

Grady quadruplets boost Prairie bowlers

Written by Tom Fruehling

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Veteran Cedar Rapids Prairie bowling coach Don Wilfong says he once had a set of twins on his girls team but that it caused little confusion.

“Luckily, they parted their hair differently so I could tell them apart.”

This year, though, is even more of a rarity as all four of the 15-year-old Grady quadruplets are on the roster.

Two of them, Lindsey and Ashley, are on the six-member varsity squad and bowled Saturday in the fifth annual Prairie Invitational at Lancer Lanes.

Their look-a-like sisters Kara and Alyssa are currently on the junior varsity unit, though Wilfong thinks that may change.

“They're only freshmen. And if Kara and Alyssa keep improving, I think you may see all four of them on the varsity together by the time they graduate,” he said. “Then, I don't know what I'm going to do.”

The foursome created quite a stir when they were born within three minutes apart at the University of Iowa hospital on April 8, 1998. It was just a year after the seven Des Moines-area McCaughey siblings became worldwide media sensations.

The Grady girls, daughters of Kim and Dan Grady of Cedar Rapids and now of Fairfax, were local celebrities for a time but have been out of the public eye since their early years.

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“Just a normal life,” says father Dan, a volunteer assistant for the Prairie team. “But a busy one.”

Born prematurely at 26 weeks and weighing less than two pounds, they spent the first three months in the hospital. But they've grown into healthy, happy teenagers.

“We have lots of fun together,” says Ashley, who boasts that she's the oldest by a minute.

They attended Cedar Rapids Catholic schools until moving into the College Community district five years ago. All are straight-A students and involved in a host of school activities.

And they've been bowling since the age of five. “Mostly because dad wanted us to,” explains Lindsey.

A lifelong bowler, Dan carries an average of more than 500. Some say mom Kim is even the better of the two.

Alternating as Prairie's leadoff in the 14-team tournament on Saturday, Lindsey and Ashley helped the Hawks to a second-place finish behind DeWitt Central.

Seeded first in the field with a 168 team average (three pins higher than Dewitt), Prairie finished the first round in fourth place behind West Delaware, Cedar Rapids Washington and Cedar Rapids Jefferson. Marion came in fifth.

Kennedy, Linn-Mar and Xavier among the local schools were eliminated from bracket competition.

In match play, the Prairie Hawks cruised by Marion and West Delaware but were narrowly edged by the Sabers of DeWitt, 2-1, in three tight games for the championship.

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The Warriors of Washington finished fourth.

As for the Grady girls, they found their first tournament exhilarating. "I never knew bowling could be this exciting with people screaming and cheering for us," says Lindsey.

Moreover, according to Ashley, "We're pretty competitive by nature. So this was fun."

Wilfong said he was pleased with the performance of his freshman duo.

"They did very well. All four of the girls are doing well," he said. "I expect them all to blossom in the next few years. And they all wear their hair different, which is good."