

Smith says Wildcat harriers

By NEIL GEOGHEGAN
staff writer

Just how strong is the Kensington Valley Conference when it comes to cross country?

Well, Novi Boys Cross Country Coach Bob Smith says he has the best Wildcat team ever, but also admits that winning the KVC crown would be a very tall order indeed.

Smith has his top four runners back from last season. Actually, the graduation losses were minimal, as the number five, eight and nine runners have moved on. All this makes Novi's chances of improving on last

year's fifth place finish in the conference very good.

"I'm cautiously — but very — optimistic," Smith said. "This is the best team we've ever had, and I can say that without any reservations. Our top four are back, which is a nice luxury that very few teams have. I think we'll move up in the KVC standings — I know everybody in the program is gunning for the top."

Leading the way will be senior Rob Rasmussen, who has been the 'Cats top individual runner since he was a sophomore. Rasmussen should be among the elite of the KVC, and Smith has him thinking conference

champion.

"Rob is phenomenal," Smith said. "He had a prior commitment this summer so he didn't get a chance to run very much and he's not in as good shape as he was a year ago. But in a timed scrimmage, he was 28 seconds faster than a year ago, and that was all on pure ability."

"He's got the experience, and he could be the best in the league if all goes well. I think he should be running around the 16-minute mark this season — so as you can see, he's a talented young man," Smith added.

Last year's number two runner is also this year's number two. Senior

are 'best team ever'

Bret Van Dyke has put in many miles this summer in an attempt to keep up with Rasmussen, and Smith thinks he can do it — giving Novi a powerful 1-2 punch. Van Dyke is a four-year varsity contributor and was number three as a freshman.

The third runner will probably be sophomore Rob Herman, who was number five as a freshman in '87. Herman was just one second behind Van Dyke in the scrimmage and appears to be a star of the future.

"Rob's goal is to run with Van Dyke," Smith pointed out.

Junior Rob Neil will hold down the fourth spot, but after that, the talent

level drops off a bit. Neil had Novi's third fastest time at Cass Benton last season and has looked very impressive in early workouts.

Runners five through 10 haven't been established yet, but Smith is hoping the times will come further down regardless. Freshman Brian Molloy is the first Novi freshman ever to break the 20-minute barrier and he may be the fifth man. Senior William Riedel and junior Lee McMains are also vying for that spot. Riedel's been in the program for four years and McMains was the team's number four last year but came into pre-season workouts in less than

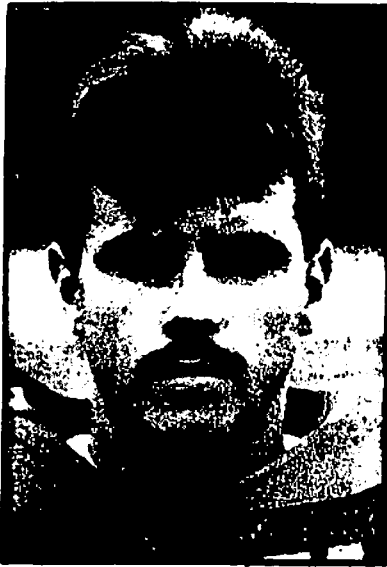
ideal shape.

The rest of the roster includes sophomore Brian Murphy, senior Yash Rohatgi and freshman Tim Norgren.

"We had nine guys go to cross country camp so they are ahead of the guys who didn't," Smith said. "Right now, our pack time is very wide but I think we'll narrow the gap in time. I just hope we can survive the early meets."

According to Smith, Milford is the pre-season favorite in the KVC with Novi, Hartland, Lakeland and Brighton all possible contenders.

Wildcats of the Week



CRAIG BERRY

After his performance in the second half of the Novi-Fenton football clash last Friday, junior runner Craig Berry is certainly an ideal 'Wildcat of the Week' honoree. After a lackluster first half, Berry destroyed Fenton almost single-handedly with a pair of flashy touchdowns in a 14-7 win. In the third quarter, Berry got behind the defense to catch a 39-yard scoring strike from quarterback Ken Hendrian. Then, with time running out and the score tied, Berry picked up a punt, broke several tackles and raced 83-yards for the game-winning T.D. Novi Coach John Osborne said it was one of the most electrifying punt returns he's ever seen, and he's been the Novi coach more than 20 years. For the game, Berry caught three passes for 52 yards.



