

The Novi News' special spring sports preview issue

THURSDAY
April 5,
1990

Rebuilding year for boys squad

By NEIL GEOGHEGAN
staff writer

Coming off a 7-1 season that included the shattering of 11 school records (out of 17 total events), what could the current Novi boys track team possibly do for an encore?

According to coach Bob Smith, there will be no encores, no command performances. And if you examine the massive graduation losses the program has suffered, you can understand why.

Four-time Kensington Valley Conference champ Maurice Richardson is gone, and so are other KVC champs like Jeff Jeffress and Daren Johnson. But that is just the tip of the iceberg.

"We lost a lot of guys in all the events," Smith admitted. "This year we have a completely different team, so there won't be any comparisons with last year's team."

There are some returnees in the field events, but there are also plenty of untested newcomers. The team's number-one shot-putter from a year ago — senior Randy Thompson — is back, but the rest of the corps includes only two individuals with any experience: senior Matt Konedá and sophomore Bob Zdravkowski. The top discus returnee is junior Scott MacKercher, with Thompson and Zdravkowski also in the picture.

"I'd say Randy Thompson in the shot put is probably our best chance for a KVC title," Smith said.

Junior Kris Krueger is the top returning high-jumper, but at long-jump newcomers Tom Hunsberger (jr.) and Shawn Bathlow (jr.) will be counted on to come through. The top pole-vaulter is sophomore Chris Rafferty, but other like Steve Myers (jr.), Rob Fileta (jr.) and Greg Larson (jr.) could make it a strong event.

Konedá was the team's top hurdler last season, but off-season knee surgery may prevent him

from competing. That leaves a group with no high school experience in either the high or intermediate hurdles. Junior Joe Taylor and senior Rob Neil are possibilities.

"Konedá qualified for the KVC finals in the high hurdles last year but he is unable to run at full speed right now, and that hurts," Smith explained. "He will throw the shot and discus and try to get back by the end of the season."

The sprint crew will be led by sophomore Ken Fenchel, with Hunsberger, Bathlow and Taylor also competing in the 100- and 200-meter dashes and possibly the sprint relays. Fenchel is also the team's top 400-meter man, with Rob Neil, Rob Herman (jr.) and Brian Molloy (so.) also possibilities.

The strength of the team may be in the distance events. Molloy, one of the top state's cross-country performers, will be the team's number-one miler and two-miler, but other cross-country runners like Neil, Herman, Brian Murphy (jr.) and Colin O'Sullivan (sr.) will provide depth.

"We are very green everywhere," Smith admitted. "Our expectations are quite different than in the past. I hate to use the word 'rebuilding' but it's the one that really fits. We are definitely looking to the future."

There will be little time for sympathy, however, as the Wildcats opened the regular season April 3 (after the News' deadline) at home against always-tough Lakeland.

"It's going to be a tough year," Smith said. "We seem to have a cyclical talent in Novi — we have a few off years and then we are very good for a couple years."

"We're going to get beat up, and we realize we won't win a lot of meets, but out of 48 guys on the team, 25 are brand new and 39 of them are underclassmen. It's unbelievable."

THURSDAY
April 12,
1990

Boys top Mustang trackers

By NEIL GEOGHEGAN
staff writer

It's a lot easier to convince your team to run two-miles immediately after a track meet if you were victorious in the competition.

Following Novi's 75-62 triumph over host Northville on April 5, Wildcat Coach Bob Smith, his coaching staff and all 45 of his performers were spotted running north on Taft Road back to Novi High School. An empty bus also made the trek.

"This is a good group of kids who are willing to put in the work," Smith said. "It was critical for us to get off to a good start this season. The kids now know they are a pretty good team if you are comparing us to the average team. That may not show up in the Kensington Valley Conference standings, so it's important that we got off to a good start against a non-conference opponent."

It was the season opener for both squads, and it was staged on a cold, blustery day better suited for skiing or skating.

The Wildcats managed to win nine of the 17 events, including three of four in the relays. The winning two mile relay team included Brian Murphy, John Crawford, Rob Herman and Brian Molloy (9:12.97); Shawn Barthlow, Tom Hunsberger, Joe Taylor and Ken Fenchel combined to win the 800-meter relay (1:40.0); and Barthlow, Greg Larson, Taylor and Fenchel teamed to win the 400-meter event (48.1). For Northville, Rob Subotich, Dave Borg, Mark Hilfinger and Neil White took the honors in the mile relay (3:58.0).

