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Little Giants' Soule chooses Grace College

BY JEFF ARENZ
Sports writer

FREMONT -- Senior runner Jessica Soule has been the heart and soul of the Fremont Ross girls cross country program since 2005.

On Tuesday, Soule, the Little Giants' team captain in 2008, signed a letter of intent to continue her academic and athletic careers at Grace College in Winona Lake, Ind., during the 2009-2010 school year.

"I chose Grace College because of the atmosphere and because of their coach," said Soule, who plans to major in sports management and minor in exercise science. "Coach (Neal) Butler knows how to help me with my running form and techniques."

Soule, the daughter of Brenda and Tom Soule, earned four varsity letters in cross country at Fremont Ross. She became a regional qualifier twice, first as a freshman in 2005 and, then, as a junior in 2007.

"Jessica is a quality runner who I expect to be among our top five next year," said Butler, who has guided the Grace College cross country program since 2003. "She is a solid Christian with good academics and a good attitude. Jessica is going to fit nicely into our program."

Soule, who carries a 3.13 GPA, earned a spot on the Greater Buckeye Conference's cross country all-academic team in 2008.

Grace College will be gaining an experienced runner in Soule, who began running as a member of the Fremont Flash cross country and track and field programs as a third-grader during the 1999-2000 school year.

"I know a lot about using different techniques and strategies during races," said Soule, who set her personal record of 19:52 at the 2007 GBC Championships. "I know how not to get boxed in and it's important to have a good start and a good finish."

At Grace College, Butler said the women's cross country program has been revitalized in recent years. The Lancers finished fourth in the Mid-Central College Conference rankings in 2008.

"We have taken off during the last two years," Butler said. "I have a team that has been dedicated to improving and I feel like we can take some teams by surprise."

Grace College competes as a member of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics.

Butler said Soule has displayed the characteristics of a collegiate runner.

"It takes consistent training and a willingness to change," Butler said. "Every runner likes working on being fast. But, the great runners take time to work on their weaknesses. It takes a person who is

mentally and physically able to handle those changes."

Soule said many people have been involved in her development as a runner, including Ross coaches Cathy Esposito and Mark Sheidler.

"I would like to thank all of my coaches for their assistance in furthering my love and dedication to this sport," said Soule, who was the Little Giants' cross country MVP in 2007 and 2008. She won the Ross Coach's Award in 2006 and 2008.

Soule, who is currently a three-year letterwinner for the Little Giants' girls track and field squad, will compete in the 1,600 and 3,200 runs this spring.



Fremont Ross High School cross country runner Jessica Soule competes during the Greater Buckeye Conference cross country meet at Walsh Park in Fremont. (News-Messenger file photo)



Fremont Ross's Jessica Soule, seated, signs her letter of intent to go to Grace College on Tuesday. Looking on are, from left, Ross assistant coach Mark Sheidler, Grace coach Neal Butler, mother Brenda Soule, father Tom Soule and Ross track/cross country coach Cathy Esposito. (Photo submitted by Brenda Soule)