

The Superior Trail 100 Mile: This One Was for You, Mom!

by Jeff Hagen

In 1991 I had the pleasure of running the first Superior Trail 100 Mile. No one who participated in that event is ever likely to forget the initial 12 hours of pouring rain, the endless supply of slick-as-ice tree roots, the impromptu "lakes" that covered the trail with ankle-deep to knee-deep water, and the slimy black Minnesota mud that ruined both shoes and finishing times. Besides the problems caused by the rain, the steepness of the course was a rude awakening for those of us who thought that there were no mountains in Minnesota. I should have known better, because I spent the first 23 years of my life in Minnesota. Unfortunately, we didn't travel much in those days, and the farm where I grew up was on the opposite end of the state from Lake Superior. So I was as surprised as anyone to discover not only that there are mountains in Minnesota, but that they are extremely steep and rocky.

The 1991 event was also personally memorable for me, because for the first and only time my mother, sister, and nephew served as my crew. None of them had ever seen me run an ultra, so I wanted to do well. Indeed, it was probably the excitement of having them there that caused me to start out too fast — something which I had never done in the past.

Shortly after passing the 11-mile aid station I found myself in first place. I knew that my crew would be waiting for me at the 21-mile aid station and started thinking about how neat it would be to still be in first place at that point. Well, I did reach mile 21 in first place, but at a substantial cost. I was pushing much too hard for so early in the race. Following a brief "reality check," I slowed to a more sensible pace, and before long I had slipped back into about 12th place. That early burst slowed me down for the next 40 or 50 miles, but then I finally recuperated and finished strongly in sixth place. What success I had in the race was due largely to a superb effort by my crew. My mom and sister even found a laundromat midway through the storm and dried out my drenched rain gear.

Last fall I started making plans to run the 1993 Superior 100, and I hoped that my mother and sister might be able to crew for me again. Then in the spring things started happening that put race planning far into the background. My mother began having unexplained pains that led to a series of medical tests, exploratory surgery, and a diagnosis of ovarian cancer. Since then she has been undergoing a series of chemotherapy sessions, each of which is a tremendous shock to her system.

A few weeks before the 1993 Superior 100 was to be held, I decided to go ahead and enter the event. I had travelled back to Minnesota from California twice since Mom's diagnosis, but this would give us another chance to visit. She was scheduled for her fifth session of chemotherapy about a week before the race. Even though she wanted to see the race, there was no way that this was possible, because she would still be recovering in Minneapolis.

We had a brief, but enjoyable, visit before I left "The Cities" (that's what Minnesotans call Minneapolis/St. Paul). As Larry Simonson, one of my running friends from Rapid City, South Dakota, picked me up for the drive to northern Minnesota, Mom wished us both good luck and said that she would be thinking of us throughout race day.

Well, I was thinking about you, too, Mom! Before the start of the race, I decided to dedicate this one to you. It was a good race, too. I started a lot slower this year, hoping to run a strong second half and maybe having a chance at one of the new "Under 25-Hour" belt buckles. Very few "Under 24-Hour" buckles had been handed out over the last two years, and apparently race management had decided that "under-25" was more realistic for the course.

As it often does, the strategy of starting slow worked like a charm. It was one of those rare 100-milers when I felt strong the whole way. The slow pace early in the race not only conserved energy for later, but it enabled me to take in more nourishment. It has always been easier for me to eat adequate amounts of food if my pace is reasonable. If I run too hard too early, my "hunger switch" shuts off, which invariably results in an energy crash a few hours later.

At the 72-mile Caribou Trail checkpoint, I finally caught up to my pace from the 1991 event. Since I had finished that race in 25:54, all I had to do was make up slightly over 54 minutes during the last 28 miles. I felt much stronger than I had at this point in '91, so a sub-25 finish was definitely a possibility.

By the time I hit the 85-mile checkpoint, I had already gained about an hour on the 1991 pace. If I didn't get lost or injured, the under-25 buckle was "in the bag." Then a strange thought occurred to me. At the rate I was going, I might end up a lot closer to 24 hours than 25. Before the race, Harry Sloan, the race director, had said that anyone who broke 24 hours would have his choice between the old "Under 24-Hour" buckle or the new under-25 version. If I were to finish in 24:05 or 24:10, I might be disappointed with myself for not pushing a little harder.

The solution to this dilemma was simple: Run as hard as I possibly could for

the last 15 miles! Then no matter what happened, I would know that I had given it my best shot.

I reached the 91-mile checkpoint at approximately 3:20 a.m., which left less than an hour and forty minutes to cover nine miles! The next four miles were on road, first downhill, then rolling hills, then a steep uphill. Walking was unthinkable. The running was just a little slower on the uphill. As I charged past the 95-mile checkpoint I yelled, "Checking in!" and "Checking out!" in the same breath.

After another short road section, the course turned into trail once again. The last five miles have some of the roughest terrain on the entire course, including steep cliffs, bad footing, and an unexpected stream crossing. Running "flat out" on this stuff demanded intense concentration. I remember thinking, as I sprinted along the boggy downhill stretch that leads to Grand Marais and the finish line, "How can I be running so fast on this terrain? I don't do 10-km's this fast!"

