

1986 complete package

# Mind games

## Harriers learn winning attitude

Bob Smith isn't ready to trade his teaching and coaching post for a career as a psychologist quite yet. But the Novi boys' cross-country mentor is becoming more and more concerned about the mental state of his runners.

Smith firmly believes the main problem holding back the Wildcats is more mental than physical. Consequently, he's developed a half-hour session in which team members train their minds before going out to train their bodies.

"We do basically the same work out as the other Kensington Valley Conference (KVC) teams," Smith stated. "So what makes them better than us? When it comes right down to it, we're doing exactly what they are doing physically, but I think it's the mental state that we're accustomed to being in that is holding us back."

In 1985, Novi failed to win a KVC meet and, although some talented runners return, Smith lost six of his top 12 runners, including two of the top three, to graduation. Facing another mediocre campaign, he purchased a motivational tape called "The Making of a Champion" and now the team is doing a lot of mind work as well as running work.

"We spend a good half-hour every day before we do any running, training the brain," Smith said. "We've been listening to the tape since our first practice and we'll continue through the end of the season. It's a mental lesson.

"These guys can't run any harder and they can't run any faster. If they did, they would be wiped out — you can only run so many miles — so I hope this training regime works."

Co-captains Bill Huotari and Paul Sumner have both graduated, but last season's top performer Craig Cowden is back. Cowden was impressive last year as a sophomore, but like so many Wildcats, was slowed down by nagging injuries.

"Craig was our top runner the majority of the time last year," Smith said. "He had some hip problems near the end of the season and it hurt his performances, but I look for him to be our number one runner again this year."

Senior Tim McBride and junior Pat Bergman are two more runners who suffered through injuries in '85, but have the potential to challenge Cowden for the top spot on the team.

"If McBride is healthy, he could be our number one and so could Pat," Smith said. "Pat is very good but injuries got him. I think he's ripe for a good season. Any of those three could be our top runner in any given meet."

Another runner who's been impressive in early workouts is Eric Bergman. Smith reports that Bergman has been in the team's top two or three every single day in the pre-season, and he's very confident the junior will place in the top five.

Bret Van Dyke was one of Novi's top five runners last season as a freshman, and Smith looks for the

youngster to be in the top five again this year as well.

Mike Dillon and Mike LaHale are both senior co-captains, but have a history of injuries. Dillon was a rising star in his freshman and sophomore seasons, but knee and shin problems ruined his junior campaign. LaHale, on the other hand, has led the school band to concentrate more on running.

"If we can get these two guys healthy, they will challenge for the top five," Smith said. "We could be a force if the injuries don't get us again."

Other runners trying to make an impression are senior Mike McNutt, junior Mike Ducker and sophomores Aaron Weinberger, Austin Opela and Steve Karevich. The Wildcats currently have 23 runners on the roster — the most ever.

"I think we'll be better than last year," Smith predicted. "But the keys are mental attitude and injuries. I think we have finally licked the mental thing, and if we can keep the injuries down to a minimum, we are going to win some KVC meets."

"We have the personnel, we have the attitude, we have the desire. It's just a matter of keeping everybody healthy. We could possibly move up as high as third in the KVC, but we won't be last."

"We can't run any harder so we've got to train the brain."

# Bulldogs run past Wildcats

...about 1980. Fudge was 24 and 25. You can even see about the 1980 loss to Brighton in the opening shot of the 1980 season at Cass Benton Park last Thursday. ... a whole new attitude ... Smith, coach of ... country team ... town. ... We're looking ... Valley ... the last ...

**Smith: I'm really optimistic. I honestly believe that this is the year we're going to be able to give some of these other KVC teams a run for their money.**

# Smith optimistic about Novi harriers

Continued from 16

Not even the 16-46 loss to Brighton could stem Smith's optimism. "Brighton has an outstanding program that's all there is to it," reported the Wildcat mentor. "They won the state Class A championship a couple years ago, and they're always one of the top teams in the state."