ROB RASMUSSEN

In KVC cross-country action last week, Novi's Rob Rasmussen was the only Novi runner who could keep up with a wave of Lakeland harriers. By the mile-mark, Rasmussen was battling three Eagle runners all by himself without a teammate in sight. At the end of the race, the senior out-kicked all three to place first in the meet by a full 10 seconds with a time of 17:19. Unfortunately, Novi lost the team race 23-36, but Rasmussen took the first of what will probably be many individual firsts this season. That's why he is one of our 'Wildcats of the Week.' "Rob ran well enough to win," Novi Coach Bob Smith said. "We both know he can go faster, but he really didn't need to."

Lakeland stuns Wildcat harriers

A Kensington Valley Conference (KVC) championship is no longer the number one goal of the Novi boys cross-country team.

Coach Bob Smith's Wildcat harriers have altered their objectives after suffering a 23-36 setback at the hands of the Lakeland Eagles in their dual-meet opener last Thursday.

Winning the KVC crown was definitely on Smith's mind prior to the start of the season when the veteran Wildcat mentor tabbed Milford as the conference favorite and predicted that Novi, Hartland and Brighton would all be in the running for top honors.

Smith also said he hoped his Wildcats were a notch above any of the contenders. But that was before the Lakeland meet when the Eagles used superior depth to dump Novi 23-36.

"In cross-country, if a team is significantly better than you are, it's better to get it over with and learn from it," he said. "We're not shooting for a KVC championship as our number one goal anymore, we

Smith: 'We're not shooting for a KVC championship as our number one goal anymore, we want to try and qualify as a team for the state meet.'

want to try and qualify as a team for the state meet. I think that's a realistic goal."

Lakeland, the defending KVC champs, established control early in the race by placing five or six runners in a pack at the front. Novi's Rob Rasmussen stayed with the top group, but was the only Wildcat to do so.

"We let them establish a lead in the first three-quarters of a mile and that was damaging psychologically," Smith said. "We need to go out and run with our competition early, and hopefully we won't be so far behind later on. Lakeland is a better team

that we are at this point of the season. But with some more training and experience, I still think we can be up with them later on this season."

Rasmussen did more than stay up with the Lakeland front-runners, he ended up finishing first with a respectable time of 17:19.

The problem was that the next Wildcat runner — Bret Van Dyke — finished fifth, more than 40 seconds off the pace.

"Rob ran well enough to win," Smith said. "He won by 10 seconds. We both know he can go faster, but he really didn't need to.

"We hoped Bret would stay close, but he is still recovering from knee and arch injuries. I'm confident he'll close the gap in the next few meets."

Rob Herman was the third Novi runner across the finish line, placing seventh overall (18:09). He was followed by freshman Brian Molloy (12th in 18:55), Rob Nell (13th in 19:31), Yash Rohatgi (14th in 20:02), Brian Murphy (15th in 20:13) and Lee McMains (17th in 20:34).

"Brian Molloy ran an outstanding race," Smith said. "To break 19 minutes in your first ever cross-country meet is unheard of."

Smith is very concerned with pack times, especially the interval between his number one and five runners. Novi's fifth runner placed 13th overall, and according to Smith, that's where the 'Cats lost it.

"Our pack time from one through five was way too big," he said. "I was hoping it would be closer."

The Wildcats will compete in the Schoolcraft Invite this weekend and will take on KVC foe Howell on Tuesday, Sept. 20.

Wildcat harriers upset Hartland

By NEIL GEOGHEGAN
staff writer

Look out! The Novi boys cross-country squad is really starting to put it all together.

With the disappointment of a season-opening loss to Lakeland channeled into raw determination, the Wildcat thinclads went out last week and topped the co-defending Kensington Valley Conference (KVC) champs from Hartland 22-33 on Sept. 13.

For Novi Coach Bob Smith, it was a welcome return to the kind of performance he had envisioned for the team prior to the season. The win evens the 'Cats' KVC mark to 1-1 and keeps the team in the hunt for its first-ever conference championship.

Amazingly, it was the first time Novi has ever beaten the Eagles in boys cross-country.

"If we would have run as well as

we did against Hartland when we took on Lakeland, we could be 2-0 now," Smith said. "We did extremely well against Hartland. We're a much improved team from a week ago, and I think we learned some valuable lessons from the loss to Lakeland.

"The kids didn't feel any remorse after Lakeland — we turned it around."

Senior Rob Rasmussen remained undefeated so far this season with a fabulous time of 16:58. It was the fastest time ever recorded by a Novi runner at Northville's Cass Benton Park. Rasmussen broke his own personal best time by a second and remains the only Wildcat runner ever to break 17 minutes at Cass Benton.