"Probably the biggest turnaround came in the 800 relay," Mustang Coach Dennis Faletti said. "We were way ahead and we dropped the baton. That was a 10-point swing right there."

Novi also cleaned up in the 800-meter run. Joe Whitney was first

(2:16.7), Murphy was second (2:16) and Crawford third (2:18.97). In the 400, Subotich was first (56.1) and Hilfinger was second (56.2). Ted Warthman prevented the sweep by taking third for Novi (58.38).

In the distance events, Northville would have been in trouble without sophomore Steve Coon as he won the two-mile (10:35.0) and was second in the mile (4:54.0). Molloy led Novi with a first in the mile (4:51.95), Herman was third in the mile (5:02.0) and second in the two-mile (10:41.6), and Chris Gannon

was third in the two-mile (11:22.03).

Fenchel dominated the sprint event by taking a pair of firsts in the 100 (11.72) and 200 (24.92). Larson was second in the 200 (25.1) and Northville's Bill Kelley was third (25.1). In the 100, Matt Hemp (second in 11.8) and Noel Koworin (third in 11.9) also scored points for the host team.

A highlight for the Mustangs was Bret Butz's performance in both hurdle events. He took first in the 300 intermediate race (46.7) and the 110 highs (17.3), while teammate

Brandon Hayes was second in the 300 (46.7). For Novi, Taylor was second (19.0) and Andy Beal third (19.3) in the highs, and Taylor was third (47.48) in the lows.

As for the field events, Koworin took first in the long jump (18'-5½") and Jamie Miller was second (18'-4¼"). Novi's Barthlow was third (16'-10¼"). Chris Lehr added a first in the long jump (5'-10"), while Kris Krueger (5'-9") and Max Schwartz (5'-8") followed.

Randy Thompson won the shot put (41'-11") for the 'Cats but Northville's Kevin Gill (37'-4") and Rob Holloway (36'-6") followed — but in the discus, Gill was the winner (101'-1"). Novi's Scott MacKercher (100'-9") and Matt Konedo (100'-4") were second and third respectively.

With Greg Larson (10'-0") and Rob Fileta (10'-0"), the Wildcats took the top two spots in the pole vault. Aaron Wiseley was third (9'-6").

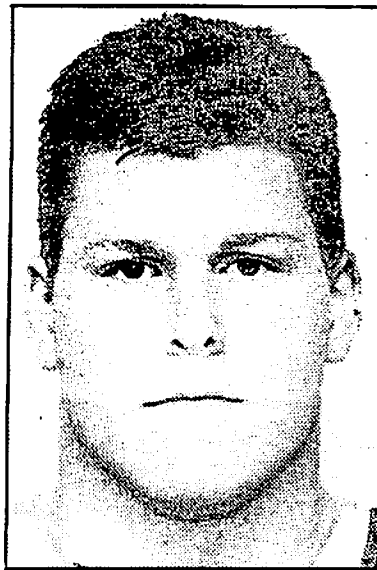
"I'm always disappointed when we lose, but I used this meet as an opportunity to see what I have," Faletti said.

Wildcats of the Week



NATE FAULKNER

At 6-foot-1, 220-pounds, Nate Faulkner is Novi's biggest baseball player. And the junior catcher came up big in the 1990 opener on April 9. Faulkner went 3-for-3, knocked in five runs and belted out a pair of homers in the 'Cats' 19-8 demolition of Hartland. With those outstanding numbers, it's easy to see why Faulkner has been named a "Wildcat of the Week." He also scored three times and even stole a base in the game, but the highlight had to be the towering two-run homer in the sixth. "He crushed it," Novi Coach Brian Howard reported. "It would have gone out at Tiger Stadium."



RANDY THOMPSON

Novi track Coach Bob Smith rated field-event specialist Randy Thompson as his team's best bet to contend for a Kensington Valley Conference title this spring. The senior has been living up to those lofty expectations so far and that's why he is a "Wildcat of the Week." In Novi's 87½-49½ defeat to Lakeland on April 11, the 6-foot, 250-pound Thompson took first-place honors in the shot put (41'-10") and added a surprise second in the discus (105'-19"). "Randy didn't really like throwing the discus last season, but this year he putting some effort into it and he is becoming our number-one man," Smith said. "He is by far our best shot putter."

