

# The Pacesetter



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## Bjerke shares perspective on making an Olympian

By Dave Graves  
Newsletter editor

“I’m pretty sure I got a shot,” Dakota (Bullen) Lindwurm texted her former college coach late in January.

The former Northern State University All-American knew what she was talking about. On Feb. 3, she finished the U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials in third-place with a time of 2:25:31 to claim her ticket to Paris. That former coach, Kevin Bjerke, a former Jackrabbit, told FloTrack, “I literally had tears in my eyes from miles 23 to the finish.”

He was watching from the comfort of his home in Billings, Montana, and kicking himself for resisting an urge earlier in the week to fly to Florida.

“I can’t even begin to describe” the feeling of having his former athlete succeed under a national spotlight, Bjerke told FloTrack.

He can describe what made Lindwurm, 28, an Olympian — hard work and persistence. Those were qualities that surfaced by her sophomore year at Northern, said Bjerke, a 2005 SDSU graduate, who ran for SDSU head coaches Paul Danger and Rod DeHaven. He also directs Prairie Striders Beef and Eggs 5K in July.

### A form letter invite to NSU

Lindwurm, of St. Francis, Minnesota, who was a track athlete and hockey goalie growing up, showed up in Aberdeen with a resume just good enough to merit a form letter.



Former Northern State coach Kevin Bjerke is flanked by former Wolf runners Sasha Hovind, left, and Dakota Lindwurm after the 2018 Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon in Duluth, Minnesota. Lindwurm ran a 1:16:16 for 13th place and Hovind clocked a 1:19:02 for 24th.

Bjerke told FloTrack, “I believe she got a letter from us. Probably informal, kind of like a form letter. ‘Hey, we believe you’re good enough to develop. Fill out this questionnaire if you’re interested.’”

That was all the incentive Lindwurm needed. Bjerke said, “I think we gave her a book scholarship” after she initially walked on in fall 2013. But with high school PRs of 5:35.61 for 1,600m, 11:56.29 for 3,200m and 22:08.40 for 5K in cross country, there’s not much leverage for a big scholarship.

However, Bjerke’s philosophy at Northern, where he coached from 2008 to 2018, “was to get as many people as you can at her level ... and hope some of them develop, runners that had some limited success at high school and would maybe break out at college.

“She seemed serious about the sport and had a great attitude. Regardless of how she performed, she was going to be great for the team.”

### The Hovind factor

Lindwurm’s freshman marks were only slightly better than her high school marks. But in her sophomore track seasons her performances “just skyrocketed,” Bjerke said.

The magic potion was the influence of teammate Sasha Hovind, who also arrived in fall 2013 and brought a tremendous work ethic. Hovind’s unspoken message was “I know how to work and I’m going to show you how to work,” Bjerke said.

Even as Lindwurm improved at Northern, she played second fiddle to Hovind. However, she took a back seat to no one when it came to work ethic and attitude. “She would do anything you would tell her. If you gave her options on a long run, she would do the highest range,” Bjerke said.

At Northern, her debut 6K time was 26:42.7 and her career-ending mark was 21:14. She ran 19:40.17 in her first collegiate outdoor 5K and clocked a 16:43 by her final season. The 10K was her strongest event, where she ran a school record 34:57.14 at the Mt. SAC Relays and finished sixth at the NCAA Division II National Championships.

Lindwurm finished 56th in the Division II national cross country meet in 2015. As a senior, she finished in the top 40 to earn All-American honors with a 21:39.4 clocking, placing 34th in the 6K. She was named women’s team most improved athlete in track and cross country for two years and was the MVP in 2017.



## 2024 RACE SCHEDULE

Arbor Day 5K .....Friday, April 26	Predictor Mile .....Wednesday, July 31
Scotty Roberts 5K.....Friday, May 10	Oakwood Lakes Trail Run.....Saturday, Aug. 3
Brookings Marathon, Half & Relays ..... Saturday, May 11	Jack 15.....Saturday, Sept. 21
Harvey Mills Longest Day 10K..... Saturday, June 22	Bob Bartling Hobo Day 5K.....Saturday, Oct. 12
Beef and Eggs 5K.....Saturday, July 13	Turkey Day Run..... Thursday, Nov. 28

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# Olympian

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## A walk-on again

Impressive, but not impressive enough to grab the attention of Minnesota Distance Elite, the team she now trains with.

