

# Anoka County UNION HERALD SPORTS

## 3 magic words, 1 magical title

By Patrick Slack  
Staff Writer

Three words.

It takes a lot to run 26.2 miles, exponentially more to cover the distance in less than 2 1/2 hours.

For Dakotah Lindwurm, though, the power to do so can be summed up quite simply.

Three words written on the back of her hand to carry her through the course — “Strong. Fast. Last.”

And three words she’s heard after every single race she’s ever run — “That’s my kid.”

The strength in each guided Dakotah (Bullen) Lindwurm, a 2013 St. Francis graduate, to a heartwarming, captivating and absolutely overpowering women’s title at Grandma’s Marathon in Duluth June 19, winning in 2:29:04 to finish over two minutes ahead of her next competitor.

“The last time I ran Grandma’s I qualified for the Olympic Trials, and it holds such a special place in my heart,” Lindwurm said. “Upon finishing the race in 2019, I ran straight into my mom’s arms. I lost my mom in 2020, so winning and being on that course again was so special knowing that she was cheering from above. And this year I got to run straight into my dad’s arms.

“Both of my parents are the most supportive and encouraging supporters. It didn’t matter if I won, lost or had the worst race of my life, my mom would cry with pride every time I called her with my results, and her famous words were always, ‘That’s my kid!’ My dad is the same with his encouragement. He has always been someone who has believed in me, even when I haven’t believed in myself. My parents are truly a blessing and a pillar of support for my running career and my success.”

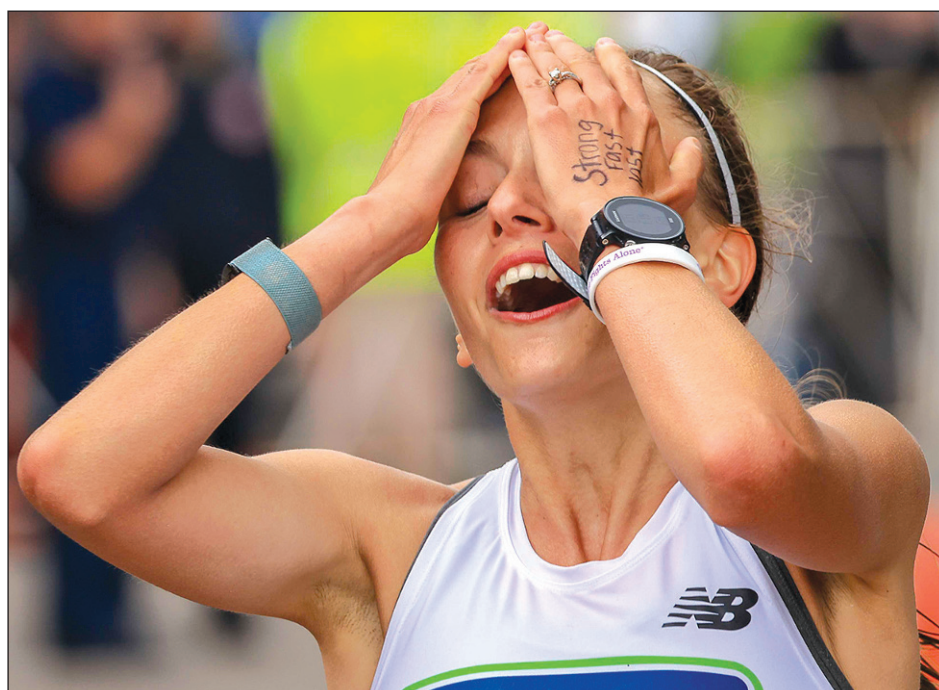
The tempo Lindwurm set at Grandma’s was fast and steady from the start. A demanding pace, but one that Lindwurm prepares for with a simple message on her hand to carry her through each passing stride.

“I always write on my hand, ‘Strong, Fast, Last,’” Lindwurm said. “It stands for, ‘I am strong, I am fast, my speed will last.’ It is my anthem during a race; it is what I tell myself when I am tired.”

