

# Possible future Olympian wins Firecracker 2-Miler

BY MARK MARTIN  
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RIPLEY – Winning Tuesday’s Firecracker 2-Miler during Ripley’s Fourth of July celebration was a huge deal for Point Pleasant native Jason Pyles.

The former Marshall University runner turned in a time of 9:31 to edge out recent University of Tennessee graduate Zach Sabatino for the win. The annual race again had plenty of spectators, who were also lining the streets of Ripley to watch the parade. Sabatino, of Charleston, finished just two seconds behind at 9:33. Ravenswood High cross country standout Ben Wise, who is getting set to enter his junior year, was third with a time of 10:37.

“I just think it’s a great small town celebration,” said Pyles, who finished second to former Marshall teammate Casey Batey in last year’s race. “It’s a great time here, the people are so friendly. It’s just a great atmosphere.”

He hopes to look back one day and see the Firecracker 2-Miler win as a race that in some small way helped him reach his ultimate running dream.

“My goal is the 2008 Olympic Marathon Trials,” said Pyles, who also spent one season playing basketball at Marshall before focusing all of his attention toward running. “I’d like to go there and toe the line with the best marathoners in America and see what happens.”

While the yearly race through the streets of Ripley on Independence Day is well short of a marathon, Pyles says it’s truly beneficial. “I use a lot these runs for great preparation for the ultimate goal,” he said.

While the Olympic Trials are a couple of years away, his immediate focus is the Huntington Marathon on November 5<sup>th</sup>.

“To get ready for that I’ve been doing about 95 miles a week with a good hill run and a good two-hour long run. I also get in a good tempo run,” said Pyles who is presently serving as a running coach at Marshall.

Regardless of what happens in the future, Pyles said it was an honor to battle a runner of Sabatino’s caliber down to the end.

“Just to be in the same race with Zach Sabatino...he’s great. He’s coming off two weeks after his

NCAA meet where he didn't run. So for him to come out here, run whatever he ran (9:33) off two weeks of not running; he's just an unbelievable talent.

"He went out a lot harder than me. He probably had 20 meters on me but that's where he's coming off his down time and that hurt him. On the way back he didn't have the base under him that I do right now."

With his outstanding career at Tennessee now behind him Sabatino is returning to Morgantown to take graduate classes and also continue training for the big running picture. He started his career at WVU but was forced to transfer when the track program was dropped.

"He's a great, great runner and he's somebody we can look to in the future to maybe represent our country in the Olympics."

## **MEN'S DIVISION**

**OVERALL:** 1. Jason Pyles (9:31) 2. Zach Sabatino (9:33) 3. Ben Wise (10:37)

**14 & UNDER:** Joshua Coombe (13:57), Troy King (14:42), Chris Hunter (14:45), Jon Schiefer (14:58), Matthew Henley (15:32), Jared Ford (15:50), Anthony Michael (15:58), Cody Fike (16:41), Dalton Gandee (16:52), Daniel Coombe (18:28), Mack Duke (18:51), Cody Pittenger (20:21), Jeffrey Gibbs (21:25), Bradley Gibbs (21:30), Brian Gibbs (21:30), Skye Stover (22:17).  
15-19: Glenn Kelley (14:13), Kyle Reed (14:27), Michael Henley (14:33), Tucker Deaton (16:47)  
**20-29:** Adam Casto (14:18), John Baron (14:25), Steve Shockey (15:05), Jed Smith (15:07), Brian Ricco (15:28)

**30-39:** Jimmy Galloway (10:46), Robert Rogers (15:02), Michael Stellato (15:23), Lee Webb (15:24), Frank Fazzolari (16:20), Jason Barr (16:32), Dave Duke (16:39), Mike Duke (16:58), Pete Hanna (17:02), Bob McDonald (21:19), Mike Colborn (22:21)

**40-49:** Mitch Carmichael (12:13), Ray Cunningham (12:51), Keith Rake (15:36), John Houben (16:08)

**50-59:** Marshall Adkins (14:07), Steve Sisson (15:46), Tommy Nichols (16:38), Bray Cary (18:01), Tom Gibbs (22:11), Rick Griest (24:52)

**60 +:** Richard Finney (14:54)

**WHEEL CHAIR:** William Riddle (15:00)

**HAND DRIVEN BIKE:** Keith Turner (1835)

## **WOMEN'S DIVISION**

**OVERALL:** 1. Jennifer Davis (11:12) 2. Lindsey Adkins (13:44) 3. Monica Vannest (13:48)

**14 & UNDER:** Parker Winters (15:22), Cortney Vannatter (17:29), Kaylee Griest (17:57), Amanda Duke (20:17)

15-19: Chelsea Knotts (13:58), Tessa Deaton (14:02), Krystle Bailey (14:08), Brittany Vannatter (16:48), Sarah Hunter (19:16)

**20-29:** Brenda Moore (15:02), Kristen McCracken (16:11), Dawn Ohse (20:36)

**30-39:** Melissa Webb (15:42), Anna McDonald (16:43), Karin Coombe (17:29), Jami Pittenger (17:47), Rebecca Duke (20:31)

**40-49:** Beth Ely (14:48), Mitsy Hunter (19:16), Kathy Kostos (19:33), Susan Baker (20:41)