Bjerke said, “She essentially walked on with me and then with Minnesota Distance Elite got a walk-on spot. Me and her had to convince the coach and president to let her on the team because her times did not indicate a professional runner. They finally said, ‘Okay, I guess you can practice with the team, but you’re not going to get a stipend like everyone else.’ She said, ‘Good enough for me’ and she moved to Minneapolis to train with the team.

In a 2022 interview with the Northern State University Sports Information Department, Lindwurm said, “You have to bet on yourself. Out of high school I didn’t have a single recruitment letter; I had to take the first step of reaching out to Kevin Bjerke to join the NSU track and field team.

“After college I reached out to my current coach to see if he would take me on post-collegiately. Even if right now you aren’t at the level you want to be at but are willing to work hard, you will find success, but you have to be the first person to believe in you.”

She also spoke highly of the Northern program.

“NSU cultivated my current success. The coaches cared about me as a person before my accomplishments. My professors were some of my biggest



*Dakota Lindwurm competes in the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference 10K May 12, 2017. She finished second. Coach Kevin Bjerke notes the future Olympian never won a conference title while at NSU.*

fans, and I still get messages from a few of them after races. I love that I wasn’t just a number to them, I was someone they believed in. And I know I’m not a special case, they all care about all of their students/athletes.”

## Success comes quick as pro runner

Lindwurm joined Minnesota Distance Elite in 2018 and soon became special.

She qualified for her first Olympic Trials in 2020 with a fourth place

finish at the 2019 Grandma’s Marathon and added a runner-up finish at the Twin Cities Marathon that same year. Lindwurm won the 2021 and 2022 Grandma’s Marathons, was 13th in the 2021 Boston Marathon, and was sixth in the 2023 New York City Half Marathon.

Heading into Orlando, experts were pegging her to place between seventh and 12th, said Bjerke, who actually went on a run with his former athlete when he was in Minneapolis for a wedding in summer 2023.

Her 2022 Grandma’s time of 2:25:01 gave Lindwurm dark horse status.

## Plans to run in Duluth in June

At the Olympic Trials, Lindwurm was a model of consistency for most of the race. For the first 20 miles, her splits ranged from 5:18 to 5:35 with most within a few seconds of 5:30. Then, on a warm, humid day on a hilly course in Orlando, her splits climbed, peaking at 6:05 on Mile 26. Nonetheless, she finished in 2:25:31 for an average pace of 5:33 to earn her spot on the U.S. Olympic Team.

Bjerke said he would love to see a celebrity appearance from his former athlete at the 20th Beef and Eggs 5K July 13, but realizes that isn’t likely. However, he said she has committed to running the Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon, which is a part of the Grandma’s event and was her first professional race in 2018 (1:16:16, 13th place).

If you miss her there, set your clocks for early in the morning Sunday, Aug. 11 — 8 a.m. Paris time for the Olympic Marathon.

## Life members

Prairie Striders now has 126 life members. New life members are welcome by making a single payment of at least \$125 with a new or renewed membership.

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Jay Bender, *Brookings, SD*  
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Rufus DeZeeuw, *Elkton, SD*  
Leeann Diercks, *Brookings, SD*  
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Shelby Eischens, *Aurora, SD*  
Kelly Evans Hullinger, *Brookings, SD*  
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Dan Foerster, *Brookings, SD*  
Brian Freking, *Keota, OK*  
Tim Fryer, *Hendricks, MN*  
Jeanette Gibbons, *Brookings, SD*  
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Chris Gruenhagen, *Brookings, SD*  
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\*New in 2023



# Jackrabbit influence felt at U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials

By Dave Graves  
Newsletter editor

To tweak an old saying, all roads lead back to State.

That held true at the U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials Feb. 3 in Orlando, Florida, where the 227-runner men's field included former Jackrabbits Joel Reichow, a 2017 South Dakota State University graduate, and Ben Olson, a 2023 SDSU graduate.

Reichow, 30, also a member of Minnesota Distance Elite, qualified for the Olympic Trials with a 2:10:37 marathon in Chicago, which gave him the 16th fastest time of the 227 qualifiers.

