

Brandi (Evans) Faith Runs into the EHS Hall of Fame

**BY RICHARD BYRD
of the Journal**



EPHRATA — Here is the thing about Brandi (Evans) Faith; as an athlete at Ephrata High School and later the University of Washington, individual awards, honors and accolades didn't matter to

her a whole lot.

That doesn't mean she automatically tossed any ribbons or trophies she received directly into the trash however.

What it means is that individual accolades weren't the reason she competed. There was something else that mattered to Evans more than personal glory.

The 2022 Ephrata Athletic Hall of Fame inductee is actually entering the hall twice this fall — for her individual accomplishments and for being a member of the 1984 girls cross country team that took first at state. Although she says being inducted individually is an honor, the team induction means a lot more to her.

“As a kid in Ephrata I was always considered to be pretty reserved and shy. I don't know that a lot has changed. I am uncomfortable with the attention for sure,” she says. “I have always been much more about the team. So, I think the personal induction doesn't excite me that much. It makes me uncomfortable. But I am really happy as far as the team recognition. I always did sports for the team.”

Evans was born over in Wenatchee actually, but she attended school in Ephrata from pre-school until her EHS graduation in 1987.

Sports were a big thing in Evans' home growing up. With her two older brothers — Anthony and Derek — being big into sports, a lot of Evans' time as a kid was spent outdoors playing every sport they could think of.

“I think we started out with softball for myself and baseball for my brothers at a very young age. That turned into basketball and especially track for me,” Evans said. “We were just a really active family and I tagged around with my brothers and neighborhood kids doing whatever. I think it was just a natural progression.”

There was really never a question of whether or not Evans would play sports at an organized level past

elementary school. The question was what sports she would play.

She played basketball, softball and ran track in middle school and started distance running in the seventh grade under the tutelage of Ephrata local Joe McManus, whom she cites as the biggest reason she stuck with running in her teenage years.

She says she entered the world of distance running by chance in the seventh grade, when one of her best friends told her that she was going to cross country practice that day.

“I was like ‘what is that?’ My brothers were a little older and in high school so we didn't have the normal hang out time after school that we had before. So, they were busy and I was like ‘what am I going to do?’” Evans recalls. “(I asked my friend) ‘Can I come to practice?’ And she was like ‘yeah, you should come with me.’”

That first practice was an intense one for Evans. The team did a run known in those days as the “Green Building Run,” which was a little over three miles in all.

With distance running being a new thing to Evans, she says she wasn't sure if she wanted to come back to practice a second time.

“He (McManus) just kind of teased me that day and took an interest. There was a bunch of kids from the other side of town that I knew and it just seemed like a lot of fun. Marilyn McManus (Joe's wife) was the team mom and it was a super welcoming environment,” said Evans.

Evans ended up coming back for practice and trained hard leading up to her freshman year at EHS. With a little bit of experience under her belt, Evans joined the EHS cross country team her freshman year — 1984.

Evans entered high school during a time of success for EHS XC and the success just happened to begin her freshman year.

The 1984 girls team brought the school its first cross country state championship and utterly dominated their competition, going undefeated that season. Evans wasn't too shabby that season either, taking second at the state meet.

Sure, hoisting the state title trophy was a memorable thing for Evans, but when asked what sticks out in her mind about that season, her answer centered around the memories she made with her teammates.

“I just felt like I was running with my friends,” she said with excitement in her voice. “It was just fun to get to run at new places and getting to travel on the bus going to Cashmere and Tonasket. It was all just so new.”

When all was said and done, Evans took second in the state XC championships four times and earned four district championships during her time at EHS.

Her track resume is just as impressive, as she won the 1985 state title in the 1600-meter run and finished in the top five at state three times.

Evans' time in high school wasn't all smooth sailing however. She was in a serious car accident in the spring of her junior year and her brother — Derek — died from a brain tumor months before the start of her senior year.

Evans says colleges were starting to show interest around that same time, but her focus and priorities were elsewhere during that trying period of her life.

She was able to attend the White Pass Cross Country Camp the summer before her senior year and that camp ended up being a big deal. Mike Johnson — who took over as head cross country coach at the University of Washington in 1986 — was a coach at the camp that summer.

“That became a big deal because that is when I became interested in going to the University of Washington,” she explained.

Her interest in the UW was also spiked her junior year when Derek was staying at the Ronald McDonald House in Seattle, which is near the Washington campus.

“I had spent much of the winter and spring of my junior year coming over to Seattle and spending time at the University of Washington,” she said. “And I remember telling (EHS head cross country coach Don McFarland) this and he happened to know that the UW coach ran this camp out of White Pass. So, I think they took it upon themselves to get me to the camp.”

The camp got Evans on Johnson's radar and she later signed-on to run for him at the UW. Coincidentally enough, Evans says her freshman year experience at Washington was similar to her experience as a freshman at EHS with regard to the welcoming environment. She started out strong her freshmen and sophomore years, but she says plantar fasciitis impacted her off and on all four years in college.

“Sports were different back then than they are now. I had a race every single week from, I think, the first week in January to the second week in June,” she said. “It was a lot of racing. I mean I loved it and wasn't complaining by any means, but I just think my body started to breakdown with the extent that we raced back in college at that time.”

Despite not seeing the individual success she would have liked; Evans was a member of two teams that went to the national championships in college — each of which finished 12th in the nation.

After graduating from Washington, Evans got her teaching certificate from Santa Clara University in California. She started teaching in California and later moved back to Washington State, taking a job in the Mukilteo School District.

She worked in the Northshore School District for a bit as well, and later took some time off to raise her three children. As her kids got older, Evans couldn't shake her love for distance running.

Having coached here and there after college, she was able to snag a job as head coach at Eastside Catholic School in Sammamish.

“I did that for five years and that was really good. But now I am the Director of Economic Resources (at Eastside) and am in meetings all the time. So, this is the first year in a long time — the past 10 years or so — that I haven't been coaching cross country,” she said. “It was time and I needed to move on. I miss it, but I try to stay away from it actually because it is really hard for me to be at practice and not coach.”