to give her your phone number and email address. She will need you on her list in case she needs to contact you about any change in hike plans.

There should be hikes scheduled during the year that will meet everyone's liking. In addition to the Easy Trek hikes, we will schedule more difficult ones. We would like to reserve a night at the Hike Inn and also have one or two backpacking trips. In May, Bob Ruby will be leading a weekend trip combined with the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club to the Apple Tree Group Campground in Nantahala National Forest. There will be several days of hikes to different destinations from that beautiful location. Stay tuned for more information as May approaches.

At this time we have hike leaders signed up to lead hikes for every month except for July and August. If anyone wishes to lead a hike on those months or has suggestions on hikes, please contact me.

Email: rshbmta@gmail.com

Phone [770-235-9760](tel:770-235-9760).



Tennessee Work Trips for January and February

Tennessee Work Trip - January 26, 2013 Trip Leader: Ernie Engman

The work of the day will be brushing out and cutting any blow downs along the Stiffknee Trail. Plan to link up with workers in Tellico Plains ~0900 behind the Cherohala Visitor Center and drive up to Farr Gap. We will start working down the Stiffknee Trail with emphasis on getting the brush on the bottom end where there are reports of bad brush conditions. Since it is wilderness, we will need at least a couple of Crosscut certified sawyers as well as several people to use swing blades and loppers to help get the tread way clear. As January weather can be very unpredictable, it is important that you come by the morning meeting location in case conditions dictate a change in the work location for the day. If you are not familiar with the trail north of the Cherohala Skyway, this would be a great opportunity to see and explore it safely under the guidance of experienced hands. Please mark your calendars and plan to help clear this remote section

Tennessee Work Trip - February 2013

February's work trip will be on the 23rd, and it looks like we will be working in the Vicinity of Big Frog. We have reports of a couple of blow downs that were not cleared, some tread-way that needs restored, and some brush work on the back side of Big Frog between Double Spring Gap and the top of Big Frog Mountain. Stay tuned for more details on this trip.

Georgia Work Trip for January

Dyer Gap Relocation...

January 12 – We plan to continue work on the reroute between Flattop Mountain and Dyer Gap. But since January is a black-ice month in North Georgia, we need a Plan B. We will shift to work closer to Blue Ridge (exact site to be determined) if there seems a significant chance the roads will be treacherous. The decision on the switch will probably be made Friday evening, but could be put off as late as Saturday morning at breakfast. Either way we will meet at the Village Restaurant in Blue Ridge at 8:00am. So come to breakfast if you can. If we decide to work at Dyer Gap we will aim to meet at the trailhead at Dyer Gap at 9:30am.

BUT DO NOT GO TO THE DYER GAP TRAILHEAD WITHOUT CONFIRMING WITH TOM KEENE THAT THE TRIP WILL IN FACT GO THERE.

The trip leaders are Tom Keene (cell) 770-548-4935; and George Owen (cell) 706-897-3366.

TN/NC BMTA Section Maintenance...Nov 15 & 29

Thursday, November 15, 2012 - BMT Section 16c - Brookshire Creek Trail –
The usual Tellico Thursday crew logged and brushed out most of this section all the way to Bald River Road, but left a few very large trees about in the middle of the trail.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Travel Hours</i>	<i>Work Hours</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Tazz Reid	1	9.5	10.5
Bobby Mitchell	2	6.5	8.5
Zoe Zardis	1	6.5	7.5
Ron Childress	1.5	9.5	11
Rayne Granger	1	9.5	10.5
Aaron Sanford	1	9.5	10.5
Roger Taylor	1	9.5	10.5
Travis Schwartzer USFS	1	9.5	10.5
Totals	9.5	70	79.5

Thursday, November 29, 2012 - BMT Section 16c - Brookshire Creek Trail -
The usual Tellico Thursday finished logging and brushing out this section all the way to Bald River Road. Only a few logs flat to the ground remain, all easy to get over or around.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Travel Hours</i>	<i>Work Hours</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Tazz Reid	1	9	10
Bobby Mitchell	2	9	11
Zoe Zardis	1	9	10
Ron Childress	1.5	9	10.5
Rayne Granger	1	9	10
Shannon Granger	1	9	10
Rick Harris	0.5	9	9.5
Travis Shwartzzer USFS	1	9	10
Totals	9.0	72	81

[Click On This Link To View
Pictures of TN/NC Worktrips....](#)

TN/NC BMTA Section Maintenance...Nov 23 & Dec 1

23 November 2012, BMT Section 16A State Line Trail: The Nennstiel family cleared brush and briars from the trail way from Hazelnut Gap to Moss Gap

<i>Name</i>	<i>Travel Hours</i>	<i>Work Hours</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Daniel Nennstiel	12	4	16
Debbie Nennstiel	12	4	16
Carson Nennstiel	12	4	16
Gatlin Nennstiel	12	4	16
Totals	48	16	64

