

Swartz Creek wins state 'A' harrier crown

By BILL KHAN
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The boys' teams were lining up for Saturday's state Class A cross country meet at IMA Brookwood Golf Course.

Suddenly, something seemed odd.

"Where'd Swartz Creek go?" someone asked.

It didn't take long to find the answer.

Swartz Creek can be found perched atop the Michigan cross country world.

THE DRAGONS shed traditional school colors of red and black for yellow jerseys, but can be excused because they captured the school's first Michigan High School Athletic Association championship since 1967.

Led by third-place Harold Mueller, Swartz Creek scored 150 points to edge runner-up Farmington by seven. Five teams were within 24 points of the top spot.

"It was anybody's race," said

Swartz Creek Coach Dave Carey, whose team pulled an apparent disappearing act at the starting line.

When they took off their red-and-white warmup sweats, they appeared in new yellow uniforms. If you blinked, you would have sworn Swartz Creek pulled out of the race.

"**THE KIDS SAID** they wanted to wear different jerseys for the meet," Carey said. "I said it was OK, so long as they bought them themselves. They came in Thursday with these yellow jerseys. I thought they were going to get something red or black, not an obnoxious color.

"We argued about it, but I figured they were the ones who had to run in them. They thought it might make it hard for other teams to key on us."

Don't mistake the ploy as the reason Swartz Creek captured the

Please see **CREEK** — D9



JOURNAL PHOTO/TOM CHEEK

Anthony Hamm of Northern (left) congratulates state champion Todd Williams of Monroe. Hamm, last year's state champ, took second place.



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Swartz Creek High's state Class A championship cross country team consists of (front row, left to right) Jeff Bach, David Freeman, Paul Sisovsky, Harold Mueller, (back row) Assistant Coach David Thompson, Steve Schisler, Allen Murphy, Brian Koske and Coach Dave Carey.

CREEK

CONTINUED FROM D1

area's first cross country title since Kearsley in 1980.

It was a blend of talent and state-meet experience that vaulted the Dragons to the top.

Five of Creek's runners have been in state meets before. Two-time all-staters Mueller and Paul Sisovsky ran on the Dragons' state runner-up team in 1984.

MUELLER TOOK third in 15:35.22, while Sisovsky was 13th in 15:57.86. David Freeman recovered from a fall 600 yards into the race and finished 21st in 16:17.80. Jeff Bach was 33rd in 16:29.61 and Allen Murphy 80th in 16:56.39.

"We were close in '84, but we knew that year we had to run a super race to get that close," Carey said. "This one we really had a good feeling about going in. Everyone was a veteran. All our runners are seniors, except for junior Brian Koske, our seventh runner."

Mueller was running sixth until about the three-mile mark when he put on a late charge.

"The first mile of the race I had a stomach problem," Mueller said. "I knew it was my last state

meet and I didn't want to get myself beat or I'd regret it. I figured if everyone got one man here or there it might be worth it at the end."

INDIVIDUALLY, the long-anticipated matchup between Monroe's Todd Williams and Northern's Anthony Hamm turned into a rout in favor of Williams.

Williams, who some experts call the best runner ever to come out of Michigan, shattered the Class A 5,000-meter record with a time of 15:08.32. The previous mark was held by Holly's Matt Stack, who won the 1980 meet in 15:22.5, also at IMA Brookwood. Hamm was second in 15:25.56, a time that would have won four of the last six state meets.

Williams won the team race last year, but his time was .36 seconds slower than Hamm's winning time of 15:42.03 in the individual race.

"It feels a lot better winning it this year," said Williams, who beat Hamm in last year's Jackson Invitational and state track meet.

Given Williams' performance, Hamm wasn't too upset about finishing second.

"I'M PLEASED with my performance," Hamm said. "Todd

ran real tough. I'm glad I had a chance to run against him.

"Last year, out of 20 all-staters, 14 were underclassmen. I knew the field would be the toughest ever. My goal was to give 100 percent."

In the boys' individual race, Powers Catholic's Joel Kaines improved by 28 places from last year to take second place with a time of 15:47.09. Lake Orion's Cliff Dwelle won the race in 15:37.64.

The girls' race was won by Ann Arbor Pioneer by a 91-125 margin over defending champion Sterling Heights Stevenson. Portage Northern was a distant third with 205 points.

Kristin Salt of Dearborn Edsel Ford won the race for the second straight year with a time of 17:58.

FLINT-AREA teams didn't fare well. Flushing was 20th with 439 points, while Swartz Creek was 22nd with 478. There were 28 teams in the meet.

Flushing's Julie Page had the top area finish in the team race by placing 39th.

Owosso freshman Michelle Wheeler turned in the best area finish among the girls by placing seventh in the individual race in 19:30. Howell's Jennifer Schank won the race in 18:59.