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Beach Report



Denis Morris High School graduate Matt Mahler is off to University of Detroit Mercy this fall on a track and field scholarship. STAFF PHOTO BY DENIS CAHILL

Photo: Denis Cahill

Better late than never; Despite attending high school an extra year, Denis Morris grad secures scholarship

ALISON ROGERS
Sports - Saturday, August 25, 2007 @ 01:00

Matt Mahler admits he may have left things a little late.

But that's not likely to happen on any forest trail or running track for the next four years.

Nope. Mahler's making his move.

Coming off a fifth-place finish at the Canadian junior track and field championships, the 18-year-old Denis Morris High School grad is bound for the University of Detroit Mercy on a running scholarship.

"I like track better - I've had more success," said Mahler, who was first coached by his dad Darryl, a DM staff member.

Mahler's longtime pal and running mate, Matt Butters, left DM a year ago and has had a standout freshman season at Canisius College.

Mahler opted for another year of high school.

"A fifth at OFSAA (the Ontario high school championships) and a fifth at (junior nationals) are two of the biggest races of my career," the 18-year-old incoming business student said.

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"I wanted to get into position to earn a scholarship. By the time I started to see results, it was almost too late."

A high score on the SAT, plus a 90-per cent average, opened a lot of doors for the 5-foot-11 145-pounder.

Mahler just needed to prove himself on the track this spring following a solid, if not spectacular, cross-country season in the fall.

"I had a little scare at zone track (championships) with my knee, but I was able to recover," Mahler said.

He healed quickly, and under the tutelage of Niagara Olympic Club coach Stuart Galloway, kept getting faster. Having run 2:00.27 in placing second in the 800 metres at zone, Mahler was running 1:54.54 and placing fifth at the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Association track and field championships.

He wasn't far off his best 800-metre time late last month, placing fifth at the nationals in 1:55.0.

"I was very happy," said Mahler. "I was just going for the top 10. Fifth was a nice present."

Mahler actually considered himself a distance runner in his younger years, but a seven-inch growth spurt in Grade 11 had the Mahler heads rethinking things.

Matt settled on the middle distances and hasn't looked back.

One of a family of four boys and a girl, Mahler said he's both nervous and excited to be heading off to university.

But that will mean running without dad parked nearby in a lawn chair, officiating at the high jump pit where he spends most high school meets.

"That's his spot," laughed Mahler, who concedes he'll miss having the old man around.

"It was pretty convenient, us being at the same school," said Mahler. "I have no complaints at all."

The attraction of the UDM was its small size and its selection of graduate programs, Mahler said.

"I was really impressed with how much time they (coaches) spent with me," he added.

Butters also answered a lot of questions about running in the U.S. for Mahler, who visited his pal in Buffalo and also hooked up to train with Butters when he was home on break.

The two will race each other in the cross-country season at the Catholic school championships at Notre Dame.

Mahler's immediate goals, after getting settled, are to run well enough to qualify for the NCAA regional championships.

arogers@stcatharinesstandard.ca

The Scoop

Matt Mahler

Age: 18.

School: Denis Morris High School.

Running club: Niagara Olympic Club.

Headed to: University of Detroit Mercy - NCAA Division 1.

Career highlights: 2007 Canadian junior track and field championships - 5th in 800 metres (1:55.01); member of second-place 4X400-metre relay team; 2007 OFSAA track and field championships - fifth in senior 800 metres (1:54.54), 11th in 1,500 metres 4:02.23. Other sports: Hockey.

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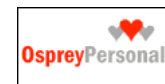


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