"There's no disgrace in losing to a team like Brighton."

Denis Cowden, the Wildcats' top runner, was the only thing that stood in the way of a Brighton sweep during a rainy day at Cass Benton last Thursday.

Despite a sore ankle which has hobbled him most of the season, Cowden managed to capture fourth place with a time of 18:49.

Novi's next two finishers were both sophomores. Rob Rasmussen, who has come from out of nowhere

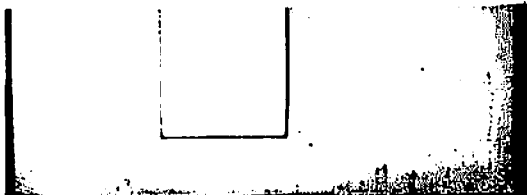
to become the Wildcats' number-two runner, came in eighth (19:02) and Bret Van Dyke came in 10th overall with a time of 19:39.

The next five Novi finishers were Mike Ducker (12th in 19:57), Eric Bergman (15th in 20:32), Pat Parsons (16th in 20:43), Jan Keranen (17th in 21:02) and Rob Mitzel (18th in 21:06).

"I'm really optimistic," said Smith. "I honestly believe that this is the year we're going to be able to

give some of these other KVC teams a run for their money. It won't be easy — the KVC is one of the best boys' cross-country conferences in the state. But we're coming on strong. There's a new wave in town."

The Wildcats have just one meet on tap this week, and that comes Saturday when they participate in the Walled Lake Western Invitational at 10 a.m.



# Harriers finish 9th at invite

Remember the adage about "a house divided . . ."

Well, that's what happened to the Novi boys cross-country team at the Walled Lake Western Invitational last Saturday.

"They ran two races — one for 12th/11th graders and another for 10th/9th graders," reported Bob Smith, coach of the Wildcat harriers.

"The only problem was that the strength of our team is our juniors and sophomores. The way the meet was divided, the strength of our team was split in half."

"We did alright, but we could have done a lot better," he added.

Novi finished ninth out of 11 teams in the senior/junior meet, but did considerably better in the sophomore/freshman competition, finishing a highly respectable fourth in the 11-team field.

Walled Lake Central was an easy winner in the senior/junior portion of the competition, taking top honors with just 46 points. Northville finished second with 63 points.

Craig Cowden again paced the Wildcats, finishing 15th overall with a time of 18:19. Other Novi finishers were Pat Parsons (50th in 20:15), Tony Harberger (51st in 20:16), Eric Bergman (58th in 20:41) and Jay Keenan (63rd in 20:50).

The Wildcats fared considerably better in the sophomore/freshman portion of the meet, totalling 105 points to finish in a fourth-place tie with Harrison. Walled Lake Western took top honors with 38 points, followed by North Farmington (97 points) and U-D (99).

Sophomore Rob Rasmussen led Novi, finishing eighth overall with a time of 19:03. Yash Rohatgi came in 13th with a 19:29 clocking and was followed by Austin Opiela (27th in 20:58), Jeff Jeffress (28th in 21:06) and Chuck Dollison (29th in 21:19).

Novi's next two dual-meet opponents are Milford (Sept. 16) and Lakeland (Sept. 23).

# Milford runs past harriers

WEDNESDAY  
September 24,  
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A stunning performance by a Novi sophomore was just about the only surprise when the Wildcat cross-country squad tangled with powerful Milford on September 16.

The 16-47 loss to the Redskins was never in doubt, but a record-breaking run by previously unheralded Rob Rasmussen took everybody by surprise — especially Bob Smith, coach of the Wildcat thinclads.

"He really has come out of nowhere and suddenly he's our number one runner . . . that's exciting," said Smith. "He's really been coming on strong lately. As a freshman, he failed to finish in his first meet, but Rob's has started showing signs lately, and against Milford it all came together."