Second place overall went to Novi's Bret Van Dyke, who is coming off some injury problems. The senior toured the course with a time of 17:09, his personal best time at Cass Benton by 20 seconds. The 'Cats next

runner was Rob Herman, who finished fourth overall. His time of 17:49 was also a personal best by 45 seconds.

The rest of the Novi finishers included freshman Brian Malloy in seventh (18:11), Rob Neil in eighth (18:19), Brian Murphy in 15th (19:33) and Lee McMains in 16th (19:33).

"Our number one-through-five runners are really starting to gel," observed Smith. "After number five, we still have a hole, but the personal best times are coming in on almost everybody. It was just unreal."

SCHOOLCRAFT INVITE: The Wildcats wrapped up a successful week with a stellar performance in this 20-team invitational on Sept. 17.

Novi placed two runners in the top 10 and ended up third in the team standings with 113 points. Farmington won the team battle with 91 points.

"Hey, third out of 20 — I'll take it,"

Smith said. "We ran real well."

Rasmussen registered his fastest time ever (16:18) to finish third overall. Van Dyke also had his best time (16:36) and was 10th. Rob Herman was 28th overall (17:00), Malloy was 29th (17:05) and Neil was 45th (17:27). For Malloy, a freshman, it has been a great start to what promises to be a great high school running career.

"Malloy is running times that Rob (Rasmussen) and Bret (Van Dyke) never dreamed of as freshmen," Smith commented. "He's our future franchise."

Yash Rohatgi placed 80th (18:21) filling in for the injured Lee McMains, and Brian Murphy rounded out Novi's top seven in 86th place (18:30).

"We're really starting to come together," Smith said. "To be a state-calibre team like we want to be, we have to be this good."

Rasmussen leads harriers to victory

With a lopsided victory over a Kensington Valley Conference opponent and an impressive outing at a prestigious multiple-team invitational last week, the Novi boys cross-country team is continuing to roll right along.

The Wildcat harriers thumped host Howell 16-43 on Sept. 29 to run their KVC record to 2-1. The only blemish on Novi's record is a season-opening loss to Lakeland — a meet that Wildcat Coach Bob Smith laments to this day.

"Boy, I wish we could have that Lakeland meet back," he said.

Against the Highlanders, Novi put four runners across the finish line before Howell could respond. Senior Rob Rasmussen remained unbeaten in KVC competition with his third straight victory of the year, winning the race in 17:08. He was followed by Bret Van Dyke (17:34), Rob Herman (18:12) and Rob Neil (18:24).

"Bret Van Dyke led the race for a while so I was happy to see that," Smith said. "He was able to run with Rasmussen and when he does that, we have a great 1-2 punch."

Freshman Brian Malloy had a case of the flu, but still placed sixth overall in 19:00. The rest of the scoring places were filled by Yash Rohatgi (ninth in 19:12.2) and Brian Murphy (10th in 19:12.5).

"Our pack time was just under two minutes and that alarms me," commented Smith. "Too many teams put their runners between our third and fifth men, so we'll have to narrow that gap."

WALLED LAKE INVITE: This 11-team invitational on Sept. 24 at Willis Park was split into two races — one for ninth and 10th graders and the other for 11th/12th graders. Novi ran well and placed third and second respectively behind Walled Lake Western in both events, but if the two

Smith: 'Our pack time was just under two minutes and that alarms me.'

races were combined, Novi would have been the winner.

"We were the hypothetical overall champion," Smith asserted. "As long as we keep healthy, we're competitive with anybody at any age level."

In the junior/senior race, Rasmussen finished third overall (16:49), while Van Dyke came in fifth (17:24). The rest of the Wildcat runners included Neil (15th in 18:01), Rohatgi (30th in 19:29) and Jeff Jeffress (37th in 20:02).

But the highlight of the meet came in the underclassmen race, where Rob Herman placed first overall with a time of 17:47. It was a 30-second-plus victory for the sophomore, who was the only runner to finish the race under the 18-minute barrier.

"Rob ran a great race," reported Smith. "He would have been seventh overall if the two races were combined."

The rest of the Novi contingent included Malloy (seventh in 18:46), Murphy (15th in 19:22), Scott MacKercher (20:47), Rob Fileta (20:48), Tim Norgren (34th in 21:19) and John Polakowski (48th in 25:36).

