

# QUARTET QUEST

by Phillip Gary Smith

Between a rock and a hard place, Chris Lundstrom smashed down to the ground. At the time he was assaulting his course record of 3:48:54 as he attacked the final and most critical 7.5 miles of the race, the return pass through unforgiving Oberg, Moose, and Mystery Mountains. Those mounts are always risky to leaders, challengers, and, well, everyone else for that matter.

Superior's plans for Lundstrom were different this race . . . and unmovable. Sacrificial offerings of knees and hands are not uncommon for these rooty, rocky trails. Obstacles mystically occur on the way in for this out-and-back venue. The forests called out to collect dues owed for setting that 2009 record; yet, he almost stamped them "paid in full."

On a sold-out Saturday in May, the other 77 finishers in the 50-km followed a quality quartet of runners on a gravelly road to begin their sojourn up and over the mountains of Superior. Veterans of this race, Lundstrom and Brian Peterson linked with new Superiorites, Dimitri Drekonja and Joshua Wopata, to dominate the front.

Wopata used his Indy 500 move to break first and pull ahead from the foursome, leading the way through the two aid stations to Carlton Peak as the trail climbs up over boulders, rock, and general obstacles obstructing the pace. Peterson wondered aloud if they should go after him. Lundstrom's experience yielded a reply of, "not yet." Competitors turn around near its top to find an entirely different look — and race — on the way back.

After Sawbill, the second and last aid station outbound, the threesome looking for leader Wopata became singles. Peterson held third as Lundstrom was late leaving Sawbill.

Wopata, slowing on the turnaround, endured being passed on the obstacle-strewn way down by Drekonja. The two frontrunners were on a course-record pace at this point.

Lundstrom got by Peterson on the climb.

From the moment a racer leaves Sawbill heading in, the route climbs, twists, and turns making time seemingly go faster while distance travelled does not correspond.

Drekonja led Wopata into the segment where soon enough Lundstrom caught them. "I passed Josh, then Dimitri, on successive uphill where the fatigue and difficulty of the trail was starting to catch up to them." Not, evidently, to him. Lundstrom was surprised. "It seemed to happen very suddenly, but without making a move I was alone out front."

Then Lundstrom fell in dramatic fashion, continuing a link to his past trials on trails. He recuperated a minute or so and returned quickly back to pace.

His 2009 course record remained. That's what the trail wanted — winning the race, he fell short by a measly 34 seconds.

Peterson continues his meteoric trail running success coming from a 2009 seventh in 4:51, fourth the next year at 4:08, to nail the 2011 Superior second overall at 4:01. He is 26, nine years younger than Lundstrom. Weeks prior to this race, he ran the Grand Canyon rim-to-rim just after winning the Chippewa 50-km in under four hours.

Dr. D finished third, commenting that the Moose and Mystery trails going in were "murderous." Wopata fell back to 4:13. He noted Mystery Mountain's extended climb coming after the rugged testing of his quads were not the



Chris Lundstrom ignores his scrapes to finish

same as flatland trails "Back Home Again in Indiana," as Jim Nabors famously sings.

Young med student, Christina Nowak, showed veteran's experience on Superior trails as she won in 4:41:42 in her first attempt in this race. Placing eighth overall, she outlasted veteran and a previous winner (2009), Connie Lutkevich, who took second.

Veteran racer, Kim Holak, chased Lutkevich over the line about a minute later. She has com-