He finished 28th in Orlando with a time of 2:16:37, which is 5:13 pace for the 26.2 miles. His mile splits were 5:07 or less for the first 17 miles with clockings of 5:00 or less for miles 6-10. His splits gradually grew in Miles 18-23 and then starting spiking — 5:56, 6:25 and 5:57 before finding the energy for a 4:59 pace split from 26.0 to 26.2.

His resume also includes finishing 56th in the 2020 Olympic Marathon Trials, winning the 2023 Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon and finishing third in the 2022 USATF Marathon Championships in 2:12:11.

During his collegiate career, he set three school records – 13:53.05 in the outdoor 5000m, 14:07.19 for the indoor

5000m, and 28:55.84 in the outdoor 10,000m as well as being a two-time Division I cross country All-American.

Their college coach, Rod DeHaven, said, "What a great accomplishment for these two young men, who did so much as Jackrabbits. The drive towards the goal of qualifying and participating at a high level is testament to themselves, their family and current coach. But it also an extension of the legacy of distance running at South Dakota State University, which has spanned several decades. These gents make me proud to be a Jackrabbit!"

## Only third marathon for Olson

Olson, a newcomer to the marathon distance, qualified with a 2:16:04 at the Cal International Marathon in Sacramento in December in his second marathon. That had him seeded as the 92nd fastest competitor in the 227-runner field. The qualifying standard was a 2:18:00.

His day in Orlando got off to a good start with miles of 5:02, 5:01 and 5:02. Miles 4-9 ranged from 5:08 to 5:12 and then gradually climbed. Miles 16 and 17 were 5:31 and after a 5:55 Mile 18, he dropped out.

Olson, who works full time as a process development engineer, graduated last spring after helping the Jackrabbits to multiple Summit League



Joel Reichow in 2022.

Cross Country Championships and a Summit League Indoor Track and Field crown in 2022. He was named the 2022 Summit League Indoor Track Athlete of the Year and was the 2022 Summit League Cross Country Athlete of the Year.

DeHaven, who is in his 20th year as head coach of his alma mater, represented Team USA in the marathon in the 2000 Sydney Olympics after winning the Olympic Trials Marathon in May 2000.

## Kleinsasser, 6 others honored for 2023 efforts

Prairie Striders races drew 1,059 finishers in 2023, a slight uptick from 1,040 in 2022 and 1,010 in 2021. The list of those running multiple races totaled 107, up four from 2022 and far ahead of the 69 in 2021. (Note: 2023 figures do not include those who participated in the Turkey Day social run.)

Prairie Striders awards free race entry to any runner completing six or more races.

Those recognized for their 2023 efforts are: Aaron Kleinsasser, nine races; Trevor Hinderaker, eight races; Chuck Harming and Dani Bohn, seven; Heidi Hopewell, Susan Holt, Tevis Holzer, six.

## Outgoing marathon director honored

Matt Bien, who directed the Brookings Marathon for 17 years, was honored for his service following the Prairie Striders Indoor 5K Jan. 20.

Bien, who served as director from 2007 through 2023, received a proclamation that was presented by club president Dave Graves to "declare the club to be inexpressibly indebted to the service provided by Matt Bien and humbly thank him for every hour of service and nugget of advice that he has provided."

It was noted that Bien guided what is now the nation's third-longest continually run marathon through the 50th running of the Brookings Marathon and produced a high quality, glossy, hard cover history book in 2019 as well as virtually planning five marathons in three years due to postponements by COVID-19 (2020) and a community-crippling derecho (2022).

He also located his replacement, Dani Bohn, who will be featured in the spring issue.

Prairie Striders also will have a new director for the Arbor Day 5K. John Blatchford, who moved to Hot Springs, is being replaced by Daniel Radtke, who is a 2019 SDSU graduate and a four-year member of the distance program. He currently is plant manager at MTR Technologies, Brookings.



Longtime marathon director Matt Bien.

Also, the club hopes its Hoyt running chair will have a busy 2024 as Suzy Gehring, Title I reading teacher Dakota Prairie Elementary School, has agreed to be the advocate for the running chair the club purchased in 2022. Anyone interested in using the chair as a rider or a pusher is encouraged to contact the club at [run@prairiestriders.net](mailto:run@prairiestriders.net).



