

## Bachs make running a family affair

Written by Tom Fruehling

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You may have to go back to Donnie and Marie Osmond to find a brother-sister act with the 1-2 punch of Marion's Myles and Maddie Bach.

Members of the Indians' varsity cross country squads, the sophomore Myles and his senior sister Maddie pulled off an improbable feat last week.

In the teams' two invitational cross country meets in the span of five days, they each won both of their races and led the Marion boys and girls to team titles both times as well. Back to back, as it were.

And the two long-distance racers will be going for a trifecta Tuesday when the Marion contingent heads to Muscatine for yet another invitational meet.

A repeat might be tough, according to Myles, since he'll be facing stiff competition with top-notch runners from Mount Pleasant and Pleasant Valley.

But he and diminutive big sister Maddie are on a roll, so anything is possible.

"We definitely don't train in order to lose," says 17-year-old Maddie. "We're both very competitive."

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Indeed, it was her own competitive streak that got her involved in cross country in the first place.

“I was a soccer player first,” she explains. “And when I was in the eighth grade, my coach told me I wasn’t fast enough to make the A team. He said I was too slow.



“I appreciated his honesty, but I didn’t want to be on the B team. So I went out for middle school cross country to get faster. And I won my very first race, at Guthridge Park in Hiawatha.”

Maybe it was just meant to be, as the Bachs' father, Andy, was a national junior college cross country champion in 1991 in his native New York.

In any case, she was hooked and has been making great strides ever since.

“She’s gotten faster every year,” points out boys and girls coach Jason Dabroski, an assistant for six years and now in his first year as head coach. “But she’s worked hard at it. Both of them have.”

Myles followed in his sister’s footsteps, although they took slightly different paths from the time they both attended Nixon Elementary School in northeast Cedar Rapids. Maddie went on to Harding Middle School, but her brother attended Excelsior Middle School in the Linn-Mar district

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because several of his AAU basketball teammates went there.

When it came time for high school, Maddie opted to open enroll at Marion instead of Kennedy.

“I went there (to Kennedy) after eighth grade graduation, and it was just too big for me,” she explains. “I got lost.

“I struggle learning in a big setting. Marion was just the right size for me. I really like all my teachers. And they know how I learn.”

Although it was academics, and not athletics, that brought her to Marion, she feels blessed to train under Dabroski and former Coach Matt Thornton.

“They’re great coaches, and I’ve learned a lot from them,” Maddie says.

Myles, 16, joined her at Marion for his freshman year and he, too, got serious about cross country. “Maddie set the example of really working hard,” he says.

Each of them puts in 50 miles or more a week year-round, sometimes together. “We both push each other,” he says.

And they’ve both gotten better.

Maddie barely missed out on the state meet as a freshman but raced the last two years. She finished a disappointing 21st place in Class 3A last year but is ranked seventh in the state this year.

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Although she's undecided about college plans, she's had feelers from Division I programs Northern Iowa and Oral Roberts among other smaller schools.

For his part, Myles has taken 30 seconds off his best time from a year ago and holds Marion's sophomore record. He also ranks in the top 10 in the state.

"And both of our teams are really good," Maddie notes.

While the Indian boys are perennials at the state meet, the girls are ranked No. 8 this season. Hopes are high for both squads.

And for Maddie and Myles, the goal is simple.

"We want to win," she says.

"We don't like to lose," he adds.

"We're both very confident," they say as one.