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"Triathletes earn series medals" -- Free Press story on Wednesday October 6th

By Martin Zeilig

Amy Briscoe admits that there is a cost to being a competitive triathlete. "There are a lot of sacrifices that have to be made. But, it's definitely worth it. I wouldn't change anything," says Briscoe, 18, who placed second overall at the Triathlon Canada Kids of Steel national race series this summer, as well as taking silver at the 2004 junior women's national championships in Caledon, Ont.

Another Winnipeg competitor, Erin Braun, placed fifth at the junior nationals and took bronze in the race series.

"This was the first year for the junior series. It was designed to give us more high-level competition on a national level because in the past we only had junior nationals as our major race. The series was valuable," explains Braun, 19, who is a second-year student in the Faculty of Agriculture/Food Science at the University of Manitoba.

The meet in Caledon was also the final race of the national series, which included events in St. Malo, Mb. and Edmonton. Junior level athletes are aged 16 to 19. They usually compete in a 750-metre swim, a 20-K cycle and a five-K run, half the Olympic distances.

Gary Pallett, head coach of the National Triathlon Centre at the U of M, says Briscoe and Braun work very hard at their sport. "These girls are really special," he says, adding that Briscoe also won the provincial time trial junior women's cycling championship on Sept. 18, while Braun was the first junior finisher and third overall at the Athletics Manitoba five-kilometre running championship on Sept. 11.

Pallett points out, as well, that Braun came third and Briscoe was fifth at the Pan Am Junior Triathlon Championships. The competition was held in Edmonton on July 11 as part of the national race series and attracted athletes from 16 nations.

"They competed in Portugal at the World Junior Triathlon Championships in May," he says, noting that Braun placed 29th and Briscoe ended up in 34th place.

"Potentially in four to eight years, they're Olympic material."

Briscoe and Braun both got their start in triathlon at St. Avila Elementary School.

"Our gym teacher started a Kids of Steel lunch and after school program," says Briscoe, a first-year student at the U of M and a graduate of Vincent Massey Collegiate. She ended up in third place in her very first triathlon at age 11.

"That motivated me. I just wanted to try it again and see if I could do even better. That winter, my dad would take me to an indoor track to run and bike. I'd also go swimming," says Briscoe, adding that the following summer she competed in most of the Kids of Steel races in Manitoba.

Briscoe and Braun have been training with Pallett for the past four years.

"We train 25 to 30 hours a week, depending on what cycle we're in. During the winter months we work the hardest. In the summer, we do less training but more racing to try and maintain what we've built up during the winter," says Briscoe.

Remarks Braun: "It would be nice to imagine being on the Olympic team someday."

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