Rasmussen not only crossed the finish line at Northville's Cass Benton Park first among his teammates, he shattered the old Wildcat course record by a full 20 seconds. His time of 18:00.01 was more than a minute faster than his best previous time and was good enough to place him fifth overall.

Rasmussen passed the Wildcats' usual top finisher — Craig Cowden — a mile and a half into the race, but it didn't get Cowden down. He ended the race in 11th place with a time of 18:33, only three seconds shy of his all-time best.

As a matter of fact, despite the convincing loss, Smith was pleased with the improvement his runners showed. Nine of the 13 runners set personal best times for races at Cass Benton, proving once again that the Wildcats are making strides.

"I'm not embarrassed at all," said Smith. "It's tough when you look at the score, but when you see all these personal bests, it really tells you how well we did."

Right behind Cowden was sophomore Bret Van Dyke who crossed the finish line in 18:40, his best time ever. Senior Tim McBride (19:09) and junior Eric Bergman (19:40) rounded out the top five finishers for Novi.

## Wildcats of the Week



LISA MCCARTHY

Novi's 5-foot-2 point guard Lisa McCarthy just wasn't herself in the Wildcats' first two basketball games of the 1988 season as a bout with the flu hampered her effectiveness. But by Sept. 16, McCarthy was close to 100 percent for the first time this season and her 18-point performance led Novi to a 61-36 blow out win over Clarenceville. Two days later, McCarthy was again the focus of attention when foul troubles sent Sandy Maloney to the bench. McCarthy needed to pick up the slack and did. She carried the club most of the way, pouring in 17 points, but the Wildcats fell to Brighton 50-46. For her efforts, McCarthy has been named a Wildcat of the Week.



ROB RASMUSSEN

Sophomore cross-country runner Rob Rasmussen's days of anonymity may be over. On Sept. 16, Rasmussen completed his rapid rise to prominence by finishing first among his teammates and providing one of the few bright spots in an otherwise sour 16-47 loss to Milford. Rasmussen's time of 18:00.01 was good for fifth place overall at Cass Benton Park, but more importantly, the mark shattered the old Wildcat course record by 20 seconds. "He really has come out of nowhere and suddenly he's our number one runner . . . that's exciting," said Novi Coach Bob Smith. Hard work and desire have moved Rasmussen up the road to the top and a Wildcat of the Week honor is in order.

# Cowden, Rasmussen set pace

By NEIL GEOGHEGAN  
staff writer

Like a successful prize fighter, the Novi boys cross-country team has an effective 1-2 punch.

But to win big in cross-country you need more than just the old 1-2, you also need a 3-4-5 and 6. And so far this season, the Wildcats have been pinned to ropes without the weapons needed to be effective after employing the 1-2.

Junior Craig Cowden and freshman Ron Rasmussen are running much faster each meet, which has Coach Bob Smith pleased. Unfortunately, the two seem to be running further and further ahead of the rest of the pack, leaving Novi with a large and unhealthy gap between the second and third finishers.

"We are beginning to develop a nice 1-2 punch, it's just that 3-4 and 5 can't keep up," said Smith. "Our pack time (time differential from first to fifth runner) is too large, so we are working on cutting it down."

In action last week, not even Joe Louis could have made much of a dent in Lakeland's cross-country line up. The Eagles, picked by many as the top team in the state, marched right over the Wildcats 15-48 on Sept. 23, but Smith was pleased with his team's overall effort.

"Lakeland is the best team we'll ever face," he said. "They are really deep in talent. I'm sure our kids knew we didn't have much of a chance to beat them, but they went out and did their best."

Cowden and Rasmussen stayed competitive with most of the Lakeland elite, placing seventh and eight respectively. Cowden's time was 18:21 and Rasmussen finished five seconds later. But another minute passed before the third Novi runner crossed the finish line, an indication the pack time was too spread out. Mike Ducker's 19:26 was good for 11th place. He was followed by Pat Parsons (19:40) and Austin Opiela (20:06).

