

ADM

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A friendship founded off the football field

Doll and Flora don't remember a time when they weren't friends.

The two connected during a library playgroup – essentially a daycare that the boys attended each week, according to Doll – and Flora joked about how, at that age, kids become friends with just about everyone.

But something about Doll and Flora's friendship stuck, aided by their mutual interest in sports.

Flora recalled playing in basketball tournaments with Doll at the local YMCA. Doll remembered taking to the Waukee practice fields on Sundays for flag football alongside Flora.

Somewhere along the way, the friendship evolved into a brotherhood – a bond extending beyond the backfield.

And there are certainly times when the two act like siblings.

Flora will kick Doll in the butt and then retort that he didn't kick as hard as his friend kicked him. Doll will attempt to make Flora crack a smile as he poses for a photo.

The duo will joke about the awkwardness of standing back-to-back like Charlie's Angels.

"There (are) a couple times when we get under each other's skin," Flora laughed.

"But it's a brotherly bond, so we can get under each other's skin and then we'll come over, smack each other on the neck and we're good."

But, like most sibling bonds, it isn't all sarcastic spats and good-natured teasing.

Flora grew up with two brothers – Austin and Andrew.

Doll is the oldest of three, with two younger sisters – Jaeley and Mykah. So Flora became like the brother Doll never had, and both boys were basically adopted by their friend's family.

The two high school stars shared their signing day experience, as the only two athletes at ADM going Division I in football.

Doll accompanied Flora and his parents to a dinner where Flora was selected to the Iowa Shrine Bowl.

Adam Doll's phone is filled with photos of his son, Brevin, and Flora through the years.

On first glance, the two blonde-haired, about 6-foot-tall high schoolers – who will both suit up at running back in college – pass as actual brothers.

And with that bit of brotherly love also comes a healthy dose of competition.



Aiden Flora of ADM runs with the ball during a game against North Polk on Oct. 20 at Adel High School.

REGISTER FILE PHOTO

Healthy competition aids Doll and Flora's growth

Competitiveness.

It's a trait both athletes share, and one that lies at the foundation of their friendship.

"Being able to compete together, that really brought us together," Flora said.

From Little League district championships to setting school records on the track, Doll and Flora were always there to push each other. The ADM football stars were one of the top quarterback-running back duos in the state over the past couple seasons.

In 2022, the duo combined for more than 3,000 rushing yards. Doll ran for 1,475 yards and 27 touchdowns; Flora collected 1,662 yards and 17 more scores with his feet.

This past season – with Doll sidelined for most of the games with an injury – Flora took on a larger role, finishing the season with 1,932 yards and 27 touchdowns, which doesn't include his statistics in the air. Doll picked up 347 yards and four touchdowns through 2 1/2 games.

Doll and Flora became better by competing against the best: each other.

What sets the duo apart, though, is their ability to keep the rivalry out of the competition.

"It's about wanting to see each other succeed and not getting caught up in the competition too much," Doll said. "Being able to walk off the track or the football field and be happy for each other's successes."

Make no mistake, Doll and Flora are about as competitive as you can be. But both athletes understand that competition doesn't translate to jealousy.

"Obviously, we wish we could beat each other," Flora said. "But it's never like, 'I'm so jealous of him' or 'I wish he would fail.' It's always wishing he would get better."

It's because Doll and Flora want the best for each other.

Which is why it hit both players hard when things didn't go as planned during



ADM's Brevin Doll runs the ball down the field against Lewis Central last Sept. 8 at Tiger Stadium in Adel.

ALLISON ULLMANN/DALLAS COUNTY NEWS

their senior football season.

Leaning on faith and friendship after adversity

Doll and Flora set one major goal for their senior year: Break the state record for rushing yards by a team in a single season.

With a combined 3,000 yards on the ground between the two the year before, it didn't seem like an unrealistic goal.

But plans changed early in the season.

In the third game of the season – against Lewis Central – Doll broke his arm. It was confirmed in the following days that he would miss the remainder of his season.

Those preseason aspirations came shattering down.

"You work so hard to have your senior season, and we were building up to that point and hoping that's where we'd see the benefits of our hard work," Doll said.

"Obviously, that didn't happen. Injuries got in the way, and that was a hard pill to swallow. Not being out there with my team, but I knew that Aiden would step up, which he did and did all he could to get us to the best point we could."

