

Fiala races into the alley for Prairie

Written by Tom Fruehling

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When he dropped a bowling ball on his little foot at the age of five or so, a bawling Brogan Fiala told everyone around he never wanted to see one of those things again.

So it's funny that this Friday the 17-year-old Prairie senior will be the anchor for the school's boys bowling team as it vies for the state championship at Plaza Lanes in Des Moines. And based on his score at the district meet last week, he'll also be one of the top contenders for individual honors.

"After crushing my toes that time, I sure didn't think I'd ever be a bowler," says Brogan, the son of Tami and Scott Fiala of Fairfax.

Not only has he had an outstanding four-year career at Prairie, but he and lifelong buddy Jeremy Cline will head off next fall to Mount Mercy University with bowling scholarships helping to pay for their education.

"Whoever thought that would happen," he says, somewhat bewildered himself.

To prepare for college and to work full-time at Tractor Supply Co. in Cedar Rapids this summer for spending money, Brogan is taking a year off from his other pursuit as a race car driver at Hawkeye Downs. He starting doing that four summers ago, about the same he took up bowling again after his childhood trauma.

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“Me and my dad have always been big fans and went to as many races as we could,” he says.

With Pop as his crew chief, he started out in small four-cylinder Hornets when he was 14, then moved up to modifieds on asphalt for two years and last summer piloted a more powerful Legends racing coupe.

“It’s just something we do for fun,” the young speed demon says. “It’s not like I’m lookin’ for a NASCAR ride.”

He took up bowling again in the eighth grade after his school science class went to a bowling alley to study the physics of the sport.

“How the ball rolls, that sort of thing,” he remembers vaguely.

While other students were more interested in the snack bar, Brogan discovered he had a natural knack for it.

Both he and Jeremy joined the Prairie bowling team in their freshman year.

“We grew up together, went to the same daycare, the same pre-school and all through school together,” Brogan explains. “We butt heads a lot on the bowling alley, but otherwise we get along.”

The two have been the linchpins of the team that bowled a 3252 team total in the districts, out-pointing perennial powerhouses Muscatine and Linn-Mar by nearly 200 pins to qualify for state.

Brogan’s two-game 481 series also put him among the individual leaders going into the state

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meet.

“He’s steadily improved over the past four years,” says Don Willfong, who serves as the Prairie boys and girls coach along with Jeremy’s dad Kevin. “Brogan’s just a real solid bowler for our team. Plus, he’s a real nice kid.”

Besides competing for his school team, he also bowls in three leagues and carries a lofty 225 average.

Prairie just missed out making it to the state tournament last year, so this week will be the highlight of his four-year career. And he’s looking to the fall and competing for former Jefferson assistant coach Glenn Healy’s one-year-old Mustang team. Longtime bowling mentors Virg Cervený and Andy Dierks, coaches respectively at Jefferson and Linn-Mar, also help out with the upstart program.

Putting aside his crash helmet and racing garb for a summer to get ready, Brogan figures, will be worth it.

“I love racing. But they don’t give you a college scholarship for doing it.”