Two of Novi's top six runners did not compete in the meet due to

disciplinary reasons. Sophomore Bret VanDyke and senior Tim McBride committed minor infractions against team rules.

"Rules are rules, and the whole team, including the two involved, agreed that it had to be done," Smith said. "These guys are building respect for me and the rest of their teammates and they accept the policies I've set up."

Last Friday's meeting with Ypsilanti Lincoln was much closer, but again the large pack time made a difference as Novi was edged 23-38. For the first time all season, a Wildcat runner grabbed first place overall in a dual meet as Rasmussen went 18:13 on a rainy Cass Benton course, just 10 seconds shy of his personal best.

"He ran an excellent race despite the heat and wet weather," Smith said.

After two Lincoln runners, Cowden placed fourth (18:56) and was followed by McBride (10th in 19:23), Van Dyke (12th in 19:48), Parsons (14th in an all-time best 19:58), Mike Ducker (20:01) and Opiela (20:10).

"Lincoln's pack time from their first to seventh runner was 50 seconds," Smith explained. "Ours from first to fifth was 1:45 — that was the difference."

The week ended on a good note at Saturday's Bishop Borgess Invitational at Cass Benton. Novi placed sixth out of nine teams and had an individual medal winner for finishing among the top 15. Cowden ran an inspired race to finish 13th with a time of 17:58, the best time by a Novi runner since Smith's been coach. It set a new school record for a race at Cass Benton, breaking Rasmussen's week-old mark by three seconds.

The other Novi runners to finish were Rasmussen (18:10 — 16th overall), VanDyke (18:52 — 31st place), McBride (19:01 — 40th place) and Parsons (another new personal record time of 19:33 — 47th place).

Our average time was 19:41 and that's our fastest ever at Cass Benton so I was extremely pleased," Smith said. "The only other KVC team involved was South Lyon and we beat them by 102 points."

# Wildcats crushed by Hartland, 15-42

THE NOVI NEWS/Wednesday, October 2, 1985

Coach Bob Smith and his Novi harriers bid farewell to the month of September without even a hint of sorrow. That's because the Wildcats suffered through a discouraging loss-filled month, which ended the way it began as Hartland cruised to a 15-42 victory over the Wildcats on Sept. 30.

Now with October finally here, Smith is optimistic about the rest of the season.

"We went against all the big boys in September and I'm happy it's over," he said. "We are now putting the whole season on the line in the next two weeks."

The next two weeks include KVC match-ups that Smith feels his squad has a chance to win — against Howell and South Lyon.

"We have seniors on the team who have never experienced a KVC dust meet win, and they want it so bad they can taste it," Smith said. "I'm

more worried about Howell than South Lyon right now, but they will both be difficult to beat — it's not going to be easy."

Amid the standing puddles and soggy ground at Cass Benton Park, Hartland showed why it is one of the top Class B teams in the state. The Eagles swept the first five spots to run away with an easy win.

Novi's top finisher was junior Craig Cowden, whose 19:44 was good for sixth place overall. He was followed closely by Bob Rasmussen in seventh (18:49) and Bret Van Dyke in ninth (19:17). In 10th place was surprising Eric Bergman, who shaved 10 seconds of his previous personal best time at Cass Benton, clocking a fine 19:30.

The rest of the Wildcats contingent included Pat Parsons (11th, 19:57), Tim McBride (12th, 20:15) and Jay Keranen (13th, 20:19).

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# Wildcat harriers topple Howell

It's an old saying that good things come to those who wait.

Well, Bob Smith, coach of the Novi boys cross-country team, did exactly that — waited and waited for the Wildcats to finally win a Kensington Valley Conference (KVC) dual meet.

The long wait — seven years, to be exact — finally came to an end Oct. 7 when Novi upended Howell 24-33, marking the first KVC win for the boys' team since the league was formed in 1979.

"We've had our share of successes and wins in the past, but it never against KVC teams," Smith said. "I don't want it to sound like we never had any good runners, but the win at Howell was our first KVC win ever."