## SUPERIOR 50K | SPRING SUPERIOR TRAIL 50K | LUTSEN, MINNESOTA | MAY 21 | ▲ 3,4

1. Chris Lundstrom, 35	3:49:28	22. Marcus Taintor, 29	5:17:52	43. Diane Laughlin, 47	6:12:40	64. Tony Evans, 40	7:10:57
2. Brian Peterson, 26	4:01:14	23. Matt Lutz, 25	5:19:54	44. Shane Olson, 43	6:15:08	65. Sheila Ross, 43	7:20:01
3. Dimitri Drekonja, 37	4:07:10	24. Rebecca George, 28	5:20:44	45. Samantha Carlson, 28	6:15:55	66. Kara O'Brien, 42	7:20:01
4. Joshua Wopata, 30	4:13:53	25. Todd Schroeder, 42	5:23:40	46. Kelli Oborn, 33	6:15:57	67. Jenny Moore, 49	7:24:50
5. Craig Hertz, 25	4:17:46	26. Simon Schaefer, 38	5:26:06	47. Amy Carolan, 29	6:20:59	68. Rick Bothwell, 49	7:25:37
6. Dusty Olson, 38	4:32:59	27. Greg Geiger, 31	5:29:47	48. Glen Hill, 62	6:21:31	69. Wayne Nelson, 45	7:29:29
7. Ryan Braun, 27	4:39:18	28. Jason Wilde, 39	5:30:09	49. Maria Barton, 45	6:24:26	70. Wendy Neupauer, 39	7:31:15
8. Christina Nowak, 23	4:41:42	29. Omar Palacios, 28	5:33:19	50. Jason Husveth, 39	6:24:50	71. David Shannon, 52	7:31:17
9. Andrew Westendorf, 26	4:43:58	30. Ron Hendrickson, 44	5:34:04	51. Kevin Mackie, 54	6:28:06	72. Sarah Rasmussen, 27	7:32:58
10. Evan Pengelly, 31	4:48:02	31. Tyler Behrends, 31	5:34:12	52. Peter Bryan, 27	6:37:52	Jim Baumiller, 51	7:32:58
11. Connie Lutkevich, 43	4:50:30	32. Jonathan Howard, 41	5:35:00	53. Patrick Hickey, 26	6:37:53	Lynette Thompson, 53	7:32:58
12. Kim Holak, 41	4:51:38	33. Alicia Hudelson, 26	5:40:39	54. David Johnson, 20	6:38:23	75. Gary Giannunzio, 66	7:36:23
13. Chris Hanson, 40	4:53:25	34. Jason Laplant, 32	5:48:49	55. Angie Vetsch, 44	6:39:00	76. Kent Porter, 45	7:38:46
14. Keith Wilson, 26	4:59:25	35. David Treichel, 39	5:52:14	56. Kelly Paasch, 30	6:41:35	77. Kerri Simafranca, 52	7:51:30
15. Patrick Santelli, 30	5:05:09	36. Nick Smith, 38	5:53:53	57. Adam Sullivan, 24	6:41:39	Todd Rowe, 54	7:51:30
16. Scott Hoberg, 33	5:05:32	37. Jeff Friedhof, 33	5:54:59	58. Warren Kerola, 55	6:43:54	79. Les Martisko, 67	8:01:36
17. Darrin Johnson, 45	5:06:23	38. Alisha Mayer, 24	6:03:40	59. Jan O'Brien, 50	6:45:59	80. Steve Clinker, 39	finished
18. Jordan Langen, 21	5:08:52	39. Scott Propson, 36	6:04:47	60. Natalie White, 31	7:00:51	Michelle Poirier, 47	finished
19. Jay Sykes, 32	5:08:58	40. Eric McGowen, 36	6:06:57	61. Steve Hagedorn, 52	7:02:20		
20. Thomas Straka, 33	5:12:41	41. Zach Pierce, 37	6:10:21	62. Anjanette Arnold, 35	7:02:20		
21. Paul Holovnia, 49	5:15:36	42. Marc Fink, 41	6:10:51	63. Misty Schmidt, 33	7:07:21		

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Connie Lutkevich crosses the line ready for more

peted here for years, winning this distance in 2005 in 5:03. Holak has wins in toughies such as July's Voyageur 50-mile sizzle-fest, which she, and husband Andy, now direct.

A runner's vow is to train hills and mountains, climbing those steep steps so another quest can, once again, be attempted. Unknown is whether one ever really succeeds here. Wins, yes. Finishes, yes. Ultimately, though, Superior triumphs as it grabs you and just never lets go. Until you line up for the 2012 race. ■

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an ultra: do not visualize  
the whole enchilada...that  
would fry your brain*  
– Andrew Harding

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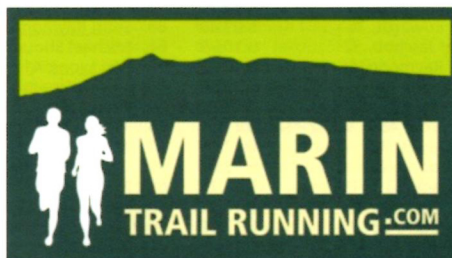


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