# State's Becker — running for the glory of God

By Dave Graves  
Newsletter editor

Josh Becker's competitive streak was ignited at sandlot baseball games with his seven brothers. It has been refined as a member of SDSU's highly successful distance program.

Becker has had his share of success in his 4 ½ years at State, including a fifth-place finish at the 2023 Summit League Cross Country Championship in Brookings. "I love to compete, but that's only a few days out of the year. Getting close to the guys is more important," said Becker, who is the 2023-24 recipient of the Prairie Striders/Phil LaVallee Memorial Scholarship.

While he earned his bachelor's degree in ag engineering in May 2023, thanks to COVID and injury redshirt seasons, he is eligible to compete through the 2024-25 school year. Currently, he is working under ag and biosystems associate professor John McMaine, a specialist in water management, to earn a master's degree.

Becker, 23, of Osseo, Wisconsin, said his running is motivated by the family feel on the team and a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Becker came to SDSU in August 2019 after running for Eau Claire Memorial High School, where he posted personal bests of 16:03 in the 5K and 4:24 in the 1,600 meters. But Becker visited SDSU because it had a top-notch ag engineering program and it's a paradise for hunters and fishermen. "I wasn't sure if I wanted to run or not," he said.

## Finding a family feel at State

An email to Coach Rod DeHaven produced no results, but Becker's mother said, "Let's just call him before we visit."

DeHaven answered the phone and provide a gracious tour of the athletic



Josh Becker races to the finish line in the Summit League Conference meet at Edgebrook Golf Course in Brookings Oct. 28, 2023. He finished fifth in the 8K (24:51.3) to help the Jacks win their record-extending eight straight league title.

facilities when they visited. Becker had visited other colleges, including the University of Minnesota, whose alumni include his parents. But South Dakota State had a family feel that was lacking at the U of M and better fit his running ability at the time.

He redshirted his freshman cross country season and outdoor track was canceled by COVID as was the fall 2020 cross country season.

A foot stress fracture he suffered in the fall was healed by track season. At the Summit League Indoor Championships he ran the 800-meter leg for the third-place distance medley relay team and had a 4:14 mile (ninth place). In the outdoor season, he was introduced to a

new love, the steeplechase, and ran the 1,500 meters in 3:57.18.

"Rod (DeHaven) has been super helpful in guidance and training and financially," said Becker, noting coach found additional scholarship money during a tight financial time as a sophomore.

## Finding life at Oasis

But his freshman and sophomore years weren't just transformational in terms of times, they were also transformational as a person.

Becker said, "Through high school, I was more centered on personal achievement. I had a Christian background, but didn't have personal relationship with God." He developed that through Oasis, a college ministry at Gracepoint Wesleyan Church in Brookings.

"A lot of the team goes to that. It (Oasis) changed my whole view of God. He loves me, he cares for me, he has a plan for me. That's totally changed running for me. Having that foundation of why, that motivates me to do the little things that contribute to the end result. Running is a talent I have been given from God.

"That's what gets me through the tough days and gets me up in the morning for the summer runs," Becker explained.

Dan Burkhalter, who attends a team Bible study with Becker, said, "It's been a lot of fun to watch Josh grow over the last 5 years. Clearly, he's developed athletically and professionally, but I'm talking about spiritually and his love for God and his teammates. His care for others is unmatched and it inspires me to want to be like that as well."

**See Becker**

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## Donated Beyond Dues

Thank you to the 81 people who donated beyond their \$5 dues.

Brenda Algood, Brookings, SD

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Peggy Whalen, Brookings, SD

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Tim Wilson, McMinnville, OR

Tom Woodall, Charleston, IL

# Becker

Continued from Page 4

## '22 xc race holds special memory

The pressure to perform in a Division I sport can be crushing, but Becker said, "I try to do my best to find my identity in God and that he loves me. At the end of the day, my family doesn't care how I perform; they will support me the same. My teammates, no matter how races go, they still love and support me the same. They support me whether I was the fastest guy or the slowest."