"It's been a long wait — too long, and boy it was nice."

In the early going, Smith must have been thinking his team was in for the same old thing against the Highlanders. At the mile mark, Howell had the top three spots and a 23:32 lead.

But a mile later, Wildcat runners like Rob Rasmussen, Bret Van Dyke and Craig Cowden started to move up and the lead shifted to Novi by one point. Down the stretch, others like

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Pat Parsons and Tim McBride moved up a few notches, providing a little cushion for the nine-point victory.

Rasmussen was the first Wildcat across the finish line, finishing second overall with a time of 18:31. He was followed in order by Van Dyke (18:39) and Cowden (18:48) in third and fourth place respectively. McBride was just behind Howell's second runner in sixth place (19:00), Parsons was ninth (19:28) and Austin

Opiela came in 10th (19:30).

In all, Novi took 15 of the first 20 places. And for the first time this season, the Wildcat pack (the top five finishers) finished within less than a minute of each other (57 seconds).

"Getting under one minute like that is a landmark for us," Smith said. "It's one of the main reasons why we won. You usually give up two to three points on an away course but it didn't seem to matter this time. I

am very happy."

Smith was also pleased with his team's performance in the Oakland County Meet, a gathering of the county's best teams at Marshbank Park in West Bloomfield. The Wildcats placed 23rd out of 41 teams, the highest finish for Novi since Smith became coach.

"I like watching the meet, but in year's past I didn't really like to take the team because we never did very well," Smith admitted. "We usually placed in the high 30s so 23rd is remarkable for us. Last year we were 32nd out of 36 teams. Needless to say, I was very pleased."

Rasmussen was again the top Wildcat finisher, placing 93rd (out of over 300 runners) with an 18:11. Van Dyke topped Cowden for the second straight time with an 18:16 and 97th place, and Cowden placed 121st. Other Novi runners included Mike Ducker (19:11), Parsons (19:27), Jay Keranen (20:00) and Eric Bergman (20:01).

"It was quite a surprise to me," Smith said. "It's real good psychological training for the league and regional meets we have coming up."

# Harriers win 2nd straight

Novi's steady rise in the Kensington Valley Conference (KVC) boys' cross-country ranks continues.

The Wildcats won their first-ever KVC dual meet Oct. 7. And in the Wildcats have now reeled off two in a row, trouncing South Lyon 17-43 on Oct. 14. Novi wrapped up KVC competition for 1986 by placing sixth overall at the KVC Meet last Saturday in Hartland.

Against the Lions, Coach Bob Smith's squad took the top three individual places and allowed South Lyon only three spots in the top 10. It was the most lopsided Wildcat win of the season, and Smith was extraordinarily pleased.

"It started to snow just before we raced, but it didn't matter," Smith reported. "It was darn near a shut out for us. Our guys went full bore out there, and the results were very pleasing."

Smith was so confident of a win that he put his top three runners through a tough work-out the day before the meet, and the gamble paid off.

"If we don't take days off, we get closer and closer to the top form we want to be in for the regionals," he said. "Instead of giving them a day off, we ran them hard — I was that confident."

Craig Cowden (18:19), Bret Van Dyke (18:24) and Rob Rasmussen (18:31) all had comparatively slow runs against the Lions, but they did finish 1-2-3, and that's exactly what Smith wanted to see.

"It showed me they really worked hard the day before," Smith said.

Other Novi finishers were Tim McBride (fifth place, 19:08), Mike Dillon (sixth, 19:12), Mike Ducker (eighth, 19:36) and Austin Opiela (10th, 19:47).

There were very few surprises at the KVC Meet as Lakeland, the state's top-ranked squad, coasted to the win by placing four runners in the

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## Harriers post 2nd KVC win

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top 10. Novi's sixth place finish (139 points behind the KVC champion Eagles) was where Smith visioned his team would be — behind the same Howell team the 'Cats beat earlier this season.

