

Pontiac Northern coach John Osler and mile relay team: Rico Walkewr (left), Craig McFerrin, Jesse Hodge and William Penson.

Meets help teams get running start on season

By TOM BUYSSE
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It used to be that track season in Michigan didn't really start until those big invitational meets, the Huron Relays at Eastern Michigan and the Spartan Relays at Michigan State, were held. January and February were the months for deciding league titles in basketball and volleyball, and March was state tournament time.

But now, many of the high school athletes who don't compete in a winter sport have found ways to get a jump on the track season by getting in shape and participating in an informal indoor season, starting as early as January, even though Michigan High School Athletic Association regulations don't allow coaches to open track practice until March 1.

TOP OAKLAND TRACKSTERS from schools like Detroit Country Day, Birmingham Brother Rice, Troy and Clarkston participated recently in a series of five informal track meets held at — and sponsored by — Macomb Community College in Warren.

The first meet was Jan. 11; the series ended Friday, when some 500 athletes from more than 50 schools descended on the MCC field house, which offers a 220-yard track and facilities for the high jump, long jump, pole vault and shot put.

"There's no indoor track in Oakland County that would hold a meet like this," said Pontiac Northern boys coach John Osler. Northern, champions at the Oakland meet last season, will be in an official team meet for the first time at the Huron Relays April 6.

Osler said the main reason his young team, with only two seniors, participated in the series of meets at Macomb was to gain experience in competing in indoor track and field.

No team totals are kept at the meets, and requests like "anyone who wants to run a leg of the mile relay, please report to . . ." are heard often on the PA system.

Kim Renas, Macomb's women's track coach and an organizer of the meets, said they have been held since 1976 and are growing more popular with schools outside Macomb County all the time.

Brother Rice had a large group at Friday's meet, even though the meets are strictly voluntary, according to assistant coach Bob Stark.

"The main reason I think (that Rice athletes participate) is the kids just get bored running," said Stark. "In the field events, they come in completely cold (because it is difficult to practice events such as the long jump and pole vault outside during winter) and get a chance to work on their form."

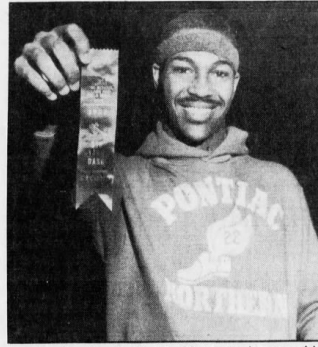
Country Day won the Class C girls title last season and has another strong team this year under coach George Prospero.

The Yellow Jackets participated in the last two meets at MCC. Many of the team's members had competed for track clubs at meets all over the Midwest this winter.

"We're here today," Prospero said Friday, "because this is the last indoor meet before the Spartan Relays (which take place Friday this week). It's like a good workout."

Prospero said he looks to build physical strength in his athletes, as well as psychological strength, at the practice meets.

A STANDOUT last week was Country Day freshman Shirley Evans, who easily won the girls 300-yard dash in 37.2. Prospero said Evans is already one of the top sprinters in the



Pontiac Northern's Melvin Mayes took second in the 300-yard dash last Friday.

state. Country Day's Peggy Evans finished second in the 300-yard dash, in 39.6.

Other winners from Oakland County were Troy's Charlie Barte, who won the boys shot put with a toss of 53 feet 10, and Paul Loving, of Brother Rice, who won the boys high jump with 6 feet 3.

John Norton, of Hazel Park, took the boys two-mile run in 9:40.8, Clarkston's Kathleen McInnis won the girls two-mile run in 12:00, and her teammate, Bridget Kilcline, took the high jump with a 5-2. Craig McFerrin, of Pontiac Northern, won the boys 600-yard dash in 1:18.4.

Hazel Park won the boys distance medley (1320-880-440-mile) in 11:04 when Norton teamed with Andy Steele, Sam Blumke and Scott Law. Clarkston took the girl's sprint medley (440-220-220-440) when Wendy Co-hoon, Lisa Ladd, Kim Ottman and Kilcline posted a 3:04.5.

Oakland teams won both mile relays. Pontiac Northern (William Penson, Jesse Hodge, Craig McFerrin and Rico Walker) won the boys relay in 3:31.3, and Country Day (Pam Laker, Natalie Greenspan, Ann Marie Regaldo and Jill Langer) took the girls' in 4:32.3.



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