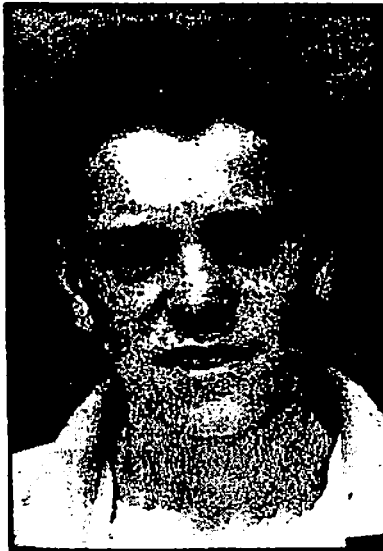
"On the day, six kids brought home medals so it was a good outing," Smith commented.

Wildcats of the Week



OSCAR MARINO

Oscar Marino may be the first non-American awarded 'Wildcat of the Week' honors, but the exchange student from Spain certainly deserves the honor. In a stunning soccer victory over Ann Arbor Pioneer on Sept. 23, Marino notched the game-winner in the second half on an unassisted goal, giving the underdog Novi team a 2-1 win. Two days earlier, Marino almost single-handedly bought the 'Cats back from a 3-1 deficit against Dearborn, the state's fifth-ranked Class B team, with a pair of second-half goals. Marino took a pass from Bryan Anderson for his second goal of the week, then scored his third on a pass from Todd Wise. Unfortunately, the comeback bid fell a goal short.



ROB HERMAN

Sophomore harrier Rob Herman often performs in the shadows of senior teammates like Rob Rasmussen and Bret Van Dyke, but on Sept. 24 at the Walled Lake Invite, he was the star. In a race against runners his age, Herman finished first in a field of nearly 100 runners. His time of 17:47 was the only sub-18 minute run as he beat the second-place finisher by more than 30 seconds. "Rob ran a great race," said Novi Coach Bob Smith. "He would have been seventh overall if the two races were combined." Herman also finished third (18:12) in a dual-meet victory over Howell last week. For the great effort, Herman is one of our "Wildcats of the Week."

Cross country

**Detroit C.C. a clear winner
in Royal Oak Invitational**

Detroit Catholic Central, ranked No. 2 in Class A boys' cross country, defeated its nearest opponent by 39 points Saturday in the Royal Oak Invitational.

Catholic Central had 41 points to Milford's 80 and Brother Rice's 94.

Junior Mike Sheridan, the individual winner in 16:27, led a group of five Catholic Central runners among the top 15 finishers. Jeff Fedewa was fifth (16:52), Chris Antczak ninth (16:58), Chris Lutz 11th (17:04) and Dave Galvin 15th (17:18).

and placing three runners in the top 15 of the
by

Waterford Kettering 57-67 for the girls' title at Walled Lake Western. Waterford Kettering and North Farmington were next with 69 points.

Colleen Yuhn of Walled Lake Central was the girls' individual winner in 20:16.

— Randal Yaakey

THURSDAY
October 6,
1988

Wildcats surprise Brighton runners

By NEIL GEOGHEGAN
staff writer

In attempting to calculate the outcome of the meet in advance, Bob Smith, coach of the Novi boys cross-country team, figured his team was in for a narrow 28-29 loss to Brighton.

But that was only on paper.

When the two KVC teams actually squared off on Sept. 27 at Cass Benton Park, the Wildcats pulled out a 26-30 triumph, proving that wins are earned out on the course and not on paper.

"We threw a monkey wrench into the mock race," Smith said. "We match up well with Brighton, right down the line. There were two very evenly-matched teams, but I think we ran a smarter race than they did. We've learned how to race, not just how to run."

For the first time this season, Novi senior Rob Rasmussen didn't come in first in a dual meet. He was locked in a struggle with Brighton's Jim Hanners the entire race, but was out-kicked in the final hundred yards and had to settle for second. Hanner won the race in 16:44, while Rasmussen was three seconds behind.

"Rob was a little disappointed, but by the time the conference meet comes around, he'll probably be ahead of Hanner," Smith said. "Rob shaved 11 seconds off his personal best at Cass Benton, so his time was excellent. The two ran together the whole way, but Hanner just outsprinted him at the end."

Bret Van Dyke won his confrontation with Todd Snyder of the Bulldogs and so did Rob Herman. Van Dyke (17:23) was third overall, Herman was fourth (17:33) and Snyder fifth (17:40).

"On paper, it looked like another close dual for third place between Van Dyke and Snyder, but Bret pulled it out and so did Herman," Smith explained.

The rest of the Novi runners to score points included Brian Malloy (eighth place in 18:33), Rob Nell (ninth in 18:40), Yash Rohatgi (10th in 19:03) and Brian Murphy (13th in 19:14).

