

# Gledhill was off and running after giving up soccer

Nobody likes to be told, "I told you so."

But to the fastest high school half-miler in Michigan, the nation and maybe the world, that deplorable phrase is sweet music.

"Turn your back on the one you love," a track coach told him, "and you can be a star someday."

That's the advice Mt. Clemens' Rick Gledhill reluctantly accepted four years ago, and he subsequently has become the nation's top-ranked 800-meter runner.

Told you so.



**Scott Walton**  
running

At age 14, urged on by Chippewa Valley coach Frank Tymrak, Gledhill ran away from the thing he loved best — soccer. He was gaining recognition as one of the state's best soccer players and had qualified as a Junior Olympian.

But when Tymrak watched him dash across the soccer field, he saw a potential middle-distance runner.

"All you need is a little polish," Tymrak told Gledhill repeatedly.

Much buffing by Tymrak — huffing and puffing by Gledhill — later, Gledhill produced the fastest 800 meters

ever by a Michigan prep performer (1:50.3). And after setting that record at the Class A championships two weeks ago, Gledhill ran a personal best (1:49.3) and won the Keebler International invitational in Elmhurst, Ill., last week, earning Track and Field magazine's national No. 1 ranking.

Told you so.

"All along I believed to myself that God had meant for me to be a good athlete, but I never intended to be a great runner," said Gledhill, 6-foot-1, 160 pounds.

"The local coaches saw my talent as a runner long ago. They said that I had world-class potential and I never believed them. Now I'm starting to prove them right."

Said Tymrak: "It doesn't matter if he's racing bicycles, running, or playing soccer, he always shows the burn-

ing desire to succeed. I can honestly say he's the finest 800-meter runner ever to come out of Michigan."

In recent weeks, Gledhill has shown that the competition poses less a threat than does his own disbelief of his superiority in the 800. While competing at the Golden West Invitational in Sacramento, Calif., before the Keebler, Gledhill was so stunned by his tremendous lead in the final stretch that he lunged prematurely and unnecessarily at the tape, fell and failed to finish.

"You sometimes have to run scared," Gledhill said. "You want it so bad, but you can't taste it until you cross that finish line."

Gledhill, who will run for Michigan State's track and cross-country teams next season, is competing today in the Junior TAC nationals in Tallahassee, Fla. The top two finishers advance to

the Junior World Championships in Sudbury, Ontario, in July.

"Rick's got the best time for the 800 in the country now, and he's not afraid of anybody," said MSU cross-country coach Jim Stincy. "He's got another opportunity this weekend where he could run time to put him on the all-time top 10 or 20 list. He's capable of that."

Stincy and Tymrak agree that Gledhill's dominance stems from his determination.

"He's really just started his career as a runner," Tymrak said. "He has fresh legs, although he trains very hard. He doesn't put in the long-distance miles that others do. Instead he does his workouts at race pace. He may run four miles, but it will be a blistering four miles."

Said Gledhill: "Probably the two

biggest factors leading to my success are that I learned to enjoy track and I realized some confidence in myself. One problem I had before was not enough self-confidence. Now I'm not too confident, just confident enough."

**NOTEBOOK:** Torn between the recreational and competitive aspects of road running? Why not take part in the Eastside YMCA's Kinda Fun Run at 9 a.m. Saturday at Chandler Park (Corner exit off I-94) and enjoy the best of both. After the featured five-kilometer race will be a one-mile for adults and mini-race for youths 10 and under, both at 10 a.m. Proceeds go the Y's Invest-in-Youth Fund, which sends disadvantaged kids to summer camp. Registration lasts up to 8:15 a.m. Saturday for \$7, \$8 for both races. Call 921-0770 today for more details. . . .

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