



Billy Orman: Running far, far away from the couch

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9/8/10 - Tuba City High School's Billy Orman can recall how he began his journey into running.

It was in the eighth grade that Orman's father became fed up with him sitting on the couch after school watching countless hours of television, and decided that it was time to get involved in a school sport.

He chose running.

"Cross country season starts in Tuba City while it's still really hot. I was completely out of shape," Orman said. "I didn't like it at first. But I got myself into shape, and I placed second in my first meet. Then I said to myself, I could do this, and got really into it."

Got into it is an understatement. Orman has found countless victories on the cross country course and the track alike.

In 2009, Orman won the 3A boys cross country championship, and saw further success during the track season.

Orman won both the 1600 and 3200 meter runs at the 3A state meet, helped his 4x800 meter relay team to first place, and placed second in the 800.

"Individually, that was my first ever win," Orman said. "My division wasn't the most competitive, but it still felt good. My main goal was to qualify for Foot Locker Cross Country Nationals, and I did."

At Foot Locker Nationals, Orman placed eighth and advanced to the finals, where he placed thirty fourth.

"I was pretty tired, but didn't care so much about how I placed because I was just happy to be there," Orman said.

And he never would have dreamed of being recruited by division one colleges. Orman is currently being recruited by Harvard, Columbia, Stanford and Arizona State University.

Orman has official visits scheduled to Harvard and Columbia on September 18 and 25, respectively.

"I would love to keep competing in college," Orman said. "But I don't think I am going to do an early decision. That's too binding and I want to keep my options open."

In preparation for the 2010 cross country season, Orman told Arizona Track that he has been putting more miles than he ever has in his life.



"I feel much fitter than I ever have, and haven't had any injuries, which is a good sign," Orman said. "I've been doing eight miles a day since June. Just long, slow and easy miles."

This past year, Orman faced an injury—a bone bruise from on his right knee.

"I was running and I tripped on my shoelace and I landed right on my knee. I couldn't run for about three weeks," Orman said. "My dad's a pediatrician, so he was taking me to the hospital and taking me to a physical therapist and stuff. Nothing worked; I think it just needed time. There was no secret cure."

Orman was able to continue running a month before the state meet.

Orman's former coach, Carl Perry, said that with Orman's attitude and work ethic, it is possible for him to repeat as state champion this year.



“Someone like Billy, he’s easy for any coach,” Perry said. “I can still remember his first day of practice freshman year. He always came with a huge smile on his face, and brings joy to the sport. Distance running’s one of those sports where the practices aren’t necessarily fun the way a team sport can be, but they can be with the team camaraderie. Billy brought that.”

Perry never had to cajole or push Orman—if he was asked to put in a ten miler, he’d do it.

With visits to elite schools in his future, this obviously doesn’t just apply to the athletic side of Orman’s life.

“I believe Billy is ranked third in his graduating class, and will have a pick of some elite schools,” Perry said. “That’s something special here in Tuba City; it will help his teammates believe that anything is possible. He’s the son of a physician, someone who hasn’t lacked anything, but growing up his peers are among the lowest economic rung.”

Tuba City is a census-designated place in Coconino County, Arizona. It is located within the Painted Desert on the Western Side of the Navajo Nation.

According to the 2000 Census, Tuba City had a population of 8,225, making it the largest community within the Navajo Nation. Tuba City has an unemployment rate of 14.8 percent.

“It’s as poor as poor gets,” Perry said. “My wife is a physician as well. Most patients didn’t have running water; a large percentage don’t out there.”

With a new season comes new changes, some more significant than the others. Coach Perry has moved to Flagstaff, as his children are now attending school there.

Coach Arvis Myron has taken the helm of the Tuba City High School cross country team—and Myron is no stranger to Orman.

“The new coach isn’t really a new coach to me, he was my eighth grade cross country coach,” Orman said. “Coach Myron is a little more subdued than Coach Perry, but that doesn’t really matter, it’s just a different style.”

Myron was contacted several times via e-mail and telephone for comment and was unavailable at press time.

With the 2010 season well underway, Orman already has two victories under his belt. He won the Peaks Invitational with a time of 16:31; he also captured first place at the Hopi Invite.

Orman hopes that a two-peat will be included in that list of accomplishments.

“They re-did the divisions, and I’m pretty sure I can do it again,” Orman said. “I don’t want to be overconfident. Anything can happen, or some other hotshot kid could come along and beat me. Other than that, this year is looking good.”