Novi boys trackers get back to reality

By Neil Geoghegan
Staff Writer

After a pair of easy victories over non-conference opponents, it was back to the reality of the tough Kensington Valley Conference for the Novi boys track squad.

On April 11, the Wildcats fell to Lakeland 87½ -49½ and managed just six firsts out of 17 along the way. But for such a young, inexperienced team, Novi was surprisingly competitive for much of the meet.

"I was quite pleased," Wildcat mentor Bob Smith said. "It was evident we have some weak spots, but for the most part we were competitive in almost every area."

The trouble areas were in the relays and the middle distance events. Novi failed to win any of the four relay races and were shut out in the 400 and 800-meter runs.

"That's where our holes are," Smith admitted. "We have to beef that up somehow, but I'm confident we will. I was a quarter-miler when I ran track and I know what it takes."

To add to the problem, the team's number two half-miler — Rob Neil — was out of town on vacation. The team also failed to place any in the top three of the intermediate hurdle race, but did go 1-2-3 in the pole vault and the high jump.

"We had a few missing kids, but so did (Lakeland)," Smith said.

Half of Novi's wins came in the field events. Randy Thompson won the shot put (41'-10"), Kris Krueger took the honors in the high jump (5'-10") and Greg Larson was first in the pole vault (10'-6"). The rest of the victories came from Ken Fenchel in the 100-meter dash (11.73), Rob Herman in the two mile

Smith: "I was quite pleased. It was evident we have some weak spots, but for the most part we were competitive in almost every area."

(10:37.66) and Brian Molloy in the mile (4:10.26).

"Molloy is a definite force in the KVC in the distance events, and I consider him a darkhorse contender in the state," Smith said. "He's starting right where he left off in cross country last fall, where he was the state's top 10th grader."

The Wildcat seconds came from Thompson in the discus (105'-10"), Max Schultz in the high jump (5'-6"), Chris Rafferty in the pole vault (10'-0"), Andy Beal in the 110-meter high hurdles (19.38) and Larson in the 200 (24.87).

The Novi trackers (1-1 overall, 0-1 in the KVC) will be the only Novi team in action during the holiday break.

Wildcat boys shock field at Novi Relays

Novi clobbers Howell, 90-47

By NEIL GEOGHEGAN
Staff Writer

Teamwork, determination and hard work has transformed the Novi boys track squad into a formidable force.

For the first time ever, the Wildcats placed first at the eight-team Novi Relays last weekend (April 28), outpointing Livonia Franklin by nine. The 'Cats scored 73 points, including four firsts, and several other runner-up performances.

It was quite a feat when you consider that last year's Novi team, with more talent and experience than the current squad, only managed to place third.

"In my wildest dreams, I wouldn't have picked us first," Novi Coach Bob Smith said. "It was amazing. Last year, with all that talent we had, we couldn't win it."

The first-place finishes came in the pole vault, high jump, 4x1,600 relay and the two-mile relay. The pole-vault trio of Greg Larson, Chris Rafferty and Steve Myers cleared a combined total of 33'-0"; and the high-jump combo of Kris Krueger, Max Schwartz and Marc Moote cleared 16'-9" and was awarded first on the fourth tie-breaker.

Rob Herman, Rob Neil and Brian Molloy were involved in both the distance relay victories. Those three, along with Chris Gannon, won the 4x1,600 in 19:43.81, and then they teamed up with John Crawford to take the honors in the two-mile in 8:46.45.

The seconds came in the discus and the distance medley. Scott MacKercher, Randy Thompson and Matt Konedo combined for 337'-3" in the discus, and Thompson led the way with a personal best 120'-5." Brian Murphy, Joe Taylor,

Herman and Molloy clocked in at 11:35.66 in the distance medley.

The thirds came in the shot put — with Scott Vermillion, Konedo and Thompson (112'-4½") — and the sprint medley — with Rob Fleta, Larson, Ken Fenchel and Murphy (4:03.89).

"The key was we scored high in almost every event," Smith said. "I think this meet showed the kids just what a real team concept can do, as opposed to a bunch of individuals.

"I can't get over the way these kids are coming around."

NOVI 90, HOWELL 47: The Wildcats completed a great week on April 24 with their first Kensington Valley Conference dual-meet victory of the season.

Novi grabbed 12 firsts in 17 tries against the Highlanders.

