



Clouds and sun Saturday, showers possible. **75/55**
Weather 4A



Religious groups seek influence
Focus on Faith 1D

Spartans build on baseball traditions
Sports 1B



50 CENTS

FRIDAY

You're the star in the Marion Star

THE Marion Star

MARION, OHIO

www.MarionStar.com

JUNE 2, 2006

Elgin teen mixes career and school thanks to online learning

By **KURT MOORE**
The Marion Star

MARION — When his sports career started to conflict with school work, Tim Hollenbeck decided to take his schooling to the virtual world. The professional dirt bike racer is now celebrating his success as he graduates from TRECA Digital Academy with a high grade point average.

Hollenbeck, the son of Jim and Mary Hollenbeck, turned pro as a dirt bike racer when he was 16. He said he took his schooling online because he was missing too many classes at Elgin High School and his grade point average was dropping because of

his absenteeism. "It's been great," he said as he prepares to graduate with a 3.3 GPA. "I couldn't have been more happy with it."

The Prospect teen attended Elgin Digital Academy, which means TRECA Digital Academy provided curriculum, instruction and technical support while Hollenbeck will receive a diploma that says Elgin Digital Academy.

According to numbers provided by the academy, the non-profit online public school that opened in

2001 currently serves 2,420 students from across the state. The school serves students in kindergarten through 12th grade and expects at least 50 students will graduate this

year, a number that may increase because students can graduate through August and still be part of the Class of 2006.

Academy director Josie Druschal said the students receive a diploma from the state and must meet the same state standards as other high school students. The difference is

that, other than state achievement tests, they can complete all their schoolwork on the Internet and not have to come into the school.

Tim and his mother, who said the family considers his dirt-bike racing to be a career, said that's the flexibility they needed. "It's great that the school is open 24/7," said Mary. "He could do his work anytime, anywhere."

She said the online schooling has helped her son tremendously because he did not have to worry about attendance. The family often had to leave on Fridays to attend out-of-state, and sometimes

Online continues on 2A

Want to learn more?

More information on TRECA Digital Academy is available at www.trecaonline.org or by calling 740-389-4798.



The Marion Star/Bill Sinden
Tim Hollenbeck, 18, a professional motocross racer from Prospect, graduated as a full-time student with Elgin Digital Academy.

Online

Continued from 1A

out-of-country, races and he was missing tests and schoolwork.

"And since I had access to his schoolwork, I could be very involved in his education by following up and making sure his assignments were completed when he was on the road."

Tim said he was pleased with his education and complimented the online schooling for giving him more one-on-one interaction with the teacher, which he explained by saying that he could do his schoolwork and communicate with the teacher without having other students around to distract him.

Tim said his love of racing dirt bikes began when he was 4 years old and his parents got him a mini dirt bike for Christmas. He has raced all over the United States and Canada.

He said he lives for that 70 mph ride and all its jumps and drops.

"To me that's a rush," he said. "They say, 'Being able to control something uncontrollable is an illusion.' I have been doing it since I was 4. I can do it like I'm walking."

Tim said he was getting good grades but was penalized because he was missing too much school. He became professional and joined AMA when he was 16, which meant more time away from home.

"That's where most of the conflict came," Tim said. He said he wanted to continue with his schooling and decided the



Courtesy of Mary Hollenbeck

Professional motocross racer Tim Hollenbeck, 18, was able to continue his high school education and graduate through the Elgin Digital Academy program, which is a partner school of TRECA Digital Academy, while pursuing his professional career since the age of 16.

digital academy might put him back on the right track.

Because of the flexibility, his mother said he spent most of January in California and kept up with his schoolwork. With TRECA, she said, he was able to make his own schedule as long as he could reach a computer. Tim said he often worked ahead because he would take advantage of 14-hour drives to some of his more remote destinations.

"This is a great example of how his lifestyle does not fit into the 'going-to-school' tradition," said Drushal. She said job and family commitments, along with a desire for accelerated learn-

ing, are typical reasons why students may prefer the digital academy.

Tim will not be among the 15 students expected to attend a TRECA commencement ceremony to be held at 2 p.m. Sunday at Tri-Rivers Career Center's auditorium. Tim said he and his family will be heading to Ontario where he has a race this weekend.

He plans to continue with dirt bike racing and hopes to eventually become a firefighter.

Reporter Kurt Moore: 740-375-5151 or
kdmoores@nncogannett.com