I was sure that less than five minutes remained before the race clock would read 24:00:00, but the lights of town were nowhere to be seen. I didn't dare slow down enough to shine the flashlight on my watch and find out exactly how much time was left, because it might make me miss the cut-off by a second or two! After slipping past two runners who were fighting their own battle against the clock, I was suddenly blinded by the bright lights of the finish area.

From across the football field people were yelling, "Hurry, and you'll make it," but I still didn't know how much time was left. Digging still deeper, I accelerated another notch or two as I rounded one corner of the football field, then another corner, and finally blasted through a gate leading to the finish ribbon. With only a few feet to go, I finally got a glimpse of the clock. It ticked off 23:57:40, as I ran through the pink surveyor's ribbon in 12th place to earn my "Under-24 Hour" buckle. After letting out what seemed to be a very appropriate victory yell (which was a little out of character for a shy Norwegian farm boy from "Lake Wobegon country"), I had the pleasure of watching two other runners squeak in within the next two minutes.

It was a magical day, Mom, and even though you weren't there in person, you were in my thoughts throughout the race. Yes, Mom, this one was for you. Get well soon.

Superior Trail 100 Mile

Silver Bay to Grand Marais, Minn.

Sept. 18, 1993

14,000' climb; 13 mi on road, rest on trail

100 miles

1. Joe Franko	20:46:03
2. Alfred Bogenhuber	20:59:39
3. Larry Ochsendorf	22:06:02
4. Gregory Atchley	22:20:50

5. Rolly Portelance	22:46:45
6. David Worlstad	23:06:39
7. Robert Baska	23:24:55
8. Odin Christensen	23:31:47
9. Larry Lovell	23:38:08
10. Bob Stavig	23:48:45
11. Michael Crofton	23:51:18
12. Jeff Hagen	23:57:40
13. Eugene Curnow	23:58:02
14. Tom Bunk	23:58:38
15. Jay Norman	24:22:33
16. Fred Dimmick	24:23:28
17. <u>Mary Bystedt</u>	25:30:28 !
18. Robert Manson	26:38:40
19. James Benike	26:44:27
20. Cliff Davies	26:44:27
21. Christopher Nybo	27:20:36
22. Allen Cambronre	27:34:30
23. Burgess Harmer	27:42:23
24. David Frank	27:56:34
25. Douglas Thomas	28:19:49
26. Keith Kehn	28:22:04
27. Mike Spenski	28:40:18
28. Jeff Goldstien	28:47:20
29. Dave Hladysch	28:53:35
30. Edwin Korkia	28:53:47
31. Tom Rome	28:55:16
32. Gary Berkner	29:12:05
33. Robert Rusch	29:20:19
34. Larry Simonson	29:55:05
35. William Watson	30:09:01
36. Patrick Gorman	30:34:57
37. Brad Drake	30:34:57
38. Dick Hogan	31:56:32
39. <u>Kelly Ryan</u>	31:57:41
40. Glen Zabl	32:02:11
41. Joseph Bonno	32:13:34
42. Mark Switala	32:13:34
43. Rodney Reisnauer	32:15:34
44. Carl Yates	32:48:17
45. Thomas Windsperger	32:54:52

46. Lee Schmidt	32:54:52
47. Rollin Perry	33:55:59
62 starters	! = course record

50 miles

1. David House	8:48:37
2. Kevin Ash	9:26:04
3. Gerald Martin	9:46:47
4. Tim Brown	10:07:09
5. Lloyd Barrickman	10:14:33
6. James Blanchard	10:40:42
7. Timothy Bloch	10:59:13
8. Joel Dahl	11:05:45
9. Jack Donahue	11:09:22
10. Donnan Christensen	11:36:51
11. <u>Phyllis Lucas</u>	11:55:52
12. Bill Rastatter	12:01:44
13. <u>Barbara Dahl</u>	12:03:12
14. <u>Claudia Wagner</u>	12:03:40
15. Andy Nordeen	12:12:00
16. <u>Marie Gonzalez</u>	12:12:01
17. Marcus Bosch	12:12:46
18. Dale Zimm	12:31:09
19. <u>Beverley Brezik</u>	12:33:23
20. John Kelly	12:39:51
21. Arthur Wagner	12:40:00
22. Chester Young	13:23:09
23. <u>Barb Van Skike</u>	13:23:09
24. <u>Debbie Sloan</u>	13:24:28
25. <u>Jean Andrew</u>	13:24:36
26. Ed Hart	13:30:00
28 starters	

The third running of the Superior Trail 100 Mile was conducted with few problems. The road detour was still there and the trail didn't get any easier, but on the other hand Mother Nature smiled on us with warm sunny days and a clear cool evening.

The start was fast with Greg Atchley

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taking the lead and holding it through Oberg Mountain (56.6 miles). By Poplar River it was a battle between Alfred Bogenhuber and Joe Franko, with Joe taking the lead for good by Caribou Lake (72 miles) and holding on to win by 13 minutes.

The women's winner, Mary Bystedt, took the lead at 28 miles and was never really threatened again. She set a new course record, breaking Susan Gimbel's record of 26:45:02.

There was also a 50-mile this year, starting in Silver Bay and ending in Tofte. Harry Sloan (R.D.)

Cecelia Kascak



Mary Bystedt from Canon, Minnesota, set a course record of 25:30:28 in winning the 1993 Superior Trail 100 Mile.