

Final run for Dykhuis

Thursday, May 18, 2000

By Scott Brandenburg
CHRONICLE CORRESPONDENT

Track had always played second banana to cross country for distance runner Harmony Dykhuis.

"I love cross country," she said. "I always thought of track as a way to train for cross."

Her passion translated into instant success in the fall seasons. Dykhuis burst onto the scene at Fremont by taking ninth in the state as a freshman, then went on to become the Class B cross country state champ as a sophomore.

Conversely, Dykhuis wasn't quite as successful in track, with seventh place in the 1,600-meter run as a freshman being her best finish.

But because of a disappointing finish in last season's cross country state finals, her love for running and because it's her last chance, Dykhuis is putting everything into making this track season a memorable one.

Sidetracked

Everything was going well for Dykhuis, then a junior, in the fall of 1998. She didn't defend her 1997 cross country crown, but she did run her fastest time of 18:04, good enough for third in Class B and fifth overall.

The Packer runner was then going to travel to Japan for a semester of school.

"I spent five months as a foreign exchange student there," said Dykhuis. "It was a very good experience."

But just before she left, Dykhuis was involved in a car accident which broke her right heel and the end of the tibia, as well as opening a gash on top of the ankle.

"They were scared that it tore a tendon in there," said Stu Sanders, who took over as girls track coach at Fremont this spring. "But fortunately it didn't."

Dykhuis was going to miss the track season anyway that spring, but the injury left her lower left leg immobile for a few months. Always an avid runner, Dykhuis worked hard to get back and was able to run in the fall, though not at 100 percent.

"She was in a lot of pain during the cross country season," said Sanders. "I think she showed the rest of the kids what it's like to be a team player coming back the way she did."

The 17-year-old senior fought back well enough to make it back to the cross country state finals, only to finish a disappointing 160th.

"I was devastated, said Dykhuis. "After that I really began to focus on the track season. I took two months off from running to give myself a chance to completely heal."

Back on track

Even now Dykhuis can still physically feel pain in her ankle, but usually it's after she's already run a race or two. She never thought about not running though.

"Running has been a part of my life ever since seventh grade," said Dykhuis, who skis recreationally in the winter. "I love it when I'm racing because I feel strong. Plus I'm really close to the team. They're all my friends."

Always an avid runner, Dykhuis stepped up her training to get ready for this season. She also knew exactly what she wanted to do in her final season at Fremont.

"Three months before the season started I had already made a goal to run an 11:30 2-mile," said Dykhuis, whose parents are Keith and Sally. "This was my last chance, so I really wanted to do well."

She hasn't reached her goal yet, but the 17-year-old Packer's 2-mile time of 11:54 is the fastest in the area so far. The Packer distance runner also has the second-best and third-best area times in the 1600 and 800-meter runs, respectively.

According to Sanders, she's had an even bigger effect on the team.

"Harmony is our best distance runner, and she comes up with good races at the right times," said Sanders. "But she also helps with the other runners and has a big impact on them. I'm fortunate to come here this year and have kids like Harmony and Adair Lindsay to work with."

The right time for Dykhuis to attain her 2-mile goal would be at regionals Friday or Saturday or in the state meet Saturday, June 3.

</HTML>