



KYLE BENDER
NVHS BOOSTER CLUB FEATURED ATHLETE OF THE WEEK
BOY'S TRACK & FIELD PROGRAM

The NVHS Athletic Booster Club is proud to present the featured athlete of this, track and field athlete KYLE BENDER. According to coach Kennedy, Kyle Bender has been the glue that holds the track and field team together. He is one of the team's hardest working athletes and is willing to race any distance for the needs of the team. The coach and the team are proud to have Kyle represent the Track and Field program for the Athlete of the Month.

Booster Club Reporter: *Have you always practiced Track and Field? Do you compete in other sports?*

Kyle: I joined track five years ago when I was in 7th grade. For the first three years at Neuqua I was a member of the football team. I grew up loving football and the excitement and hype of the games only made my passion stronger. However, as my senior year came closer I knew in my heart that I wanted to try and run track in college. I had to make one of the toughest decisions I have ever made and drop football on my senior year to focus on running. I joined the cross-country team in the fall to help with my endurance training. Although I really miss playing football, I do not regret my decision to join cross-country as I have already seen the training pay off in the early part of this track season.

Booster Club Reporter: *How has your track and field career been?*

Kyle: When I joined the Neuqua track team on freshman year I was known as “Little Bender” because my brother was a senior that year and was known as one of the best runners in the state. Those were tough shoes to fill. As sophomore and junior year came along I realized that I was not producing the marks that he had and I felt I was still deserving of the name I was given freshman year. I did not think I was living up to my last name and I doubted I could make any type of impact on the team. Since then I have worked on overcoming this doubt by putting more confidence into the athlete that I know I am and the abilities I know I have. This gain of confidence in myself has already helped me run much faster than I did last year and I cannot wait to leave my legacy this year by winning a state championship for our school.

Booster Club Reporter: *What have you learned from the coaches and from competing?*

Kyle: My coaches have always brought out the best in me and I will always be thankful for the opportunities they have given me. At the state track meet on my junior year I was a part of the 4x400 meter relay. Out of the four runners in the relay I was well aware that I was the slowest of the group. During the first day of state we ran in the preliminary race and came away with a victory, which meant we would be moving onto the finals the following day. However, I was told that I would be not in the relay the following day because my split was too slow and our team had someone who could replace me and run a faster time. I was crushed because I felt that everything I had worked for that year went down the drain in one poor performance when it truly mattered. That night was filled with many emotions. Later on the coaches, watching a video of the race, realized that I had run faster than they thought and I was put back into the relay for the finals. This experience taught me to not take any opportunity for granted and to work harder than everyone else during the year so that I could not be put into that situation again. I also learned two very important things from my coaches: to trust myself and trust the work I put in, because it will lead me to success. If you don't believe you can win, then there is absolutely no opportunity for success. Second, there will be more opportunities to succeed if I fail. This has served me greatly already this year as I have underperformed in certain meets but exceeded expectations in others.

Booster Club Reporter: *Who is your role model?*

Kyle: My role model is my big brother. I have always looked up to him since I was little and I especially look up to him now. He left me some pretty big shoes to fill here at Neuqua in track and now he runs for the University of Nebraska and has been named a two-time All-American. He does not back down from a challenge and I admire his tenacity. My biggest goal would be to run at Nebraska next year so I would be given one more year to be able to run with him. I know his success will carry on and I am eager to leave a legacy to our last name as well.