"(Howell) slipped by us, but I kind of knew it would happen," said the Wildcat coach. "They have one outstanding runner, and that helps a lot. I was disappointed we didn't beat Howell until I looked at our times and saw we had six personal best times — so I can't gripe at all."

Rasmussen recorded the best time of his high school career, traveling

the Ironwood course in Hartland with a fine time of 17:28. It was enough to place the Ironwood runner first among his teammates and 18th overall.

"He was flying," Smith reported. "I didn't think we'd be able to crack the top 25 — that was the first time he's ever broken 18 minutes."

Cowden was the next Novi runner across the finish line (18:18) in 33rd place overall, and he was followed closely by Van Dyke (18:24) in 34th. The Wildcats' fourth fastest time came from sophomore Yash Rohatgi (18:33), who ran in the junior varsity

race. Rohatgi placed seventh overall in that race, and his time was more than a minute faster than even before.

Other Novi finishers were Opiela (40th, 19:06) and Ducker (41st, 19:10), both setting new personal best times.

"You want your best guys to peak this time of the season, and four of our top six runners had personal bests," Smith noted. "That's what I like to see."

In the last team event of the season, the Wildcats will travel to Ann Arbor for the State Regionals this Saturday (Oct. 25) at Buhr Park.



# Wildcat boys run into tough regionals

The MHSAA Class A regional boys cross-country meet at Ann Arbor's Buhr Park last Saturday held very few surprises, especially when it came to Kensington Valley Conference (KVC) teams.

Just like the KVC League Meet a week earlier, teams from Howell, Novi and South Lyon were relatively close. The Highlanders just flipped the Wildcats for 14th place as a team in the 18-team regional, and South Lyon placed 18th.

The Wildcats finished 15th in the regionals with 388 points — more than 300 points behind Farmington, which claimed the regional championship.

The rainy weather and slick running conditions caused slightly slower times for all teams, but Wildcat Coach Bob Smith said he was pleased with his team's all-around performance.

"With the exception of one runner, we did really well," reported the Wildcat coach.

Novi's top finisher was sophomore Rob Rasmussen who completed the Buhr Park course in a time of 17:35 to place 43rd in the field of 128

runners. The last state final qualifying time was 16:35, meaning Rasmussen missed the cut by 43 seconds.

"Rob ran his second best time of the season despite the rain so I think he ran great," Smith said.

Junior Craig Cowden was the next Wildcat across the finish line in 18:07 (72nd), also his second best time of the year. But the big surprise was sophomore Yash Rohatgi, who rose to the occasion to place third among his teammates and 85th overall with a fine time of 18:24. The reason for the surprise is that Rohatgi normally runs with the junior varsity squad, but was brought up by Smith in an attempt to get him prepared for the season-ending freshman-sophomore meet.

"Earlier in the season, Yash wasn't running very well when we put him in with the varsity team," Smith explained. "But to end up just 17 seconds behind Craig (Cowden) is remarkable. It was a gamble, and I'm glad it didn't backfire. It paid off because his confidence is sky-high right now. He's got the tools and I knew that all along —

now he knows it."

The other four Novi finishers were Mike Ducker (18:33), Austin Optela (18:44), Tim McBride (19:08) and Bret Van Dyke (19:44). The seventh place team finish for Van Dyke shocked Smith because the sophomore has been among the top three Novi finishers all season.

"Bret just had a bad meet," Smith said. "Halfway through the race, his legs failed him."

Mike LaHale, running in the J.V. race, even topped Van Dyke's time by nearly 40 seconds.

The Wildcat underclassmen wrapped up the 1986 season in the Royal Oak Kimball freshman/sophomore meet on Oct. 23 (after The News' deadline). With excellent young talent like Rasmussen, Van Dyke and Rohatgi, Smith is looking for a nice finish.

"If we can find two more runners to go with them, we have a chance at the top five," Smith said.