Lindwurm broke out of the gates with an opening 10K of 34:57 — a 5:38 pace — to seize the early lead.

Lindwurm knew she was leading the pack. It wouldn’t be long before she discovered just how wide the margin was becoming.

“Somewhere around mile 10 I believe, the media vehicle asked one of the lead



St. Francis graduate Dakotah (Bullen) Lindwurm reacts after crossing the finish line in first place at Grandma’s Marathon in Duluth June 19. Lindwurm won in a time of 2:29:04, becoming the first Minnesotan to win the women’s race since 1987.

Photo courtesy of Clint Austin/Duluth News Tribune

bikers to fall back and find out who was in second, third and fourth,” Lindwurm said. “So that was when I knew they must be fairly far behind if the media vehicle can’t see them at all!”

Lindwurm’s speedy clip continued to hold midway through, with her first half marathon completed in 1:14:03. She would never be challenged in the second half of the race, running a near even split to cruise to the homestretch more than two minutes ahead of the next woman.

“At that point I was so tired, but so thankful, I felt overwhelmed with joy,” Lindwurm said. “All of my hard work culminated in this one great moment when I broke the tape. It was something that I was dreaming of for so long. I was thrilled running a minute and a half PR. I have consistently been able to shave minutes off of my marathon each time I run, and it is giving me great hope for my career! I felt great from the gun. The pace was difficult, but I joined up with a group of men from about mile 5 to 20 and they carried me through those tough miles.”

The final time of 2:29:04 marked a pace of 5:42 per mile and a personal best for Lindwurm. Just off of her lofty pre-race time goal, but a championship performance.

“I was hoping to run 2:28, so I finished just short of my time goal, but I am still very happy with my effort. I was hopeful that I would win and it was definitely on my mind for the past two months. I trained really hard with the goal of winning in mind.”

Lindwurm also crossed the finish line in rarefied air, the first homestate woman

to win the race in 34 years.

Her racing has taken her across the country and into one of the nation’s elite, but there’s still no place — or road — like home.

“It means so much to be the first Minnesotan woman to win since 1987, because Minnesota is truly my favorite place to race,” Lindwurm said. “I have traveled the country racing, and nothing will beat having the home state support of a great Minnesota crowd.”

Lindwurm’s journey to one of the country’s top marathons began growing up in St. Francis ... although not without some resistance.

A fiercely passionate goalie in the hockey program, her mom wanted her to find another activity to go along with it. Enter running.

“My mom is actually the reason I got into running,” Lindwurm said. “Growing up I played hockey and loved it. It was everything to me and to be frank I was totally obsessed with it. Watching ‘Miracle on Ice’ in middle school is where my first Olympic dreams started. When I was a freshman in high school my mom saw how engrossed I was with hockey. She decided that I needed to broaden my horizons and try something new.”

It was a push that caused some frustration at first. Later on, it led to a world of possibilities.

“As a teenager, I thought my mom was trying to ruin my life and didn’t believe I could be an Olympian,” Lindwurm said. “But in reality she just wanted me to be great in more than one thing in life. And as an adult I understand that my love for

hockey wasn’t always healthy. So, long story short, my mom won, and I started looking for a new sport to try.”

When Lindwurm settled on running, she was sure she would be able to excel at it. Or at least so she thought.

“I went out for the track and field team because I was always one of the first girls to finish the mile in gym class, so I figured I must be all right at distance running,” Lindwurm said. “I was wrong. I believe I frequently took last or near last that first year.”

Those finishes didn’t last long.

Lindwurm progressed throughout high school in cross-country and track and field for St. Francis, then went on to qualify for five national meets in college at Northern State, including a First Team All-American run in the 10,000-meter.

Still, her best days remained in front of her.

