

Superior Trail 50 Km

by Bob Metzger

The Superior Hiking Trail (SHT) traverses Minnesota's aptly named Sawtooth Mountains, which parallel Lake Superior's north shore. Consequently, the route is almost never flat, and steep climbs and descents are very common. The trail is mostly single-track, its surface peppered with an abundance of rocks and roots. Even in perfect conditions, the trail is formidable to hike or run.

The second annual Superior Trail 50 Km was held on May 22. Rain had fallen during much of the previous week and more was predicted for race day. A significant percentage of the section of trail used for the event is quite wet under normal circumstances; with all the recent rain and an ominous forecast, a generous amount of water and mud was expected. It would be a challenging day.

The race started at 7:00 a.m. in front of the Caribou Highlands Lodge in Lutsen. We had the opportunity to spread out on the initial half-mile of a wide, dead-end paved road before funneling into the forest on a spur of the trail. From there, we followed the well-marked trail to Carlton Peak, checked in with a race official, and then reversed our route back to Lutsen, where we finished behind the lodge. The finish line cutoff was 3:00 p.m., a seemingly generous eight hours for just 50 km, but potentially challenging for slowpokes like me, especially given such challenging conditions.

The section of trail used for the event is one of the SHT's oldest, toughest, and most popular. Because of the numerous everyday wet areas it traverses, it has a lot of both plank bridges and "corduroy." Corduroy is a term for cut logs that are placed side to side laterally onto the trail, perpendicular to the direction of traffic. The logs are round and of varying thickness and height. Once those logs are covered with wet and greasy mud, both visibility and traction are little more than a dream. Corduroy is *not* conducive to fast running.

Rain fell steadily and often heavily throughout the day, as temperatures settled into the mid-40s, and the wind blew hard at us across the cold, vast expanse of Lake Superior. Fortunately, the mountains and thick forest mostly protected us from the wind, but when it found its way through to the trail, it was mighty cold. On the positive side, with all the recent rain there were wildflowers everywhere. Colorful

birds zipped through the trees serenading us. The local fauna was out having fun; one runner reported having to wait for a bear to get out of his way before continuing down one of the many sections of single-track. The stunning birch forest on the way to and from Carlton Peak was absolutely breathtaking. This is what makes trail running so compelling: a day outdoors in beautiful surroundings, experiencing whatever nature has to offer, up close and personal.

Despite the tough conditions—nearly every runner reportedly took at least one fall—there were nothing but smiles to be seen on the faces of the runners as they enjoyed the post-race gathering at the lodge while recounting their adventures and observations. Only one runner, Charles Hubbard, has broken four hours on the course, and he somehow managed to do so again this year in the mud and muck. Likewise, only one woman, Deb Bennett, has broken five hours on the course, and she too has now done so twice.

At the other end of the spectrum, I was the last person to cross the finish line within the time limit this year, matching the feat of my wife Chris Markham, who did so last year. I guess we're just not the sort of folks to pay for eight hours worth of trail running and not make the most of it. A big thanks once again goes out to race directors Rick and Linda Lindquist and all their great volunteers for a fabulous event. Chris and I have already reserved our room at the lodge for the Superior Trail 50 Mile on September 11.

Superior Trail 50 Km

Lutsen, Minnesota

May 22, 2004

Trails

1. Charles Hubbard, 42	3:59:28
2. Rick Cleary, 41, WI	4:20:19
3. Pete Miller, 34	4:22:21
4. Steve Schuder, 40	4:30:31
5. Bruce Bauer, 32	4:33:37
6. Fred Johnson, 41, WI	4:38:24
7. Travis Wildeboer, 24, IA	4:45:10
8. Dallas Sigurdur, 33, MB	4:54:46
9. Deb Bennett, 45	4:58:55
10. Kevin Brochman, 44	5:01:15
11. Matthew Baker, 29	5:12:17
12. Jeff Allen, 37	5:13:08
13. Matt Long, 47	5:17:29
14. Jon Newman, 37, WI	5:21:33
15. Curt Krieger, 51, IA	5:27:51
16. Pierre Ostor, 47	5:28:06
17. David Liechty, 21	5:35:39
18. Patrick Susnik, 39	5:41:01
19. Patrick Boros, 50	5:42:09

20. Jason Boon, 30	5:43:40
21. Bill Wonder, 28, WI	5:46:07
22. Andy Schollett, 38, ND	5:48:58
23. Brock Foreman, 29	5:50:45
24. Herbert James, 47, WI	5:57:01
25. David Wrolstad, 45, ND	6:03:13
26. Alyssa Wildeboer, 25, IA	6:10:18
27. Todd Albertson, 49	6:10:35
28. Mick Justin, 56, WI	6:11:30
29. Robin Kokjohn, 48, IA	6:14:24
30. Dawn Long, 48, WI	6:15:49
31. Pete Shafer, 48, OH	6:21:21
32. Scott Wagner, 38	6:29:51
33. Tony Villano, 38	6:30:34
34. Shari Olson, 39, WI	6:32:03
35. Georgia Northdurft, 54	6:34:16
36. Amy Chartier, 26	6:47:12
37. Brian Poeppel, 49	6:48:06
38. Brad Perry, 39	6:55:14
39. Mike Most, 44	6:55:18
40. Shelley Wilson, 36	6:55:28
41. Kathleen Weix, 55	7:01:01
42. Maynard Lagace, 55	7:03:54
43. Jesse Price, 50	7:04:13
44. Marc VonKeitz, 40	7:23:52
45. Christine Markham, 51	7:24:54
46. Dennis Johnson, 55, IA	7:26:17
47. Laurie Ann Schuler, 42, NJ	7:27:00
48. Timothy Johnson, 45, AZ	7:28:29
49. Mark Howard, 41, WI	7:29:49
50. Kevin Hatfield, 29, GA	7:29:54
51. Kelly Wonder, 27, WI	7:53:16
52. Bob Metzger, 53	7:56:58
53. Greg Allen, 39	NT
54. Bonnie Riley, 51	NT

Big Butt 50 Km

Lancaster, South Carolina

July 17

Trails

1. John Brower, MS	4:03:50
2. Markus Reiter, SC	4:39:14
3. Jeffery Porter, NC	4:42:16
4. Sandy Beaudoin, SC	4:43:04
5. Lynn Difore, NC	4:45:53
6. Tom Thornburg, NC	4:46:51
7. Bill Linder, SC	4:55:54
8. Robert Crosby, SC	4:57:21
9. Kevin O'Connor, VA	4:58:28
10. Mark Nowling, SC	5:02:54
11. Leon Harmon, NC	5:17:13
12. Rich Schick, GA	5:17:57
13. Hal Hawisher, NC	5:22:47
14. Bill Rich, SC	5:25:58
15. Tony Rouse, NC	5:29:29
16. Bryan Church, GA	5:33:58
17. John Saunders, GA	5:44:39
18. Eliza Weston, SC	5:45:49
19. Scott Ludwig, GA	5:45:50
20. Andy Wright, NC	5:46:40
21. Jim Snyder, NC	5:47:21
22. Alex Morton, SC	5:47:23
23. Keith Wood, NC	5:48:58
24. Brenton Floyd, TN	6:03:05
25. Angela Ivory, TN	6:06:47
26. Peter Bennett, TX	6:22:37
27. Yen Nguyen, TX	6:22:52
28. Bill Keane, NC	6:36:43
29. Dave Howe, NC	7:06:32
30. John Connor, KY	8:20:45