Sophomore sprinters from the track team, Jeff Jeffress and Bill Lethbride — may be the biggest key to a top five finish, according to Smith.

# Novi takes ninth in Oakland meet

The freshman/sophomore cross-country meet at Royal Oak Kimball Oct. 28 officially ended the 1986 season for Novi runners, and the Wildcats' ninth-place finish was an optimistic way to bow out.

A total of 26 teams from all over Michigan competed. Novi finished with 304 points, far behind Walled Lake Western's winning total of 84, but Coach Bob Smith was very pleased with the effort of his seven-runner group. It was the highest a Novi boys' team has ever placed at the meet, up three spots from the 12th place finish of 1985.

"We were within fighting distance up to sixth place," Smith reported. "The competition gets better and better every year we compete in this meet and our places keep getting better, so it's every encouraging.

"Our kids were running as fast as the leaders of past years. It's getting tougher to place high because all the good teams run in it."

Three other Kensington Valley Conference teams were at the meet. Milford finished second (106 points), Lakeland came in seventh (280) and South Lyon finished in a tie for 19th place.

"It was a good battle between us and Lakeland and we just missed catching them," Smith said. "It's good to see that our youngsters can stay with their youngsters — we are closing the gap."

Rob Rasmussen, the 'Cats top runner most of the season, was the first Novi runner to finish, crossing the line with a time of 18:10. The sophomore placed a respectable 24th overall out of over 200 runners.

"It was a good time for Rob," Smith said. "The course had a lot of standing water and it affected the times a bit so you have to take that into consideration. Usually the course is very fast because it's so flat."

Only four seconds and three places behind Rasmussen was sophomore Bret Van Dyke (18:14). It was Van Dyke's best time ever and Smith was happy to see his two top runners so close together.

It took Novi's third runner, Yash Rohatgi, more than a minute longer to finish the race (19:31, 71st place) and Smith believes that may have been the difference between a much

**Smith: 'To me, for us to place ninth is pretty exciting. There are teams that come from all over the state, not just Oakland County, and the talent level is very good.'**

higher team finish.

"I was hoping Yash would be up higher because he was right behind Van Dyke at the league meet and the regionals," Smith noted. "If he could have stayed on the pace of earlier races we could have moved as high as sixth. Yash didn't run his best, but I suppose it's always easy to wonder what might have been."

Other Wildcat runners to finish were Jeff Jeffress (19:43, 78th place), Bill Letheman (20:37, his best time ever), freshman Chuck Dollison (22:42) and William Riedel (23:09). Both Jeffress and Letheman are sprinters on the track team trying to keep in shape and Smith was encouraged by their efforts.

"To me, for us to place ninth is pretty exciting," Smith said. "There are teams that come from all over the state, not just Oakland County and the talent level is very good."

## Wildcats of the Week



**CHRISTIE DUTHIE**

Christie Duthie may be only a freshman, but her performances all season in the pool for the Novi swim team have been veteran-type results. The freshman has compiled three school records during the '86 season, and Coach Chad balk knows the best is yet to come. For her efforts, Duthie had been named a "Wildcat of the Week." In a win over Brighton last Thursday, Duthie was a member of the 400-yard freestyle relay team that topped the old school mark by four full seconds with a winning time of 3:59.7. Against Chelsea, Duthie set a record in the 500 freestyle event (5:47.2) and versus Edsel Ford she grabbed another, this time in the 100 butterfly (1:05.0).



**ROB RASMUSSEN**

Sophomore cross-country runner Rob Rasmussen has been a big surprise for the Novi team, moving up from obscurity to the top spot on the team in less than a season's time. To wrap up the season, Rasmussen joined four other teammates and competed in the Michigan Junior Olympics 5,000-meter race last Saturday (Nov. 8). He was the the first Wildcat runner to cross the finish line in a time of 17:57, good for 51st overall in a field of about 130, and has been named a "Wildcat of the Week" for his efforts. "The competition was fierce," Novi Coach Bob Smith said. "This was better than the state finals because you had the best kids from all four classes."