"We didn't know what to expect from Howell," Smith said. "We performed very well. There were five or six events that we thought were pivotal, and we came through on all of them."

Thompson topped everybody in the shot put (42'-9") and the discus (113'-2"), and Andy Beal was a winner in the high (18.39) and intermediate (46.42) hurdles. And Fenchel won both the 100 (12.12) and the 200-meter dashes (24.61) to keep his undefeated streak alive this season. They were the only two-time winners.

The other firsts came from Krueger in the high jump (personal best 6'-0"), Larson in the pole vault (11'-0"), two-mile relay team (with Murphy, Crawford, Joe Whitney and Molloy), the 800 relay team (featuring Tom Hunsberger, Larson, Taylor and Fenchel), and the 400 relay team (with Shawn Elsing,

Larson, Taylor and Fenchel).

"We placed in everything except the mile relay, and that was the last race," Smith said.

DEARBORN ELKS RELAYS:

Most prep track squads take a vacation from competition during Easter break, but not the Novi boys.

Smith took his inexperienced squad to the 25th annual Dearborn Elks Relays on April 21 at Dearborn High School. And even though the Wildcats took 11th place in the 12-team field, Smith was happy just to see his tracksters in action.

"We were missing a lot of guys, just like everybody else," he said. "For instance, we didn't even enter the discus."

It was the first invitational meet for Novi this season. For many on the team, it was their first look at a multi-team varsity event.

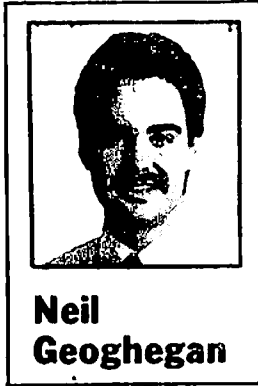
"In the group we sent to Dearborn, only nine of them were on the varsity team last year," Smith pointed out. "We didn't expect to make a great impression, but we went there for the experience."

The 'Cats managed just four top-six finishes and scored four points. Westland John Glenn took first place with 57 points.

Novi's best finish was fourth in the 4x1600-meter relay. The team of Colin O'Sullivan, Crawford, Whitney and Molloy finished the four-mile event in a time of 20:28.5.

The Wildcats also added a pair of fifths in the high jump relay and the pole-vault relay. In the high jump, Krueger, Schultz and Moote each cleared 5'-7." In the pole vault, Larson (11'-0") and Myers (10'-0") scored enough points to place fifth, even though Novi could not find another vaulter to clear the opening height of 8'-0." Larson's effort was a personal record.

Novi teams try to overcome losses



In high school and college athletics, you are going to have a high turnover. With graduation losses taking players away and newcomers flocking in, it's only natural.

But for whatever reason (coincidence, bad luck or both), many of the

Novi and Northville varsity teams this spring are facing some serious rebuilding problems. More than I can ever remember from one season. It could make for a down year overall because so many outstanding senior performers took their diplomas last spring and faded away. Or maybe the newcomers will fill in quite nicely

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If you follow Novi, names like Scott Wladischkin, Ken Hendrian, Maurice Richardson, Stephanie Groom, Ken Chasse and Nikki Kasten are just a few you may recognize. In Northville, the list includes standouts like Heather Sixt, Mark Kiraly, Rob Richcreek, Jim Willerer, Amy Freimund and Karen Baird.

Perhaps the hardest hit in this area was Bob Smith, Novi's boys track mentor. His '89 group was one of the most talented Wildcat track squads ever. The team broke 11 of 17

school records and lost just one dual meet, but almost all of the standouts from a year ago have moved on. To make matters worse, one of the few returning stars — hurdler Matt Koneda — is hobbled by a knee problem and has been relegated to action in the field events. Others like Jeff Schram didn't even come out for the team.

But it appears the team has survived the transition. Just last weekend, Smith's squad placed first at the eight-team Novi Relays — a feat the '89 team didn't come close to accomplishing.

Honorable mention for graduation losses goes to the Northville softball squad (the defending WLAA champs with seniors Friemund and Baird), the Novi and Northville tennis squads (both lost seven of their top 10 players), and the Wildcat baseballers (one returning regular).

On the other side of the coin is the Northville soccer program. Always a state powerhouse, the Mustangs enter the '90 campaign with arguably the most returning talent of any prior soccer team in the area. Add to that a pair of top-notch transfer students and you have unlimited potential.

