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SPORTS

Greenhill Triathlete Shares Spotlight with Charity

By Todd Jorgenson
SPORTS EDITOR

Ariana Luterman has a cheering section at every race, even if she doesn't hear it all.

Every time she lines up for a triathlon, the Greenhill junior gets extra motivation not only from her family and friends along the route, but from the young children at Vogel Alcove.

It's part of a philanthropic initiative that has fueled Luterman's success in the sport, and earned her recognition from the Pro Football Hall of Fame, which will honor the teenager during its annual induction weekend for former National Football League greats on Aug. 5-7 in Canton, Ohio.

Luterman's honor comes for her academic and athletic achievement, along with her community service to Vogel Alcove, a Dallas-based nonprofit that provides vital child-care services to homeless children ages 5 and under.

"When I'm out running, I'm wearing an expensive outfit, and you think about the kids who don't have clothes, and many of them don't even have a home," Luterman said. "I run for them. It puts things into perspective."

When she was their age, Luterman was an active girl without an activity to call her own. She tried just about everything — dance, gymnastics, karate, soccer, softball — but couldn't find the right fit. Then she start-



ed participating in youth triathlons in second grade.

"As a lower schooler, you're just trying to find your sport. I tried just about everything and was horrible," she said. "A few of my friends were doing triathlons at the time. My first one, I loved it. When I crossed the finish line, I knew it was going to be my thing."

Triathlons combine swimming, cycling, and running. Luterman began at shorter distances, grew to like endurance running, won several local sprints in her age group, and at age 10 decided to try her first adult race. That's when she knew she needed emotional reinforcements.

"It was kind of terrifying," she said. "I told my dad that if I was going to do one, he had to do it too. It's definitely something special that I'm very proud of."

Her father, Zach, has since become a triathlon aficionado himself, running with Ariana in



almost every race in addition to trying a half-Ironman race and the daunting Escape from Alcatraz event in California.

As for Ariana, she typically competes in races in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, but has traveled to various parts of the country. She usually competes about 12-15 times each year, mostly at the adult sprint distance — which consists of a half-mile swim followed by a 12.4-mile bike ride and a 3.1-mile run.

"I've definitely seen myself grow as a person through triathlon," Luterman said. "There are so many challenges, mentally and physically. I'm doing three sports at once."

Luterman was introduced to Vogel Alcove a few years ago by her younger sister, Gabrielle, who's also an athlete but doesn't compete in triathlons.

The year Ariana turned 12, instead of asking for birthday gifts for themselves, both sisters

requested donations of clothes and other supplies they could contribute to the charity.

"We brought huge boxes with all of this stuff, and before we even left, it was gone," Luterman said. "Seeing an immediate impact that something that small could have on people's lives was so incredible to me. That was just a birthday party. I knew I could do so much better than that."

Meanwhile, she began to receive some attention in the local running community — and some sponsorships — for her success in triathlons, so she decided to turn that spotlight toward the cause.

The result is Team Ariana, in which sponsors donate money to Vogel Alcove in exchange for a logo on her jersey. The effort has raised more than \$150,000, including gifts in kind, during the past four years.

"I decided to combine the two passions of mine," she said.