Now 26, Lindwurm has been a quick study to the marathon, although still a relative newcomer. Her first marathon came after her freshman year of college when she convinced her college coach at Northern State University that the Eugene Curnow Trail Marathon outside of Duluth would make for a good summer training run. She won that event, then completed the race the next two years, but was primarily focused on collegiate-level distances.

That changed two years ago.

In her first marathon after graduating from college, Lindwurm took fourth place in the 2019 Grandma’s Marathon in 2:34:02, a time that qualified her for the 2020 U.S. Olympic Trials. The pandemic dealt a detour to the remainder of Lindwurm’s 2020 plans, forcing her to go it alone training, but she has since picked back up in full stride this summer.

“My training has only gotten better and better,” Lindwurm said. “And the pandemic was tough when I couldn’t train with my team, but I was thankful that running was something that I could continue to do safely. So having 2020 really gave me a solid year of really great running and training.”

The possibilities are wide open for Lindwurm, who has solidified herself as a contender at any race she toes the line in. Where she goes next is uncertain, only that she will look to continue taking more and more seconds off of her time.

“I will start training for a fall major marathon, but haven’t decided which yet,” Lindwurm said. “But I am hungry to lower my PR more.”

Hungry with strength and speed to last — with family always by her side offering full-throated support at the finish line. First, last or anywhere in between.

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## Rooney wins national title, sets all-time record

By Patrick Slack  
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It was the race he had been waiting for his entire college career.

And it was a race better than anyone else in Division III history.

Andover graduate Taylor Rooney secured this spring’s NCAA Division III 110-meter hurdles national title to conclude a prodigious track and field career at Gustavus Adolphus College, closing in record fashion in 13.72 seconds.

After the coronavirus pandemic wiped out his 2020 season, Rooney entered 2021 locked in and

with his sights on being the best.

Not just of this season, but of all time.

Rooney began the year in dominant form in the winter indoor season, garnering several awards and setting facility marks on his way to the top 60-meter hurdle time in the country.

“The national record is something I had in mind,” Rooney said. “It started my sophomore year after running a few fast times. I was introduced to the record books, immediately putting my sights on Justin Johnson’s 13.79. Although it started as a dream, especially with COVID taking away a full outdoor sea-

son, my goal for senior year was completely set on breaking the all-time divisional record. I view myself as a better runner outdoor with the longer hurdle race, compared to the indoor 60 hurdle, so to have my name high up on the all-time indoor list as well, this year was a true blessing.”

When the season transitioned outdoors and larger meets were allowed to be held, Rooney was ready for even more.

Rooney remained atop the MIAC in the 110 hurdles, breezing to the conference title, while also placing in the top eight for the Gusties in the 100, 200

and high jump.

Once the national finals arrived at the end of the spring, he stepped to the line prepared for the race he had awaited his entire collegiate hurdling career.

Seven opening steps, 10 hurdles, 110 meters, one last run.

“Going into finals I had a very wide array of feelings,” Rooney said. “I knew if I performed how I knew I could, I could become a national champion. However, that was not the only accolade in mind.

“It was a beautiful day on a fast track and all I can remember is thinking how great it would be for my last race to set the re-

cord. Stepping into the blocks my game plan was simple: execute in the first seven steps of the race and be the first person to the first hurdle. Landing over the first, knowing I had executed the worst part of my race, I let adrenaline take over and the rest is history.”

It was a race ran to perfection. Rooney crossed the line in first, then quickly looked up at the clock — 13.72 seconds.

National champion, national record-holder.

“As soon as I crossed the finish line I had an instant sigh of relief,” Rooney said. “Countless hours of training both

physically and mentally had finally paid off and I had accomplished the race that I have visualized in my head thousands of times. After gathering myself, my eyes went straight to the clock and there it was: 13.72. It was extremely humbling to have accomplished such a big goal of mine; instantly finding my family in the crowd to see their joy as well. I was also beyond thankful for each and every one of my competitors. With many of them running their own personal-best times, everyone had such a great moment and shared the joy with each other.”

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