In 1985, the Northville girls won the state Class A soccer championship. No other team since from Novi or Northville has been able to duplicate the feat. The Mustangs, under coach Bob Paul, did make it to the title game last

spring but fell 1-0 to Troy Athens. And don't forget the Wildcat gridders, who were just a few yards away from making it to the Class A title game back in 1988.

So the question remains: can Northville win its second girls soccer title this spring? Absolutely.

If the Mustangs can remain injury free, and they follow Paul's advice about taking it one game at a time and not looking ahead (a problem early in the season a year ago), they have a great chance. Teams like Athens, Plymouth Salem and Farmington are also loaded with talent, but when I look through the Northville roster and see splendid performers like Kristi Turner, Karen Cavanaugh, Marcie Dart, Nikki Higdon, Ashley MacLean and Amy Goode — I realize that these are among the premier players in the state, and they play for the same team.

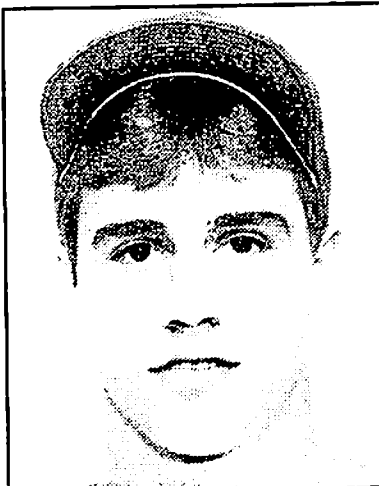
Other starters like Neysa Colizzi, Michelle McQuaid and Laura Whiteley are solid role players who could be stars anywhere else. And even reserve players like Kelly Kronberg, Valerie Schuerman and Merlynn Millgard would undoubtedly start for any KVC squad and many WLAA teams.

So at the risk of putting too much pressure on a squad already ranked second in the state, I'll just say this: WHAT A TEAM!

Neil Geoghegan is the sports writer for the Novi News and The Northville Record.

Wildcats of the Week

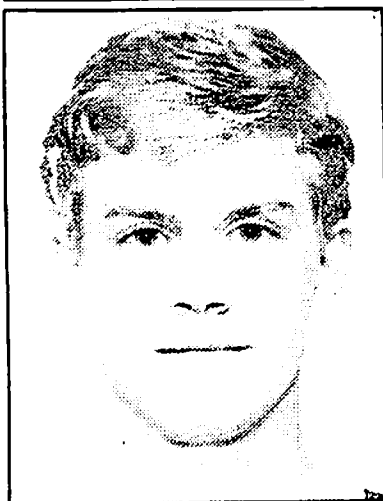
Junior Jason Wladischkin had a very productive week at the plate for the Novi baseballers, and we think "Wildcat of the Week" honors should go out to him. In four games last week, Novi was victorious three times and Wladischkin led the way with five hits in 11 at bats (.454 average) including four runs batted in, five runs scored, and two extra-base hits. The biggest hit was a three-run homer in game one against South Lyon. Wladischkin went 2-for-3 in that contest, helping to raise his batting average in KVC games up to .333.



JASON WLADISCHKIN

Wildcats of the Week

When talented sprinters like Oscar Marino, Andy Fitzpatrick and Bill Lethemon were lost to graduation, many thought it would be an area of weakness for the 1990 Novi tracksters. But sophomore Ken Fenchel has stepped right in and has been rock-solid, including last week's performance versus Brighton. That's why his has been selected as a "Wildcat of the Week." In a 93-44 loss to the Bulldogs on May 1, Fenchel was the only two-time winner for the 'Cats, with firsts in the 100- and 200-meter dashes. His times were 11.59 and 24.75 respectively. Fenchel is currently undefeated in both events and has been a valuable sprint relay performer as well.



KEN FENCHEL

Thursday, May 10, 1990/THE NOVI NEWS

Brighton brings tracksters back down to earth, 94-44

By NEIL GEOGHEGAN
Staff Writer

Just three days after winning its own eight-team tournament, the Novi boys track squad got a rude welcome back into Kensington Valley Conference competition. Host Brighton provided the opposition — as well as a 94-44 win over the Wildcats — on May 1.

"It really showed our kids that the KVC is a great track league," Novi Coach Bob Smith said. "It brought our kids back down to earth just three days after the highlight of the season. But we held our heads high and performed even though we knew the outcome would go the other way."