## Runners compete for team

In the final running event of the '86 season, Coach Bob Smith took five members of the Novi cross-country team to compete in the Junior Olympics in Flint last Saturday (Nov. 8).

The competition was not a school-sanctioned event, but Smith took a contingent of young harriers to give them additional experience as well as an opportunity to make the Junior Olympic team from Michigan.

None of the five placed in the top 30 (to advance to the five-state regional later this month), but Smith said he was pleased with the performances of all his runners.

Sophomore Rob Rasmussen placed 51st in a field of approximately 130 runners in the 15-16 age group with a time of 17:57. Tony Hersberger, Bill Letheman and William Riedel all ran well in that same race, but finished near the back of the pack.

"The competition was fierce," Smith said. "This was better than the state finals because you had the best kids from all four classes."

In the 17-18 age group, Novi's Mike Ducker finished the 5,000-meter course in 19:57, placing 75th in a field of 78 runners.

# Prospects bright for Novi runners

WEDNESDAY  
November 12,  
1986

By NEIL GEOGHEGAN  
staff writer

The 1986 season was a rebirth of the Novi boys cross-country program, according to Coach Bob Smith.

The season provided the Wildcats with many opportunities to defeat opponents the team has never beaten before — and, for the first time in years, the Novi harriers made the most of their opportunities.

"I call it the renaissance," Smith said. "We had some good, powerful athletes in the program up until 1984 and then the bottom dropped out. There seemed to be a shortage of good athletes for awhile and (the cross-country team) was hit harder than anybody. But now we are coming back and earning back the respect we've had in the past."

Novi won its first Kensington Valley Conference dual meet ever in '86. As a matter of fact, the Wildcats won two dual meets (over Howell and South Lyon) and for the first time in a long time, managed to move out of the league cellar. Smith's troops placed sixth at the KVC Meet.

"We're not going to have any more of those droughts," Smith promised. "Our runners believe in themselves now, and they know how to win. Winning breeds winning and this season we finally started to do it."

The big surprise of '86 was the stunning improvement exhibited by sophomore Rob Rasmussen. Heading into the season, Rasmussen was a runner fighting for a varsity letter. At the end of the season, he was the Wildcats' number one runner.

"From the very first meet, Rob took off and has been very good," Smith said. "He's still got a long way to go, and I think he'll shave a lot more time off because right now he is still growing and doesn't have a lot of strength yet."

"He believes in himself. Once his body catches up to his mental growth, he'll be a real power."

At the start of the season, junior Craig Cowden was Novi's undisputed top runner and even though he lost some ground to Rasmussen, Cowden was still at or near the top. Cowden placed first among his teammates in six of the season's 12 races with Rasmussen winning the remaining six.

"They kept pushing each other and I think it is making them better — they are running harder," Smith said. "It's a very healthy competition."

"Craig (Cowden) improved this season. It just wasn't like the phenomenal growth that Rasmussen had. Craig quietly cut 35 seconds off his personal best time at Cass Benton."

The number three runner most of the year was another sophomore, Bret Van Dyke. At season's end, Van Dyke was just four seconds behind Rasmussen, giving Smith a very potent 1-2-3 punch next season. According to Smith, Van Dyke didn't train during the summer and it hurt him early. But once the season began, he started to improve dramatically.

"Bret just ran out of time," Smith said. "If the season was longer, he may have caught the other two."

The third sophomore very much in the picture for next season is Yash Rohatgi, who spend much of '86 with the junior varsity. Despite the J.V. status, Rohatgi recorded the fourth fastest time of the year for Novi runners and lacks only experience.

"He could develop into the top four next year, but right now he is behind the top three," Smith explained. "We have a very good sophomore class, but we are hurting without many freshmen in the program. We are good for two years, but we could be desperate after that — the soccer program is really wiping us out."



Rob Rasmussen and Craig Cowden will lead the Wildcats next year