

Stevenson's Smiley lying in wait

3,200 champion trains to pick up pace at state  
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BY SCOTT TALLEY  
FREE PRESS SPORTS WRITER

She waits, and waits, and then waits some more.

A state record

Rockford junior Dathan Ritzenhein continued his dominance Tuesday when he set a state record (4:05.9) in the 1,600 at the OK-Red conference meet in Grandville.

His time betters the mark of 4:07.19 set by former Olympian Earl Jones (Taylor Center) in 1982. Ritzenhein's time also tops the state mile record of Pontiac Central's Steve Elliott (4:07.4) set in 1975, which converts to 4:06.6 in the 1,600.

#### TOP TIMES

These are the top times in the 3,200 meters as compiled by Jeff Hollobaugh. Check out [www.michtrack.org](http://www.michtrack.org) for more information.

Boys

Dathan Ritzenhein, Rockford 8:41.10

Ryan Cole, Sanford Meridian 9:15.23

Andy Marsh, Grand Ledge 9:15.38

Tom Greenless, Milford 9:22.5

Kyle Fujimoto, Rockford 9:28.88

Matt Daly, Redford CC 9:31.71

Chris Toloff, Novi 9:31.9

Brian Smith, Rockford 9:33.89

Dave Sage, Clarkston 9:34.94

Tristan Perlberg, Sag. Valley Luth. 9:37.1

Girls

Kalin Toedebusch, Rockford 10:46.25

Emily Blakeslee, Rockford 10:47.59

Linsey Blaisdell, Rockford 10:49.6

Jamie Krzyminski, Corunna 10:50.4

Melissa Miller, Portland 10:59.9

Emily Anderson, Marquette 11:06.0

Abigail Nelkie, Ogemaw Heights 11:14.6

Katie Danyko, SH Stevenson 11:22.09

Jordan Hartmann, Rockford 11:22.26

Rachel Cox, BC Lakeview 11:24.2

Such is life for a 3,200-meter specialist, who usually has to wait until a meet's late stages to take the track, but Sterling Heights Stevenson's Marne Smiley isn't complaining.

"My mom gets really worked up sometimes having to wait for me to run, but I like the buildup," Smiley said. "It gives me more time to think about my race. If I have to wait 10 minutes or two hours, I'm going to stick to my plan."

And the plan usually works.

Smiley is the defending state champion in the 3,200 meters and is a four-time all-stater in cross-country.

"Marne came to our program with a great deal of talent, but she also has the ability to work hard," Stevenson distance coach Kevin Hanson said. "She's very capable of running at the next level because she is willing to train hard."

Smiley may have been an immediate success, but she faced an early roadblock.

Stevenson does not have a ninth grade, but because the Utica school system does not offer cross-country for junior high students, Smiley was able to run with Hanson's team. However, when track season came around, it was back to Heritage Junior High for Smiley.

"I saw all of these people that I knew I could beat up on if I had a chance, but I was just this dinky little ninth-grader and no one was going to pay attention to me," said Smiley, who has received a track scholarship to Eastern Michigan.

"That year also gave me a greater appreciation for my teammates. If I don't have anyone around me to push me harder, I can't get better."

At Friday's Division 1 regional at Warren Mott, Smiley expects to run a leg on the 3,200-meter relay, and then she will begin the waiting process until her individual event. This year Smiley should have much to think about.

Her race promises to be one of the most hotly contested at the state finals. Rockford's Kalin Toedebusch (10:46.25), Emily Blakeslee (10:47.59) and Linsey Blaisdell (10:49.6), who will be running on their home track, already have beaten Smiley's winning time (11:07.62) from last year.

A strong performance at regionals would boost Smiley's confidence. Her best time this season is 11:43.

"This season has been going slower than expected," said Smiley, who defeated Blaisdell, Blakeslee and Toedebusch in last year's final. "I'm

not where I was last year, but with hard work hopefully we'll reach some of our goals."

Hanson said the keys to success are patience and belief in the plan.

"Our training is divided into three phases -- base, pace and race -- and we're just really getting into the race phase," Hanson said. "We try to get ready for the end of the season and because of that, sometimes people don't hear about us until late."

The Stevenson girls have chosen the longest individual race to be their pet event. Stevenson has had at least one state qualifier in the 3,200 for 18 consecutive years.

"These girls weren't even alive when the streak started, but there is a certain expectation because the people before them have done it," Hanson said.

"The girls respect the person they're running against, but they are not in awe of people, and that allows them to compete well."

Stevenson will bring another strong distance-running contingent to the regional. Other top runners include juniors Jenni Fitzgerald and Michelle Kinkela and sophomores Katie Danyko and Stephanie Proos.

Hanson is confident that five of his runners can meet the 3,200-meter state qualifying standard (11:45.1) at the regional. And then he would like a little help from the weatherman on the day of the state meet -- perhaps a hot, steamy day or even a thunderstorm.

"We train in everything so the worse the outside elements, the better it is for us," he said. "I really think Marne was helped by the heat last year. Our effort remains the same no matter the conditions."

Contact SCOTT TALLEY at 313-222-5163.  
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