1 December 2012, BMT Section 16A and 16B two groups from the BMTA worked this section. From Sandy Gap, a crew mostly made up of Georgia folks worked as far as Round Top clearing brush and cutting blow downs:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Travel Hours</i>	<i>Work Hours</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Shirley Adams	1.25	6	7.25
Greta Farmer	1.25	6	7.25
Marty Dominy	6	5	11
Aaron Sanford	1.5	6	7.5
Bill Hodge	1.5	6	7.5
David Blount	5	7	12
Richard Sullivan	3	7	10
Totals	19.5	43	62.5

From Beaver Dam Bald, the TN/NC crew went down to Sledrunner Gap and cleared up to Round Top clearing brush and blow downs as well:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Travel Hours</i>	<i>Work Hours</i>	<i>Totals</i>
Kyle Adkins	4	8	12
Ernest Engman	5	8	13
Matthew Engman	5	8	13
William Engman	5	8	13
Totals	19	24	43

Both crews put in an outstanding effort and were able to clear the entire "Stateline Trail" AKA the Heart O' Darkness in one day of work. This was partially due to the efforts the Nennstiel Family put in the week prior over the Thanksgiving Holiday weekend. This section is notoriously hard to get to and keep clear, so getting it done over one work trip was a feat of determination and dedication. A big thanks from the TN/NC maintainers for all the GA maintainers that came up and helped out.

Curing Cabin Fever...With Fire!

By Laura Nix

It's a real phenomenon and those who have suffered with it can attest; cabin fever comes on quickly and takes no prisoners. The feeling that you are under house arrest or that you may well lose your mind if you don't get out of 'this ^&\$%* house' afflicts many anytime of the year. Even if it's a variation of SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder), coupling shorter hours of sunlight with inclement weather makes cabin fever more prevalent in the winter months.

The first thing to remember is that cabin fever is a normal response to our unnatural living arrangements. Our ancestors did not stay in the cave or the lean-to for hours on end. They used their shelters for truly poor weather and for sleeping. Humans, all animals really, need fresh air, the sun and to commune with nature. There is even evidence now that walking barefoot on the bare ground reaps several health benefits (including reducing anxiety, detoxifying the body and curing insomnia - (<http://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-4369/7-Health-Benefits-of-Going-Barefoot-Outside.html>)).



In a funny way, we think that we have to have a purpose to venture out into the woods; to hike, to camp, to garden, and so on. There are times, though when I am exhausted and don't want to have to do any work while I'm outside. I don't want to walk or camp, I just want to be outside; just a chair and the sound of rushing water perhaps. So what to do? My family and I have discovered the joy of the simple fire.

Built properly and safely, surrounded by folding chairs and fueled by either bought or scavenged wood, the fire can be just the cure for that bound-up and cloistered feeling.

We pick our destination from the plethora of options in North Georgia, pack up the chairs, some food and firestarter. Once there, the kids help us collect wood and build the fire. Gathering wood gives all of us some exercise and a project to ward off kid-boredom. Feed the fire steadily and it can afford several hours of relaxation and even convalescence for one recovering from illness. Bring a book, friends, family, your dog, or just go by yourself.

Don't forget your camera...

Benton MacKaye Makes the News...

The Benton MacKaye Trail was highlighted in two separate articles last month in the News Observer. The News Observer, a local newspaper, serves the Blue Ridge and surrounding areas.

One article was congratulating Donna Shearer as being named Atlanta's 2012 Cox Conserves Hero for her work with Save the Hemlocks. The other article was Trout Unlimited announcing the new Trout Adventure Trail.

These were both contained in November issues and also contained in our last Newsletter.

Hike Report-Fall Branch to Weaver Creek Road

David Blount – Trip Leader

As part of the Annual Meeting activities, a hearty group of eight set out on Friday, November 9, for a little exercise. With a distance covered of just over 6 miles and an elevation gain of 1,340' in the first 2.5 miles, we got plenty of exercise and took in the last of the fall colors along the way. While the dry fall of 2012 had greatly reduced the flow of Fall Branch, we still found the cascading waterfall to be pretty and worthy of a brief stop shortly after leaving the vehicles and prior to beginning the steep ascent up the Ridge. Several members of our group had recently been out on their first BMTA outing, participating in one of the "Easy Trekker" hikes. We all quickly agreed that the section we were on would not qualify for that program.



As we continued to gain altitude, we rose above most of the remaining fall leaves and began to get glimpses of Lake Blue Ridge. By the time we reached our lunch spot atop Rocky Mountain, we were all eager for the rest it afforded. For approximately 2 miles near the middle of our hike, the BMT runs with the Aska Road Trail (aka the Rich Mountain Trail) which is open to bicycles. We, however, encountered no other users after departing the waterfall, where we had seen several adults and children. They had shared with us their quest for the day, which was to visit 2 waterfalls and the Swinging Bridge over the Toccoa River, all of which were on the BMT.

Leaving the Aska Road Trail, the last 3 miles of our hike was almost entirely downhill. With the steepness of the route, and the fresh covering of fall leaves on the trail, we did not find the hike down much easier than the morning's climb. We agreed to err on the side of caution and took our time making our way to the Weaver Creek trail head. Though tired, and thinking aloud of how soundly we would sleep that night, we all agreed it was a great way to spend a day! Participating in the hike were Ron and Jane Olds, Frank and Joy Forehand, Kim Tatum, Scott Barker, Tom Johnson, and David Blount.