"Each team placed in waves, but we got our sixth man in before (Brighton) got their fifth and that was the big difference," Smith said. "It was a matter of depth in the middle of the line-up."

The Wildcats (3-1 in the KVC) are currently in third place — behind Lakeland and Milford.

Novi boys win Ann Arbor Invite

If Bob Smith wants his Novi boys cross-country squad to be considered one of the area's top teams, all he has to do is hope the Wildcat harriers will continue to perform like they did at the Ann Arbor Pioneer Invitational.

The 34-team event at Buhr Park on Oct. 8 was split into two divisions. And Novi ended up placing first in one of them with 50 points.

The only other Kensington Valley Conference (KVC) team in the division was South Lyon, which placed ninth with 211 points.

"It was great because there was some very good competition in Ann Arbor," reported Smith, the veteran coach of the Wildcat harriers. "I quietly hoped we'd win it, but I didn't really know how realistic that was because I didn't know much about some of the teams in the field."

Novi star Rob Rasmussen waged a man-to-man battle with a Battle Creek Central runner for the entire race only to lose it down the stretch. As a result, the Wildcat star had to settle for second place, but his time of 16:27 was impressive nonetheless.

Smith: 'I quietly hoped we'd win it, but I didn't really know how realistic that was because I didn't know much about some of the teams in the field.'

Rasmussen set the pace for a group of Novi runners who ended up claiming five of the top 20 places. Bret Van Dyke was fifth overall (16:58), Rob Herman came in ninth (17:19), Mike Malloy finished 14th (17:34) and Rob Neil crossed the finish line in the 20th position (17:53).

"I don't think we've ever had five runners underneath the 18-minute mark on a true course — and Buhr Park is a true course," Smith said. "Our pack time has improved. We went from 1:45 several days earlier to 1:25, so the guys at the end of our

line-up cut off 20 seconds and that was the key."

REDFORD UNION INVITE: On Oct. 4 at Cass Benton, the 'Cats proved they can run with the best of the Western Lakes Athletic Association by finishing fifth in the 18-team event.

Novi scored 110 points, just 16 behind first-place Plymouth Canton and only seven points out of second place.

"It was real close — only the best teams in the Western Lakes finished

ahead of us," Smith noted. "We could have run a little better back in the pack, but our front runners did very well."

Rasmussen finished second in the individual race to Walled Lake Western's Brian Grasso, who may very well be the premier distance runner in the state this year. Grasso blew away the rest of the field with an incredible time of 15:30. Rasmussen was next about a minute later (16:34) as he shaved a full 13 seconds off his own school record on the Cass Benton course.

"It was remarkable that Rob could shave almost a half a minute off his best time," Smith said. "When you're as good as he is, it's hard to continue to drop times like that, but he was really digging down."

Van Dyke recorded a personal-best of 17:11 to finish in eighth place. He was followed by Herman (16th in 17:29), Malloy (37th in 18:12) and Neil (47th in 18:19).

Novi (3-1 overall) will return to KVC dual meet action on Oct. 18 at South Lyon.

Milford outruns Wildcats

By NEIL GEOGHEGAN
staff writer

Coming up a little short against one of the state's best cross-country teams is not something to moan about.

The Novi harriers simply didn't have the kind of depth needed to beat fifth-ranked Milford on Oct. 11 at Cass Benton Park, but that didn't stop the 'Cats from running a great race.

The Redskins came out ahead 24-36 in the final analysis, but it was relatively close with Novi taking two of the top three places individually. The Wildcats left the meet feeling disappointed but also left with a feeling of pride, knowing Milford had to work very hard for the victory.

"Our guys ran great," said Bob Smith, coach of the Novi team. "The only way we were going to beat them was by using an element of surprise and that was our plan. We wanted to go out as hard and as fast as we could and hope that when their runners found themselves behind early, it would demoralize them."

The rabbits in the race were senior Bret Van Dyke and sophomore Rob Herman, who were 1-2 for much of the race with teammate Rob Rasmussen close behind. But the experienced Redskin runners stayed with striking distance and made a move in the final mile.

Rasmussen outkicked everybody to come in first in 16:35 — more than 20 seconds ahead of Milford's number one man.

Van Dyke took third (16:59), registering his all-time best effort at Cass Benton. But the fast early pace took a toll on a fast-fading Herman, who could manage no better than ninth overall (17:34).

"After Van Dyke, Milford had five guys cross the finish line within 24 seconds of each other," Smith said. "Herman ran very well, but he couldn't maintain it all the way through. He still had his fastest time ever at Cass Benton but it just wasn't enough."

