

All Eyes On: Brandon Farotto

Triathlon competitor prepares for next goals

BY CHARUNDI PANAGODA
Staff Reporter

Some people grow up wanting to become astronauts, celebrities or millionaires. Freshman Brandon Farotto grew up wanting to run a triathlon.

His wish came true in September 2010, when he participated in the NEMO triathlon at Thousand Hills State Park. Farotto raced in the Olympic distance category, running five miles, swimming three quarters of a mile and biking 18 miles. He finished 98th out of 158 participants and placed second in his age group.

"Triathlons are kind of like the top tier of athletes," Farotto said. "People who do triathlons are pretty fit. I've always wanted to try it. As soon as I got here, I saw an advertisement at Hy-Vee for a triathlon. I thought 'I'm going to do it.' I was running in summer, just for a change. I had a little bit of [a] leg up, but I only had a couple of weeks to prepare for the swimming. It was kind of a spur-of-the-moment thing."

His friends and roommates were amazed at his decision to race in a triathlon.

"He's never done it before, so it was pretty neat that he was running it," Farotto's roommate freshman Chase Hobbs said. "That's a lot of endurance to take."

Farotto didn't have a coach to train him. He made a workout schedule for himself. He ran six miles to Thousand Hills State Park and six miles back, a total distance of 50 miles every week. He mapped running routes online and often changed them to keep things interesting. He practiced swimming at the Pershing Natatorium. He biked around town.

Farotto was determined to keep up with his rigorous training schedule each week, despite the workload from a 15-credit-hour semester and his memberships in the Environmental Campus Organization and the health science fraternity Phi Epsilon Kappa.

"It was obviously tough," he said. "There were times I knew I had to plan my day out where I would go to class. Then I would have to tell myself, 'All right, you have to get your work done here.' I would sometimes get up before class, do my workout, and go to class and do my homework, and later at night do another workout. I had to do a little juggling act."

Farotto's perseverance was encouraged and supported by his parents. His father, a chiropractor, was his team doctor at the triathlon. Farotto said he is glad that his parents encouraged him to participate in sports from a young age.

"They weren't the parents that make you do sports," he said. "If you want to do it, then that's that. They never forced me to do anything, which is really cool because I got to do a lot of stuff that they didn't get to do. My dad wanted to play football, but his parents wouldn't let him. He let me do a lot of stuff."

Farotto has participated in athletics since he was in middle school, and he played football and hockey in high school. He said he would love to pursue a career in athletics.

"I could see him being a professional athlete," Farotto's friend freshman Gabby Epstein said. "I know he really looks up to Lance Armstrong. He has the shoes, the socks, the shorts, the jackets, the book bags. He keeps all his downtime to working out. He doesn't go out. That's what he does during the day. His fun thing to do is work out and stuff. He's a unique individual."

Farotto said he hopes to run a marathon next, and that he has already started training for it. His ultimate goal is to participate in a triathlon in the Iron Man category.

"It is a two-and-a-quarter-mile swim, a 120 mile bike and then a marathon at the end of it," he said. "That's going to be way down the road."



Amy Vicars/Index

Freshman Brandon Farotto finished second in his age group in the NEMO triathlon this September. He is now training to run a marathon.

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Sri Lankan students work to welcome others

Founders hope to create welcoming atmosphere for fellow Sri Lankans

BY BETHANY COURRY
Assistant Features Editor

Sophomore Selvavigneswara Janakan (Jan), left his Sri Lankan hometown to come to Truman last spring. He was excited for the U.S. experience but said he had trouble adapting.

Jan decided there needed to be a way to help new Sri Lankan students who were just like him. However, he was still new to the campus and unsure of procedures.

"I didn't find anyone to guide me, and I was like, 'Oh my God, I'm so lonely,'" Jan said. "[Now], whenever I'm walking on campus, friends are like, 'Hey Janakan, Hey Jan. That's fine. Someone knows me, so it's the perfect thing that you can make it in a community. So now I want to make it to ... [new Sri Lankan students] who come here, so they won't feel much loneliness — they can study and they can make fun.'"

Then he met senior Modasthas Roshitha Perera (Rosh), a Sri Lankan transfer student who'd also had concerns about new stu-

dents who are having difficulties meeting new people. Rosh suggested starting a Sri Lankan Student Association but didn't have time to do it himself. Jan said he'd be more than happy to help.

With Rosh's advice, Jan began working on establishing SLSA this semester, going to the Center for Student Involvement and the International Student Affairs Office, acquiring all the paperwork and collaborating with other students to write the constitution. They worked diligently while writing the constitution, wanting to set a good foundation for future students, Jan said. They turned in the paperwork Oct. 27.

"I'm feeling so happy, like I'm self-satisfied with that, because I'm helping someone," Jan said. "Rosh told me like, 'Man, we want to help our people. We're helping.'" Rosh, voted as president, had

two clear purposes in mind: to introduce the Kirksville community to Sri Lankan students even before they come to the U.S. through the ISAO, and contact new students and to give them tips and automatic friends when they arrive in a new country.

"International Office is really helpful," Rosh said. "But it's really fair for them if their own country, their own people, are here for them."

Rosh said there are many adaptations new students have to make.

"It's not like we don't know about American culture," Rosh said. "We watch American movies, listen to American hip hop ... but what we see in movies are not real. When we first came here, it's just totally different. Everything is really huge, and everybody is like big people, and seems like, you know, you are

just another one, another different person, like kind of feel like an alien, sometimes."

Rosh said a lot of this is because when someone walks around in Sri Lanka, everyone smiles and greets them. This is not the case in the U.S. Also, he said that although English is their second language in Sri Lanka, they still sometimes have trouble communicating with fellow students.

"We speak more British English," Rosh said. "So if I say something, sometimes people can't understand. The other person thinks we don't know English. That really kills me."

He said he thinks it's important to help the new students learn the culture and to help them enjoy the experience sooner.

The other purpose of the club benefits the entire community. "Our culture is very different from any other culture in South Asia," Rosh said. "As Sri Lanka, we wanted to show the Kirksville community and Truman what is Sri Lankan, what our culture is."

For SLSA's first few semesters, members intend to host Sri Lanka's traditional New Year's Day celebration (an April holiday), and celebrate Buddhist holidays, such as Buddha's birth and death.

Sophomore Shihara Maduwage is particularly happy about exposing her culture, she said.

"I've had people ask, 'Oh, where is Sri Lanka? We've never heard of it,'" Maduwage said. "So I think, you know, if there was a club specifically that was Sri Lankan, then people who know more about Sri Lanka, and that would be nice."

Maduwage said she thinks being able to celebrate her country's traditions also will help her feel at home. But this does not mean she's homesick.

"When I first came here, I did not, like, have too much of a culture shock," Maduwage said. "Everything was different, that was true, but I guess I didn't really find it as a bad thing, I thought it was nice, exciting."

However, she does think contacting new students before they fly here is important.

"For example, about the weather," Maduwage said. "How cold it would actually get, because it's really, really hot [in Sri Lanka]. We don't actually have seasons. It's always really sunny, so it's always like summer. When you say, 'Really cold,' you might think of weather like now. That is the most I would imagine, coming from Sri Lanka."

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Modasthas Roshitha Perera
president, Sri Lankan Student Association

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