Spectators watch closely as Tim Martin struggles for leverage in the tire flip category. His tire weighed 500 pounds; the heavyweight tire was 625 pounds.

CRYSTAL FALLS—Last year, three local men wound up with top honors in the annual U.P. Strongman contest. This year, at the sixth annual Strongman event, held Aug. 4 as part of Fungus Fest, the locals got shut out.

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For the first time, the event was held as a fundraiser for the Forest Park football program, with spectators charged $3 a head for a ringside view of the action. The event was held on the Runkle Lake Park softball diamond, and seating was set up on all four sides of the infield.

Spectators saw plenty of muscle-straining action, but they didn't see any local winners. Ryan Martin had won the first four Strongman contests as a middleweight and moved up to heavyweight in 2011, holding off Dana Skytta by two points to win the title.

This year, the heavyweight class (over 230 pounds, three entries) was essentially a head-to-head battle between Martin and Skytta, and the Michigamme entry won four of the five events—Martin took first in the farmer's walk, where he had to carry heavy cylinders (210 pounds each) in one direction and then a large stone (250 pounds) the other way. He was second in the other four.

Skytta finished with 48 points, with Martin was second with 42.

Ian Bender, who won the lightweight division in 2011, moved up to the middleweights (up to 230 pounds; seven entries) this year and finished second overall. Bender didn't win any events, but he was runner-up in three of them (farmer's walk, tire flip and medley event) and third in another.

But nobody was going to stop last year's runner-up, Nick Behling of Sault Ste. Marie, who won all five middleweight events to finish with 50 points, the only perfect score of the day. Bender was second at 34.

Rob Semke won the middleweight division in 2011 but finished back in the pack this time.

A total of 23 competitors took part in this year's event, well down from 42 the year before. Alex Van Oss of Sault Ste. Marie won the featherweight division (up to 175 pounds; three entries) with 46 points; Taylor Petrick from Vulcan was second at 42.

Several local people battled in the lightweight class (up to 200 pounds; five entries). Adam Schiavo was second with 38 points, including a win in the tire flip and runner-up in the overhead lift and farmer's walk. He ended up just two points in front of third place Tim Martin, who won the medley and was second in the yoke carry. Martin earned 36 points.

Brimley's Nate Case won the lightweight title with 46 points.

No local entries in the women's open division, which had five competitors. Emma Horner of Richards Landing, Ont., won with 46 points, and Kaylyn Bernardski of Escanaba was second at

38. Horner also won the women's bench press competition with a record 26 lifts.

Four of this year's six winners made the long trip to Crystal Falls from the Soo region: Behling, Van Oss, Case and Horner.

While this year's turnout of lifters was down, the event's luck with the weather continued. Storms that threatened earlier in the day didn't come close to Iron County.

A concessions stand did good business, and the big winner was Forest Park's football program, which wants to upgrade some of its training equipment, especially its blocking sled.