

## Duluth News Tribune

Published June 17, 2012, 12:00 AM

### LUBBERS: He ran from Duluth to Two Harbors, then back

It's not every runner who gets told he's running the wrong way on the Grandma's Marathon course.

By: Rick Lubbers, Duluth News Tribune

It's not every runner who gets told he's running the wrong way on the Grandma's Marathon course.

Eric Strand heard plenty of suggestions to do a 360 Saturday morning while running from Duluth to Two Harbors. And the 51-year-old eventually did turn around, but not until he logged 26.2 miles first. Then he joined the Grandma's Marathon throng and ran the official race from Two Harbors to Duluth.

52.4 miles in one day. Two marathons for the price of one.

But the Grandma's Double was not a stunt as much as it was Strand's training strategy. The veteran marathoner has completed more than 30 marathons — including the past five Boston Marathons and more than a dozen Grandma's Marathons. But he is now training for his first ultramarathon — the grueling Leadville Trail 100 run through the Colorado Rockies, no less — and a mere 26.2-mile run wasn't going to cut it for someone training to run 100 miles.

"I love coming and doing Grandma's, but having to taper for Grandma's didn't fit in real well with keeping the mileage high and getting ready for Leadville," said Strand, a St. Paul native who has lived in St. Louis for more than 20 years and took up distance running as he approached 40.

So, he decided to double his miles and hit the course twice Saturday morning. That meant a 3 a.m. start time from the Grandma's Marathon finish line and a solitary trek toward Two Harbors.

It also meant a bit of heckling from some of Duluth's early morning denizens.

"I've run at night before, but it was very interesting running the course backwards, especially when the bars had people filing out. You had an interesting crowd," Strand said.

And more than a few of them raucously told him "You're going the wrong way."

"I heard that the whole way up there," Strand said.

About 4 hours and 20 minutes later, he arrived at the Grandma's Marathon starting line around 7:15 a.m.

"About two miles out, I started seeing the elite runners going out and stretching their legs and doing a slow jog," he said. "So the highlight for me was being about a mile from the start and passing a Kenyan."

But Strand didn't have very much time to rest. He only got about a half-hour break before the 7:45 a.m. start time for the 36th annual Grandma's Marathon. And he finished the second 26.2-mile leg of his odyssey in 4:32:38.

Less than 9 hours to complete 52.4 miles? Not too shabby.

And he completed his Grandma's Double 12 years after running his first marathon in 4:14 at the 2000 Grandma's. He also proposed to his wife, Tami, in Canal Park nearly 30 years ago.

What does she think about her husband's running bug?

"There's more to come," Tami quipped. "It's his way to get out of cleaning the house."

Not a bad plan, even if it includes running the wrong way on a marathon course.

Contact News Tribune sports editor Rick Lubbers at [rlubbers@duluthnews.com](mailto:rlubbers@duluthnews.com) or (218) 723-5317. He has yet to run Grandma's Marathon, either frontward or backward.

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