The 'Cats managed five firsts (out of 17 events), including a 1-2-3 sweep in the pole vault, but the visitors failed to score a point in any of the four relay events, and were swept in other events like the 400, the discus, the long jump and both hurdle races.

"It kind of went as expected."

"It really showed our kids that the KVC is a great track league. It brought our kids back down to earth . . . but we held our heads high and performed even though we knew the outcome would go the other way."

Bob Smith
Novi Track Coach

Smith said. "(Brighton) is a few notches above us right now. We knew they have more experience than us and they are deep and solid at every event."

Sophomore sprinter Ken Fenchel continued his dual meet dominance by winning both the 100 (11.59) and 200 (24.75) meter dashes. He remains unbeaten so far this season. The rest of the Novi wins came from Kris Krueger in the high jump (5'-10"), Chris Rafferty in the pole vault (10'-9"), and Rob Herman in the two-mile run (10:39.4).

The runner-up finishes included Randy Thompson in the shot put

(44'-9"), Max Schwartz in the high jump (freshman record 5'-10"), Greg Larson in the pole vault (10'-9"), Brian Molloy in the mile (4:46.07) and Chris Gannon in the two-mile (11:01.15). The thirds came from Steve Myers in the pole vault (9'-9"), Tom Hunsberger in the 100 (11.9), Joe Taylor in the 200 (25.02) and Bob Bates in the 800 (2:19.93).

The Wildcats (1-2 overall, 0-2 in the KVC) will travel to Hartland today (May 10) to take on the Eagles in a dual meet originally scheduled for April 10 but postponed due to bad weather.

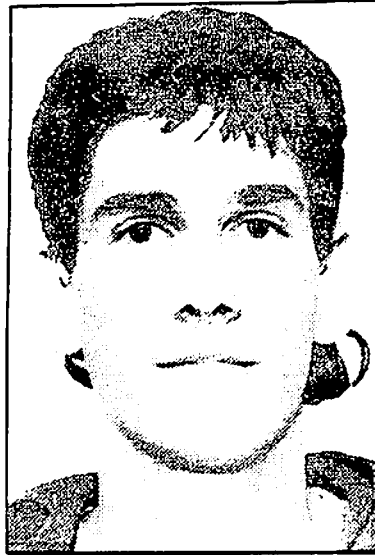
THURSDAY
May 17,
1990

Wildcats of the Week



MATT BUTLER

The Novi netters have only one conference win in 11 tries this season, but singles player Matt Butler is on a hot streak and we think "Wildcat of the Week" honors are appropriate. Last week he beat Lakeland's Jake Fritz 6-3, 6-4, disposed of Chris Perssons of Walled Lake Western 7-6, 6-4; then trounced Tim Larkins of Howell 6-0, 6-2 — all in the span of four days. For the week he went 3-for-4 and has now won six of his last seven matches. "Matt's really been coming on," Novi Coach Jim Newbold said. "It took him almost half the season to get on his game, but he is now."



KRIS KRUEGER

With such heavy graduation losses, not much was expected of the Novi boys track squad this spring. But the team has emerged as a solid, competitive KVC team, and individuals like Kris Krueger are a big reason why. The junior high jumper is quietly having a fine season, and we think he deserves "Wildcat of the Week" honors. At the Milan Invitational last weekend (May 12), Krueger took first place with a personal-best jump of 6'-1". Several days earlier, he grabbed another win with a 5'-8" effort in terrible weather conditions against Hartland.

Tracksters overcome Hartland

By NEIL GEOGHEGAN
Staff Writer

The Novi tracksters found out in graphic fashion last week that they are pretty much a middle-of-the-pack squad when it comes to the Kensington Valley Conference circuit.

In the span of three days, the 'Cats fell to powerful Milford by 70 points and then turned around to clobber Hartland 70-26. The victory on May 10 probably would have been even more lopsided if the meet wasn't called with five events to go because of adverse weather conditions.

"The wind, sleet and rain were horrendous," Novi Coach Bob Smith said. "The officials stopped the meet for the safety of the kids when it got really bad. We were already mathematically the winner.

"I think the difference was that we were more prepared for the bad weather, and we were the visiting team."

The Wildcats managed to win nine times, which was quite impressive because there were only a dozen events run. Novi also grabbed 1-2-3 sweeps twice — in the high jump and the 100-meter dash.