The rest of the Novi finishers included Brian Malloy (13th place with a personal best time of 18:06), Rob Neil (16th in 18:20), Yash Rohatgi (17th in 18:28) and Brian Murphy (23rd in 18:58).

"We came up a little short, but Milford is a tough team," commented Smith. "They won the 37-team Oakland County Meet and are ranked in the top five in the state. Their program is so strong that their J.V. team can beat every varsity team in the KVC except us and Lakeland."

The Wildcats (3-2 overall and in the KVC) are now preparing for the KVC Meet, slated for Tuesday, Oct. 25.

Rasmussen leads Wildcat runners past South Lyon

In an attempt to gain a few valuable days of training on Lakeland and Milford, the Novi harriers ran right through their dual meet with South Lyon at Cass Benton Park on Oct. 18.

Amazingly, the 'Cats cruised to a 17-44 triumph over the Lions, and did it without the considerable services of number-two runner Bret Van Dyke and without tapering off at practices.

"We ran right through this race without breaking our workouts, so we ran very tired," noted Bob Smith, coach of the Wildcat harriers. "But I think this will help us against Lakeland and Milford at the KVC Meet. They went against each other on the same day. I know they tapered off their workouts just before the meet, so I'm hoping we gained some ground on them."

The Lions have a young and promising team, but are in the midst of a rebuilding process and are still a couple of years away, according to Smith.

"They are a little down like we were a couple years ago, but they'll be back," he said.

Novi received the typical efforts from standouts like Rob Rasmussen and Rob Herman, but Smith was even more impressed with performances by several runners further down in the line-up — runners like Rob Neil, Rob Fileta and Brian Malloy.

"I was especially happy with those

three," Smith said. "Even though we had them running very tired, they still had personal-best efforts."

Malloy finished third overall (18:09) and cut three seconds off his personal-best time at Cass Benton. Neil was fourth overall (18:06) and backed five seconds off his previous-best time, while Fileta was down in ninth, but his time of 19:11 was a full two-minutes better than his all-time best.

Rasmussen took first place honors (17:01) and was followed by Herman in second (17:51) as the Wildcats grabbed the top four spots in the team competition.

Other Novi finishers included Yash Rohatgi (seventh place in 18:50) and Brian Murphy (eighth in 19:08). In the meet, Novi's top-five pack time was a respectable 1:49 — not bad considering Van Dykes' absence.

"Van Dyke has a knee problem so I didn't run him," Smith said. "But I'm confident he'll be back and ready for the league meet."

The 'Cats finished the regular season with a 4-2 mark against KVC opponents. The two losses came against Lakeland and Milford. Heading into the KVC Meet on Oct. 25 (after The News' deadline), Smith was pointing toward Lakeland and a second place finish.

"I still want to beat Lakeland," he said. "We have the personnel to beat anybody in our league except Milford, and they are ranked sixth in the state."

Number One

Rasmussen wins KVC title

By NEIL GEOGHEGAN
staff writer

The bigger the meet, the better Rob Rasmussen seems to perform.

In cross-country action last week, the Novi senior did it again and it happened not once, but twice — at the Kensington Valley Conference (KVC) Meet and again at the MHSAA Regionals.

And with Rasmussen, it was no coincidence.

At the KVC Meet at Ironwood Golf Course in Howell on Oct. 25, Rasmussen led the Wildcats to a third-place team finish by leading all runners to the finish line, thus becoming first runner in the history of Novi High School to win the KVC cross-country championship.

It's quite an accomplishment considering the KVC is one of the most respected cross-country leagues in the state.

"We've never had a KVC champion," Novi Coach Bob Smith said. "It's actually the first time we've ever had anybody in the top seven — which is considered All-KVC."

"Rob commands a lot of respect from all the coaches in this league. They were coaching and planning around him to try and beat him, but Rob ran one of the best races of his life."

Rasmussen ran his normal first mile in the 5:30 range but then, about a quarter-mile later, began throwing in calculated surges and managed to gain a couple places each time.

His sixth surge at the two-mile mark broke the field open and he cruised to the finish line in 16:41.

Rasmussen won the race by 20 seconds, ahead of Milford's Dave Rogers. He was the only competitor in the field to break the 17-minute mark.

"Rob is remarkable," Smith said. "He's earned everything he's now getting. He's come out of obscurity as a freshman and now he's really a legend in his own time around here. He's a great inspiration to all the younger guys."

Milford won the team title with 28 points, Lakeland was second (65 points), Novi came in third (75), Hartland was fourth (101), Brighton finished fifth (121), Howell came in sixth (147) and South Lyon was seventh (195).