Given Becker's outlook, it's not surprising his favorite race memory is team oriented. It dates to the 2022 conference cross country championship in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

"We had a great day. It's super rare when you get a group of five guys to all have your best day in the same race and that happened there. We separated from the pack and were just cruising. Rod was all fired up and he doesn't get excited too

often. He shouted, 'The Jacks are cruising today, baby.' That is a fun memory," said Becker, who finished sixth. Jacks also placed first, second, fourth and fifth.

## Sets lofty goals for self, team

Becker said he is surprised and thankful for the success he has had at State, but adds, "at the same time I'm a very optimistic person. Mom has always said you can do whatever you set your mind to. I'm super thankful for (my success) but I believe I can achieve great things."

On an individual basis, Becker wants to win conference in the 3,000-meter steeplechase and advance to the NCAA regional meet.

His team goal is for the cross country team to advance to the NCAA nationals. That's a big goal. In 2023, SDSU had an outstanding regional meet and placed fifth. Only the top two teams advance to nationals and those are often teams who have international recruits.

"But my main goal is to help get the best out of everybody on the team. That's



Josh Becker competes in the mile at the Jim Emmerich Invitational at the Sanford-Jackrabbit Athletic Complex Jan. 20, 2024. He finished fifth (4:11.19) in the first major meet of the indoor season.

my main mission and as a team we can achieve our goals," said Becker, sounding as much like a coach as a team member. He has 1 ½ years left to see those goals come to fruition. And then?

"I'm really excited for what is next. I plan to go back home and get an ag engineering job. I would love to keep competing, maybe get into trail running or Ironman. Who knows how running will go. If there is an opportunity to keep running, I will. I just love it."

## Longtime loyal members

Defined as paying dues at least eight of the last 10 years or life member

Brenda Algood, Brookings, SD  
Bruce Allen, Flandreau, SD  
Arne Anderson, Canton, SD  
Jill Anderson, Duluth, MN  
Bob Bartling, Brookings, SD  
Herb Bartling, Vancouver, WA  
Christa Bartling Bortnem, Brookings, SD  
Benda Berseth, Brookings, SD  
Steve Berseth, Brookings, SD  
William Berzonsky, Lincoln, NE  
Rob Beyer, Mound, MN  
Tom Bezdichek, Brookings, SD  
Dan Bielfeldt, Brookings, SD  
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Tom Birath, Marshall, MN  
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JoAnne Bohl, Humboldt, SD  
Pat Bohl, Humboldt, SD  
Justin Bonnema, Inwood, IA  
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Dan Carlson, White Bear Lake, MN  
Laura Carlson, White Bear Lake, MN  
Rob Carney, Lakeville, MN  
Craig Cassen, Piedmont, SD  
Lyle Claussen, Beatrice, NE  
Sharon Clay, Brookings, SD  
Paul Coffin, Sioux City, IA  
Paul Danger, Valparaiso, IN  
Sara Danger, Valparaiso, IN  
Ann Day, Willmar, MN  
Rod DeHaven, Brookings, SD

Jane Derby, Estelline, SD  
Andrew Dickinson, Aberdeen, SD  
Jay Dirksen, Hot Springs Village, AR  
Jim Egeberg, Valley City, ND  
Pat Egeberg, Valley City, ND  
Monte Farnsworth, Pierre, SD  
Brian Fendrich, Apple Valley, MN  
Van Fishback, Brookings, SD  
Becka Foerster, Brookings, SD  
Dan Foerster, Brookings, SD  
Brian Freking, Keota, OK  
Tim Fryer, Hendricks, MN  
Jim Glazer, St. Paul, MN  
Dave Graves, Volga, SD  
Dave Griffith, Wecota, SD  
Chris Gruenhagen, Brookings, SD  
Dan Hansen, Brookings, SD  
Randy Hanson, Aurora, SD  
Paul Hanusa, Volga, SD  
Chuck Harming, Elkton, SD  
Steve Hauff, Sioux Falls, SD  
Mary Held, Aurora, SD  
Mike Heyl, Lincoln, NE  
Mike Hieb, Brandon, SD  
Wade & Kristi Hoffman, Minnetrista, MN  
Joanie Holm, Brookings, SD  
Dennis Hopfinger, Brookings, SD  
Owen Hotvet, Sioux Falls, SD  
Hunter Jamison, Wentworth, SD  
Scott Jamison, Wentworth, SD  
Taylor Jamison, Wentworth, SD  
Gloria Jansen, White Bear Lake, MN  
Marcus Johansen, Stacy, MN  
Randall Kantack, Aberdeen, SD  
Angela Kauch, Minneapolis, MN  
Lucy Kephart, Kansas City, MO  
Gene Kingslien, Watertown, SD  
Wally Klawiter, Sioux Falls, SD  
Carol Klitzke, Maple Grove, MN