The wins came from Randy Thompson in the shot put (42'-2"), Kris Krueger in the high jump (5'-8"), Steve Myers in the pole vault (9'-0"), Andy Beal in the 110 hurdles, Ken Fenchel in the 100 (12.64), Brian Molloy in the mile (4:47.85) and three of the four relay races.

The 400 relay winners included Shwan Barthlow, Greg Larson, Joe Taylor and Fenchel (48.64). The winning 800 relay squad was the same as the 400, except Tom Hunsberger was inserted in place of Barthlow (1:39.72). The team of John Crawford,

Joe Whitney, Molloy and Rob Herman also took first-place honors in the two-mile relay (9:21.4).

MILFORD 103½, NOVI 33½: The undermanned Wildcats won just twice en route to a lopsided defeat to the Redskins on May 8. Despite the 70-point loss, Smith found some positives.

"We were prepared for a top-notch opponent, but we didn't roll over and die," he said. "It was the first evening meet we've had in a long time, but it didn't faze the kids — they competed."

Chris Gannon was the only Novi individual to register a win against Milford as he crossed the finish line in 5:01.4 to place first in the mile run. The other victory came from the 400 relay team (featuring Barthlow, Lrason, Taylor and Fenchel) that finished in a time of 47.4.

Molloy led the runner-up finishers with a fine 9:56.9 effort in the two mile — an improvement of more than a minute over his previous best this season. The other seconds included Thompson in the shot put (43'-8"), Scott Vermillion in the discus (110'-4½"), Larson in the pole vault (12'-0"), Fenchel in the 100 (11.76) and Taylor in the 200 (24.6).

SUNSHINE RELAYS: For the second straight year, the Novi ninth and 10th graders placed first at the Sunshine Relays on May 12 in South Lyon. The Wildcats scored 113 points and outscored five of the remaining six KVC squads (Howell didn't attend) in the seven-team event for sophomores and freshmen.

"We've won it two years in a row and that shows

that we are young but talented," Smith said.

Perhaps Novi's top all-around performance came from Fenchel, who had a hand in three gold medals and a silver. He won the 100-meter dash (11.6), the 200 (24.33) and anchored Novi's winning 800 relay team (along with Max Schwartz, Chris Rafferty and Shawn Eising). He also added a second in the 400 (56.24).

The other firsts came from Schwartz in the high jump (5'-8"), Rafferty in the pole vault (9'-6"), Molloy in the two mile (10:22.07) and the two mile relay team (featuring Tim O'Sullivan, Crawford, Whitney and Molloy). Andy Beal also had a fine meet with a pair of seconds in the 110 (17.16) and the 300 (46.34) hurdles.

MILAN INVITATIONAL: The rest of the Novi squad traveled to Milan for a five-team competition that same afternoon, but didn't fare as well.

The Wildcat contingent, made up of juniors and seniors, placed last but did score a respectable 40½ points. Pinckney won the meet with 113½.

"It was a good workmanlike effort, but obviously it hurt us not having our whole team," Smith said. "We were last but we weren't far from the rest of the teams."

The highlights included a pair of seconds from Krueger and Herman. Krueger's 6'-1" effort in the high jump was a personal best and Herman's time in the two mile was 10:24.48. Herman also added a fifth in the mile (4:51.66).

Novi (3-3 overall, 2-3 in the KVC) will host the MHSAA Regional Track Meet on May 19 at 10 a.m.

Novi tracksters excel at regional competition

Three Wildcat boys qualify for state meet

By NEIL GEOGHEGAN
Staff Writer

Against top-notch competition, lofty accomplishments become even more exceptional. For the Novi boys track squad, last Saturday's (May 19) performance in the MHSAA Regionals was just such a case.

The host Wildcats grabbed eighth place in the strong 16-team field with 31½ points, which was nearly 60 behind first-place Detroit Central. Novi registered seven top-six finishes and qualified three individuals for the State Class A Track Meet, to be held on June 2 in Midland.

"That's remarkable because we only had two qualifiers for the state meet last year, and that team only lost one dual meet all season," Wildcat Coach Bob Smith said. "It's really exciting."

The individuals going to Midland are pole vaulter Greg Larson, high jumper Kris Krueger and distance runner Brian Molloy. Larson made the cut by clearing 11'-1" and winning the pole vault. Novi featured the top two seeds in the pole vault with Larson (No. 1) and Chris Rafferty (No. 2), but Rafferty wound up fourth (10'-7").