Flora did his best – rushing for nearly 2,000 yards and throwing for over 1,000 more. He posted those numbers despite missing a game after aggravating his shoulder.

But while putting the offensive load on his back, Flora also needed to look out for his friend.

"I was praying over him, to keep his emotions in check," Flora said. "This is not his life. There's more than just football."

When Doll needed someone to talk to, Flora was there. He watched the injury make Doll hungrier and more competitive. Flora saw a disruptive injury bring his friend closer to his faith.

There are few upsides to an injury. But in hindsight, Doll learned to look at the silver linings.

"It really helped me gain an appreciation for what I had," Doll said. "My rela-

tionship with God definitely grew. I wouldn't say I'm happy I broke my arm. But I'm happy it gave me the appreciation for the game and everything else in my life."

Track offers Doll and Flora one last chance to compete together

On the gridiron, on the court, on the diamond, on the track.

There was rarely a time when Doll and Flora didn't compete alongside each other.

But soon enough, the teammates and friends will depart to separate campuses and separate sidelines.

Doll signed with the Iowa Hawkeyes as a running back. Doll opted to walk on at Iowa State, also as a running back. One friend in Iowa City, the other in Ames.

For the first time, it will be Doll *versus* Flora instead of Doll *and* Flora.

"It'll definitely be weird," Doll said. "We had a little taste of that. One of our first years of tackle football, our team split up and I was on the Black Falcons, and he was on the Red Falcons."

Like usual, the soon-to-be opponents won't let a little in-state rivalry get between their friendship.

"What's going to be fun is that we're both on offense," Flora said. "So we won't be 100% competing against each other. My brother can succeed, and I want him to succeed, even if we're playing each other."

Doll and Flora aren't focused on that right now.

There is about one month remaining in the high school track and field season. The two compete on some relay teams together and compete against each other in the sprint events.

As of Feb. 19, Doll and Flora are part of the third-fastest 4x100 and fourth-fastest 4x200 relay teams in Iowa. Doll competes on the third-fastest 4x400 relay squad, and Flora is on the fourth-fastest 800 medley relay team statewide.

Just like in football, the two teammates set goals for their final season of high school sports.

Doll wants to win an individual state championship. He wants to win a title in one or both sprint relay events. Heck, he wants to help ADM to the team title.

Flora wants to claim first and second alongside Doll. He wants to succeed in the relay events and win a team title, as well.

And – even if the season doesn't end with a title win or two – there will be at least one victory for Doll and Flora: The friends got to finish things how they started ... together.

"Just doing track, it's nice," Flora said. "Being able to compete with Brevin for the last time is cool, and it's nice to be able to focus on that."

Donation

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The committee donated all of the funds raised during the Jan. 5 basketball games to the Perry prom committee, Hatchitt said, as a way for Perry to know "they were in our hearts." Leslie said ADM's donation helped Perry reach its original fundraising goal.

"It was such a blessing in regards to them helping us feel like we had achieved that without being able to have our last three fundraising events that we had scheduled," she added.

After Perry learned it was one of five schools across the nation to receive a \$50,000 donation from JCPenney to help with creating a memorable prom night, Mahler-Moreno said the students knew they wanted to pay it forward.

"Once we knew that we had a surplus of money from the donation that we received, we thought it was a really important thing to pay it back to (ADM)," she said.

Hatchitt is looking forward to handing out the donated prizes to the ADM students and telling them they came from Perry students.

"(I hope) they know how special it was that Perry gave those prizes to us and are really grateful to see the gift that keeps on giving," she said of Perry's donation from JCPenney.

Perry's prom is set for Saturday, April 27. A walk-in will be held at 3:30 p.m. in the high school gym.

The students will then head to the Hotel Pattee, where they will get a pasta bar and desserts. The dance will be held at La Poste and before students will head to Spare Time in West Des Moines for after prom.

ADM's prom will be held on Saturday, May 4. Grand march will be held at 4:30 p.m. in the ADM High School north gym.

Tickets are \$5 for individuals and \$10 for families, with funds going to kick start next year's after prom fundraising efforts. Students will head to Decades Event Center in West Des Moines for prom before returning to the high school for a variety of after prom activities.



Perry prom committee members pose for a photo after being awarded \$50,000 from JCPenney for their "dream prom" on April 12, 2024.

ALLISON ULLMANN/THE PERRY CHIEF

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