Kelly Koenig, Brookings, SD  
Shelli Koistinen, Madison, WI  
Bryan Krogman, Brookings, SD  
Steve Kurtenbach, Sioux Falls, SD  
Shari Landmark, White, SD  
Jay Larsen, Brookings, SD  
Polly Larson, Sioux Falls, SD  
Steve LeFevre, Fallbrook, CA  
Deb Leiferman, Brookings, SD  
Mark Lidman, Kansas City, MO  
Harry Mansheim, Brookings, SD  
Reyna Martin, Brookings, SD  
Chuck McCullough, Brookings, SD  
Nikki McDaniel, Rapid City, SD  
Barry McKeown, Arlington, TX  
Dan Merchant, Brookings, SD  
Kati Merkley, Brookings, SD  
Janet Merriman, Brookings, SD  
Michael Merriman, Brookings, SD  
Christy Mettler, Colorado Springs, CO  
Miles Mettler, Colorado Springs, CO  
Dave Meyer, Brookings, SD  
Patricia Meyer, Brookings, SD  
Jerry Miller, Sioux Falls, SD  
Paul Morgan, Winona, MN  
John Nelson, Madison, SD  
Vicki Nelson, Sioux Falls, SD  
Trudy Nepstad, Roeland Park, KS  
Judy Norton Pinckney, Rosemount, MN  
Mandy Orth, Brookings, SD  
Kurt Osborne, Brookings, SD  
Jim Pedley, Martinez, CA  
Trevor Penning, Volga, SD  
Grant Peterson, Brookings, SD  
Gary Pierson, Sioux Falls, SD  
Dan Propst, Pierre, SD  
Susan Quass Scott, Lincoln, NE  
Eric Rasmussen, Brookings, SD  
Richard Reid, Brookings, SD

Colene Reiser, Brookings, SD  
Lynn Riedesel, Brookings, SD  
Bob Ritter, Brookings, SD  
Gail Robertson, Brookings, SD  
Stephen Roy, Hastings, MN  
Bob Salmi, Aberdeen, SD  
Andrea Schmidt, Brookings, SD  
Brad Schmidt, Brookings, SD  
Nancy Scholl, Brookings, SD  
Joe Schuch, Belton, MO  
Justin Sell, Brookings, SD  
Boyd Shank, Brookings, SD  
Kevin Smith, Brookings, SD  
Richard Smith, Brookings, SD  
Peder Solberg, White Bear Lake, MN  
Audrey Stavrum-Riggs, Portland, OR  
John Stiegelmeier, Brookings, SD  
Russ Strande, Brookings, SD  
Joe Sudtelgte, Elkton, SD  
Barbara Swenson, Afton, MN  
Ron Tesch, Brookings, SD  
Marcel Thielke, Brookings, SD  
Chuck Tiltrum, Aurora, SD  
Dale Tribby, Miles City, MT  
Gregg Uecker, Freeman, SD  
David Ulschmid, Arlington, SD  
Scott Underwood, Brookings, SD  
Peggy Whalen, Brookings, SD  
Andriette Wickstrom, Storm Lake, IA  
Tim Wilson, McMinnville, OR  
Joan Wolles, Colton, SD  
Tom Woodall, Charleston, IL  
Becky Youngberg, Eden Prairie, MN  
Jack Youngberg, Eden Prairie, MN  
Tim Zbikowski, Maple Grove, MN  
Kim Zilverberg, Drayton, ND  
Jason Zimmerman, Brookings, SD  
Kyrsten Zimmerman, Brookings, SD



# McCullough named Friend of Running

Charles “Chuck” McCullough, a longtime volunteer in the Brookings running community, received the 2023 Harvey Mills Friend of Running Award presented by Prairie Striders Running Club after the Prairie Striders Indoor 5K Jan. 20.

