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KNOW YOUR MADISONIAN | SCOTT WILTON

Know Your Madisonian: Scott Wilton

Samara Kalk Derby | Wisconsin State Journal

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Madison native Scott Wilton set two new world records at the Unicycling World Championships in Montreal, Canada, in August. With his two gold medal performances, Wilton reaffirmed his World Champion titles in the marathon and 10-kilometer road races.

Michael Tomczyk

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Scott Wilton, 21, is a unicycling phenom who set two world records in August at the

Unicycling World Championships in Montreal, Canada.

One of Wilton's records came in the 26.2-mile marathon, which he cycled in one hour, 19 minutes and seven seconds, an average speed of 20 mph.

He also set the world record in the 10-kilometer race there in 18 minutes and 52 seconds.

Wilton got into unicycling in 2004 at age 11, and it was his fourth time competing on the international stage.

A graduate of East High School, Wilton was born in Austin, Texas, and moved to Madison when he was 6, in time to start first grade.

His mother, Ann O'Brien, is a senior accounting lecturer at UW-Madison. His father, Jeff Wilton, is a dentist.

Wilton is now a senior at the University of Minnesota studying mathematics with a German minor, and is halfway through a study abroad year in Germany.

How did you get into unicycling?

My mother used to dance in the Austin Ballet Company. A male dancer in the company used to unicycle to rehearsal every day and it made a lasting impression on her of being a fun activity. She got my sister and me a unicycle and a balance board for Christmas just before I turned 11. It sat around for almost a year before I picked it up and started learning to ride with another friend in Madison.

What draws you to unicycling?

The uniqueness. Unicycling doesn't fit in the category of "normal activities" that most kids try. It helps to define what I like to do and myself as a person. It's not about being different, "special" or better than someone else because I can ride. It's just something that sets me apart.

How challenging is it?

In order to learn to unicycle, you have to repeatedly fail to go more than a few feet at the onset. From there, it's hours of practice to be able to ride down the street.

However, it's not just the challenge of learning that I find cool. There's always more to learn, whether it's riding a difficult and technical trail, learning a new trick, or going as fast as I can.

Madison has a larger unicycling community than most places. Tell me about that.

This is the biggest point for me. The unicycling community is, in one word, amazing... We all kind of know each other and in the case where we don't, we instantly have a commonality that creates a quick connection. Also, for some reason, the type of person that learns how to unicycle (especially at a more advanced level) is just cool in the sense that they are friendly, fun and open to trying new things. I didn't know about the unicycling community when I started riding but it is certainly a large part of why I continue to ride.

What is the hardest thing about riding a unicycle?

There's always days and rides where I just feel (rotten) and don't want to ride anymore that day. Sometimes that's during a competition.

However, for me, the answer that jumps out is going out to ride when I don't have other people to ride with. Because there just aren't that many unicyclists, this can often happen. Luckily in Madison, we don't have that problem due to the ever-growing club we've created: the Madison Unicyclists!

You set world records for the unicycling marathon and the 10K. What were the records that you broke?

In the marathon, it was 1:22:18 set in 2012 by Christoph Hartmann from Germany. He finished second to me at the race in August by a few seconds. In the 10K, it was

20:01:40 set in 2008 by Chuck Edwall from California. I unofficially set a new record of 19:37 at the previous World Championships in 2012 but the course didn't satisfy the world-record guidelines.

— *Interview by*

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