

# Heusel Big Help In Tribe Victory

By Doug Mintline  
Journal Sports Writer

East Lansing—If Jim Heusel sings a little louder in the First Presbyterian Church today, there's a good reason. The 5-foot-9, 140-pounder might even try bass.

That's because the Flint Central High senior proved he's a big man here Saturday. And Coach Jim Whittaker can be especially proud of Heusel—and the rest of his 1959 State Class A track champions.

Whittaker was as elated Saturday as he was dejected a week ago Saturday when Central's 880-yard relay team—the second best in the State by comparative times at that stage—was disqualified for exchanging the baton out of the designated zone.

Whittaker—and Heusel, who ran out of the zone—could see the State title disappear. A loss of a possible six points (for first place), probably five points (second place) or an almost sure four points, (third place) loomed vital in what was billed as a close State Meet title battle.

"What do you tell a youngster in a situation like this," asked Whittaker, who went on to explain that Heusel was one of his most dependable performers all season. "It's just one of those things that happens. But sometimes in our disappointment we are apt to forget they're just kids."

Sure they're just kids. But

what could be more important to them at the time? And what could break a kid's heart more than just such an event?

Whittaker knew this and that's why last Monday he threw the medley relay positions wide open for the State Meet. He could have made up his mind right then not to take another chance with Heusel, choosing instead one of several other runners of near-equal ability. Instead he said, "You're on your own, boys, and those with the best times will run in the State Meet."

And what does a youngster do, Mr. Whittaker, when he makes a mistake and lets his coach down a little?

Maybe it depends on the boy, but Heusel reacted just fine.

Heusel forgot his mistake in the regional meet and worked even harder for another chance in the State Meet. The 880 relay and the medley relay are entirely different races, especially for Heusel who ran a 220 leg in one and a 440 leg in the other. But the exchange of the baton is almost identical.

Heusel earned a spot based on challenge races during the week. And never in State Meet history has there been a more perfect baton exchange than that of Ron Watkins to Heusel.

Heusel ran the anchor leg on a Tribe unit that was clocked in 2:29.5, extremely fast considering poor track conditions and cold weather. At that, it



Heusel . . . Perfect Exchange

wasn't far off the State Meet record 2:28.1.

That race provided the first Central points in the meet Saturday. And it was a surprise victory, offering a fine springboard for the rest of the outstanding Tribe thinclads.

Sure, they're just kids and sometimes we do forget. But Whittaker's confidence in Heusel and the youngster's desire to make good resulted in a big step toward maturity.

It's just one of many behind-the-scene incidents which add up to a State title effort.

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