

## Blood siblings grew up with bowling

Written by Mike Condon

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It is an easy cliché, but it is also true.

Cedar Rapids Prairie siblings Rylee and Nick Blood have bowling in their blood. The Bloods will be competing together at the combined boys and girls Class 2A state tournament March 12 at Plaza Lanes in Des Moines.

The 1A tournament will be held March 11 at Plaza Lanes. The meets, originally scheduled for this Thursday and Friday, were postponed due to threatening weather.

It is rare that a brother-sister combination competes on the state stage on the same day at the same venue, but the Bloods will be doing just that.

Rylee, a freshman, comes in with the second-best qualifying score among the Class 2A girls. Nick, a senior, is making his initial appearance at state after just missing last year.

"They come from a bowling family," said Prairie Coach Don Willfong. "They both enjoy bowling and they are always working on their games."

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Parents Chris and Wendy Blood are long-time bowlers. Their love of the game quickly passed on to their children.

"I started bowling when I was in the second grade," Nick said. "My sister always came to watch and then she started too. We have learned everything about bowling from our dad. Whenever we have a problem with our game, we go to him."

"I started when I was seven," Rylee said. "My family was a big influence. My dad and grandpa both bowl and my mom is getting back into it."

"I love it. I've bowled for years and I can't imagine not bowling."

Make no mistake, there is a sibling rivalry, albeit friendly, between Nick and Rylee.

"We do have that," Nick said with a laugh. "I beat her by seven pins at substate and gave her a hard time. Sometime she beats me, sometime I beat her, but it is all in good fun."

Rylee agreed.

"We like to have a lot of fun with that," she said. "We compete against each other, but we want to see each other do well too."

Rylee had one of her best days at the district meet. She strung together nine straight strikes to start the second game, finishing with a 262. Her two-game score of 462 was eight pins shy of being the top district score around the state.

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"I was nervous, but the ball kept going in the pocket during that second game," she said.

The prospect of winning a state championship as a freshman is something Rylee admits she has thought about.

"I think it would be a great accomplishment to win it as a freshman," she said. "I just have to go there and do my best and try to have a great experience."

Nick is excited about his first state appearance, but is disappointed he and his sister are going alone as individuals. The Hawks missed qualifying as a team in both the boys and girls races.

"The other guys really helped keep me motivated," Nick said. "I wish both teams could have made it. I'm going to state and do just the best I can. I know most of the guys I will be bowling against from other tournaments.

"Bowling is a sport with friendly competition," he added. "We all want to see everybody do well."

Besides the Bloods, there are several other individuals who have a shot at a state title. In the boys tournament, Austin Swanson and Justin Wyant from Linn-Mar qualified in 2A while Cedar Rapids Xavier's Kirby Guge is in the 1A field.

Xavier's Tara Trcka is in the 1A girls field. Those in 2A include Rylea Bennett and Savannah Fowler of Cedar Rapids Jefferson, Cedar Rapids Washington's Shania Christensen and Courtney Snodgrass and Cedar Rapids Kennedy's Amanda Wiedemeier.

Both the Washington girls and boys qualified for the 2A team tournament, along with the Jefferson girls and Linn-Mar boys. Xavier's girls and boys will be in the 1A competition.