A life member of Prairie Striders, McCullough has dedicated nearly 20 years to the Brookings Marathon committee. A marathon committee mainstay, McCullough has volunteered with almost every aspect of the race including course certification, course marking and being course marshal. He is one of three people that know the current course forward and backward.

Longtime marathon director Matt Bien said McCullough is known by the comment “just tell me where you need me.”

He has played a key role in the Scotty Roberts 5K, which is held the evening before the marathon. Since 2018 he has directed the race.

He also has quite a running resume, including four Jack 15 finishes and he has run every iteration of the Disney Challenge weekend series runs, either at the full or half marathon level. In fact, he recently pushed the streak of Disney Challenges to 18 years.

McCullough also shows his love for running when at work, where he collects used running shoes for the Soles4Souls project. Injured running enthusiasts also are able to benefit from his skills as a physical therapist at Avera Medical Group.

The award is named for Harvey Mills, one of the club’s earliest members who was a longtime club member, an accomplished runner and major contributor to the club’s 2018-19 scholarship drive.



Chuck McCullough, center, receives the 2023 Harvey Mills Friend of Running Award from Dave Graves, president of Prairie Striders Running Club, Mary Jo Minor, daughter of Harvey Mills, and Cora Minor, his great-granddaughter. The award was presented at the Sanford-Jackrabbit Athletic Center following the Prairie Striders Indoor 5K.

## In memoriam

Prairie Striders Running Club lost two longtime members in 2023.

James Thvedt died March 26, 2023, at Edgewood Vista in Brookings. Thvedt, 89, of Brookings, had 14 Jack 15 finishes, the last coming in 2014 at age 81. An extended obituary was in the June issue of The Pacesetter.

Dwayne Rollag, 92, of Sioux Falls and formerly of Brookings, died March 11 in Surprise, Arizona, where he and his wife wintered.

## \$10 discount offered for Deadwood Marathon

Organizers of the Deadwood Mickelson Trail Marathon on June 2 are offering a \$10 discount to Prairie Striders members through X. Go [www.DeadwoodMickelsonTrailMarathon.com](http://www.DeadwoodMickelsonTrailMarathon.com) and use the code 24DMTM10.

For questions, contact race director Emily Schulz-Wheeler, [Emily@RunCrazyHorse.com](mailto:Emily@RunCrazyHorse.com), 605-390-6137.

## World’s first legit 2-hour marathon?

Kelvin Kiptum has explained what his priorities are as he gears up for the Rotterdam Marathon where he wants to make history by becoming the first man to break the two-hour barrier.

Reigning World marathon record holder Kelvin Kiptum is not resting on his laurels as he seeks to make history at the Rotterdam Marathon scheduled for Sunday, April 14.

Kiptum has expressed interest in becoming the first man to break the two-hour marathon barrier in normal conditions. Former world marathon record holder Eliud Kipchoge is the only man to have run a marathon in under two hours.

However, his time was not recognized by *World Athletics* since the whole setup of the event did not meet the rules of a standardized course.

Rotterdam will mark the fourth marathon of Kiptum’s career after he burst onto the scene with the fastest marathon debut in history at the 2022

Valencia Marathon, clocking the third-fastest time in history (at the time) of 2:01:53.

Within a year, he lowered his time by almost a minute-and-a-half and claimed victory in two World Marathon Majors, London, and Chicago, where he lowered the world record to 2:00:35.

## Women record amazing times

Tigst Assefa (Ethiopia) obliterated the previous women’s world record and lowered it by more than two minutes by clocking a 2:11:53 at the Berlin Marathon Sept. 24, 2023.

Many women ran incredibly fast in 2023. You have to run faster than 2:20 just to think about the world’s top 100 list.

All three of the U.S. Olympic Marathon qualifiers broke Shane Flanagan’s 2012 record of 2:25:38. That list is Fiona O’Keeffe, who ran in marathon debut in 2:22:10; American record holder Emily Sisson, 2:22:42; and Dakota Lindwurm, who finished in 2:25:31.