

AGAINST ALL ODDS: Donovan McBride overcomes spina bifida to become top area athlete

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
July 12 2015 9:30 AM







Donovan McBride has overcome great odds to walk and now has become an inspirational para-athlete.

He was born with spina bifida and wasn't even expected to walk at birth.

Donovan, 13, was the top finisher in the recent five-mile Glen Carbon Homecoming race with a time of 26:29 in his lightweight, aero dynamic wheel chair some call "the green machine."

Donovan's mother Kim couldn't be more proud of him for the accomplishments and efforts of the young man from Waterloo who will be 14 next month.

"Honestly, we did an experimental surgery before he was born and with it, we hoped to create a better lifestyle for him and since birth he has had seven other surgeries," she said. "They didn't expect him to walk and thought he might be delayed but he has pushed through almost 14 years and walks with braces and a walker. He uses a regular wheelchair when he has to walk distances."

Kim McBride said her son has far exceeded most people's expectations with persistence, hard work and physical and occupational therapy.

“He just blossomed this fall as a freshman in high school,” she said.

The five-mile race at Glen Carbon was his longest race to date and he responded to his mother after completing it, “I am not even tired.”

Two weeks ago, Donovan completed a race in Collinsville and finished first with a time of 20 minutes, 7 seconds.

Donovan started his training in a regular, everyday wheelchair, but after he realized he enjoyed racing, his mom and dad invested in a racing chair and he has been in that ever since.

“He hopes to do a 10K, a 15K and possibly a half-marathon by the fall,” his mom said. “He has mentioned to us he would love to compete with the Para Olympic team and he does compete with the Disabled Athletic Sports Association in St. Louis. My husband and I are both blown away by his progress.”

Presently, Donovan trains on Tuesday nights at Parkway Central High School and Thursday nights at St. Charles High School with other kids with disabilities ranging from some who are in wheel chairs, to others who are visually impaired or kids with prostheses.”

Donovan was born with spina bifida, a neural tube defect where the vertebral, or back, column doesn’t completely close risking exposure of the spinal cord. It can occur in one to seven out of 1000 live births. Persons with this condition are affected in the lower extremities to varying degrees.

The family is looking at a purchase of a trainer that will allow his competitive chair to be used indoors for the winter.

Soon, Donovan will be competing in the Junior Nationals.

Kim said she can’t imagine what the future has in store for her talented son if he continues to work hard.

“He has come a long ways,” Kim said of her son. “I think it is limitless what he can achieve as long as he continues to push like he does and has a positive attitude.”