"The league meet came out exactly the same way as the dual meets came out," Smith said. "We were only 10 points behind Lakeland — the seventh-ranked team in the state — so I was excited about the way we performed."

Bret Van Dyke placed 12th overall in the race to grab second team All-KVC honors. The senior finished the race in 17:27 — just two seconds out of eighth place.

"Bret did well," Smith said. "It was a nice way for him to wrap up four years of running in the KVC."

The rest of the Novi finishers included Rob Herman (16th place in 17:56), Rob Neil (20th in 18:14), Brian Malloy (26th in 18:46), Yash Rohatgi (33rd in 19:32) and Brian Murphy (34th in 19:32).

"Malloy came up with a cramp so he didn't run as well as he could," Smith said. "I think it was just a matter of not being warmed-up properly. He was very disappointed in his time but I wasn't, considering the circumstances. Overall, it was the best we've ever run at Ironwood."

The third place team finish is Novi's highest ever. According to Smith, his team has shown steady improvement in every KVC Meet the last few years.

"Four years ago we were last, three years ago we were sixth, two years ago and last year we were fifth and now we're third, so we are improving," he said. "I honestly feel we are one of the top 15 teams in the state. Just because we are in the same league as Milford and Lakeland, a lot of people may not realize how good we are."

MHSAA REGIONALS: Rasmussen came back on Oct. 28 at Ironwood to have another outstanding outing as he ran to a third place finish to qualify for a berth in the MHSAA Class A state finals this weekend.

As a team, Novi placed ninth out of 19 with 227 points. Milford was first (58) while Lakeland came in third (97) as both KVC powers qualified for team competition in the state finals due to their top-three finishes.

Rasmussen finished the race in 16:38 — three seconds better than his KVC run — but was over a minute behind Walled Lake Western great Brian Grasso (15:34). Grasso may well be the top runner in the state this year.

As a top-10 regional finisher, Rasmussen will be competing at the State Meet at the Flint IMA Golf Course on Nov. 5.

At the three-quarter mile mark, Smith was shocked to see Rasmussen running all the way down in 75th place. But as it turned out, much of the field took off too quickly and Rasmussen resisted the temptation and maintained his normal first-mile pace.

"When I saw he was that far down, I thought something was wrong," Smith said. "But in reality, he handled it very well by sticking to his race plan. He showed a lot of patience and maturity by staying on his pace. The better the competition, the better Rob runs."

Soon after that, with others started dropping back like mad, Rasmussen started passing opponents in droves and soon he was comfortably in third.

"I think Rob has a good chance to be in the top 10 in the state meet because this was the toughest regional in the state," Smith said. "I don't want to put more pressure on him, but Rob could conceivably finish second in the state — nobody is going to catch Grasso."

Rasmussen takes 8th place finish in Class A finals

Novi's Rob Rasmussen wrapped up a brilliant prep cross-country career last weekend with an eighth-place finish in the MHSAA Class A State Finals.

Rasmussen missed All-State accolades by less than two seconds, but he did finish in front of 84 of the best cross-country runners in the State of Michigan.

The meet was held Nov. 5 at the Flint IMA Golf Course despite cold, wet and windy conditions.

"Weather-wise it was miserable, but it rained on everybody," noted Bob Smith, coach of the Wildcat harriers. "Rob ran in the fourth race of the day and as the day went on, the course got a little slower — so the times were a little slower. As usual, it was a great effort by Rob — he ran another smart race."

Rasmussen's time of 16:53.8 wasn't anywhere near his personal best time, but it was very good, considering the conditions.

"Rob's time wasn't exciting but everybody's times were high," Smith said. "Because the course was so slippery and slow, all the runners were trying to get to the first turn as fast as they could and it turned into an all-out sprint in the first 200 yards."

Without blazing speed, Rasmussen was way back in 85th place after the first corner, but he came on to post a 5:08 first mile — about 12 seconds quicker than his normal first-mile average.

"Rob went out a little faster than usual, but he didn't overreact like a lot of the others so he didn't fade down the stretch," Smith said.

After a mile, Rasmussen moved up to 21st place and during the second mile, he proceeded to pass runners at every turn. In the last half of the race, Rasmussen passed several dozen runners and was passed by other runners only twice.

"He was picking off people left and right," Smith said. "From the start, he really ran through almost

**Smith: 'He's
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the whole field."

After two miles he was entrenched in ninth place. From that point on, there were very few position changes at the front of the pack. In the final 200 yards, Rasmussen was edged by KVC-rival Jim Hanner of Brighton for seventh place.

"He was noosed out by Hanner," Smith said. "This season, those two are now 2-2. Obviously, they are two very comparable and talented runners."

First-place honors went to Niles' Dave Couch (16:30). Defending state champion Brian Grasso of Walled Lake Western was in the process of running away with the race before he made a wrong turn. The blunder ended up tacking an additional half-mile to his race. Amazingly, Grasso still managed to finish fifth, beating Rasmussen by a second.

"Rob is going to continue running now that the high school season is over," Smith said. "He's going to go to the Kinney Invitational in Racine, Wisconsin, over the Thanksgiving weekend, and that's a prestigious national event."

"He's the best runner we've ever had as a Class A school. He's our premier KVC performer with a league title, course records all over the place and an eighth place finish in the state meet."

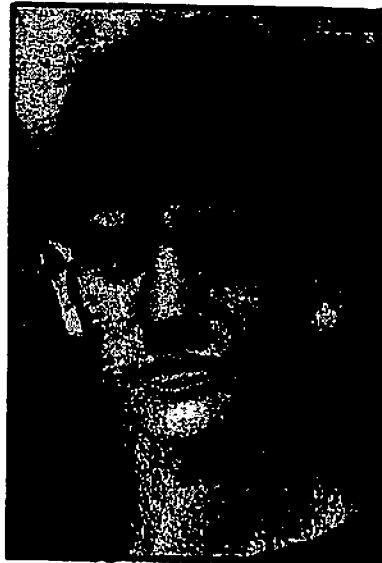
"He's been a dandy."

Wildcats of the Week



KEN HENDRIAN

Novi quarterback Ken Hendrian saved his best performance of the season for the playoffs, and his effort was a key factor in the Wildcats' 22-14 overtime victory against Okemos. That's why Hendrian has been selected as a "Wildcat of the Week." The senior signal-caller completed 7-of-12 passes for 127 yards and no interceptions in the MHSAA first-round playoff clash. He also scored the winning touchdown in overtime on a one-yard sneak. "Ken's a solid quarterback and he's been improving," Novi Coach John Osborne said. "I feel real confident in him. He had some nice touch passes and a couple of good runs."



ROB RASMUSSEN

Novi's Rob Rasmussen is the eighth best individual cross-country runner in the State of Michigan and we think "Wildcat of the Week" honors are in order. The senior placed eighth in a field of 94 runners at the State Championship Meet in Flint on Nov. 5, and it came after a slow start. After 200 yards, Rasmussen was about 85th but he picked up 64 places in the next mile and was up to ninth at the two-mile mark. "He's the best runner we've ever had as a Class A school," Wildcat Coach Bob Smith said. "He's our premier KVC performer with a league title, course records all over the place and an eighth place finish in the state meet. He's been a dandy."

Young Wildcat harriers shine at Kimball meet

The Novi girls and boys cross-country teams wrapped up the 1988 season with a freshman/sophomore meet at Royal Oak Kimball in early November.

The Ladycats ended up finishing fifth in the 21-team field, placing two runners in the top 20.

"I was very happy with our youngsters," commented Norm Norgren, coach of the Novi girls. "To be among the top quarter teams in a field of 21 is good — and we were without runners like Melissa Marinetti and Deanna Hayden, who were injured."

Sophomore Cherie Stewart — the number three runner for the Ladycat varsity — finished sixth overall with a time of 20:35. She was followed by Tony Sturm in 19th place (22:26), Amy Ahrens in 39th (23:28), Jackie Phillips in 57th (24:46) and Becky Messer in 68th (26:42).

BOYS CROSS-COUNTRY: Coach Bob Smith's crew placed ninth out of 28 teams with 247 points — 159 points

Smith: 'Last year we were 11th, so we're moving up. We didn't have the depth to contend for first, but we did have some pretty nice runs.'

behind first-place Milford.

"Last year we were 11th, so we're moving up," Smith said. "We didn't have the depth to contend for first, but we did have some pretty nice runs."

Sophomore Rob Herman finished third overall in the field of 225 runners. His time of 17:29 was just 12 seconds behind the first-place finisher.

"There was standing water on the

course, so obviously times were slowed," Smith said. "But Rob's time was pretty good considering the conditions."

Second for Novi and 13th overall was Brian Molloy (17:57), who ran despite a case of the flu. He was followed by Brian Murphy in 37th (18:32), Scott MacKercher in 83rd (19:43) and Mark Strausberg in 109th (20:14).

"Our fifth man was in the top half, so that was very good," Smith said.