Krueger jumped 6'-0" to place second in the high jump. Winner Fred Robinson of Detroit Central also jumped 6'-0", but was awarded the victory in the tie-breaker.

But it was Molloy who had the most difficult road to qualifying. Because he placed third in the two mile, he wasn't given an automatic berth (like Larson and Krueger) and had to meet a qualifying standard of 9:46.0. With an all-out sprint in the final lap, Molloy finished with a personal-best 9:43.5.

"Brian had only been under 10 minutes once prior to the regionals, so it was a great effort on his part," Smith said. "He knew what he needed, and he got it."

The rest of the top six finishes came from Randy Thompson in the shot put (43'-0") — good for fifth place, Max Schwartz in the high



BRIAN MOLLOY

jump (5'-9"), and a season-best effort from the 400-meter relay squad. The team of Shawn Barthlow, Larson, Joe Taylor and Ken Fenchel finished in sixth place in a time of 46.3.

"That was a surprise," Smith said. "We finally put it all together."

"Overall, there were some very bright spots. The kids really came through, especially in the field events. We are a young team and it takes a while, but we are coming around."

SOUTH LYON 77, NOVI 60: On May 15, the 'Cats dropped a close dual meet with the Lions, and wrapped up the regular season with a 4-4 mark, 2-4 in the KVC.

"We got beat, but not by much," Smith said. "My pre-meet guess was that we'd get 45 points, so I was pleased to score 60."

After the two mile relay, Novi held a commanding 35-15 lead, but South Lyon dominated the hurdles, sprints and sprint relay events to make up the difference. Down the stretch, the Wildcats managed to score only two out of a possible 46 points in the 100, 200, 400, 300 hurdles and the two sprint relays.

Brian Molloy was Novi's only two-time winner with victories on the mile (4:34.19) and the two-mile (10:08.11).

THURSDAY
May 24,
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Molloy, Rafferty pace Wildcats

By NEIL GEOGHEGAN
Staff Writer

As a coach, you'd hate to think that no matter how well you perform, you are still locked into a certain position — but that's essentially what happened to the Novi boys track squad at the KVC Meet on May 22.

The Wildcats performed very well, but wound up where everybody thought they'd be — fifth place — in the seven-team field at Howell. Milford ran away with the title with 179 points, Lakeland was fourth (56) and Novi followed (46).

"We almost caught Lakeland, so we did a little better than expected," Novi Coach Bob Smith said. "Lakeland was definitely worried about us."

The 'Cats did not have a KVC champ ("We are still a year away from that," Smith said), but distance runner Brian Molloy and pole vaulter Chris Rafferty notched impressive seconds. Amazingly, both are only 10th-graders.

Molloy ran his fastest two-mile ever (9:39.8) to get the runner-up position behind Milford's John Fundukian — the son of the Novi Athletic Director.

"Brian ran a great race," Smith said. "He's just seconds off Rob Rasmussen's school record (9:36) and he

"We almost caught Lakeland, so we did a little better than expected. Lakeland was definitely worried about us. We are still a year away from (contending for KVC title)."

Bob Smith
Novi Track Coach

may break that at the state meet. It was a two-man race, but Fundukian won it by about three seconds.

"Molloy came up big for this meet — he's a big-meet runner."

Novi's best event was the pole vault. The Wildcats placed three individuals in the top five places, including Rafferty's second. He cleared a sophomore-record 12 feet, 9 inches to get it, shattering his previous best by a foot.

"Chris put it all together — it was amazing," Smith said. "He got a little lucky and everything fell into place."

"He's a state-caliber vaulter already. He's very young and he's got the talent, but he is still inconsistent."

Greg Larson went a personal best 12'-3" to place fourth and Steve Myers when 11'-6" (also a personal best) for fifth.

"We had four guys go over 11 feet," Smith said. "Some teams didn't even have one guy clear that."

Other individual placers included Randy Thompson in the shot put (third place, 43'-9"), Ken Fenchel in the 200-meter dash (fifth, 24.3) and the 100 (sixth, 11.9), Joe Taylor in the 200 (sixth, 24.4), Scott Vermillion in the discus (fifth, personal best 121'-4"), Kris Krueger in the high jump (fifth, 6'-0") and Andy Beal in the 110 hurdles (sixth, personal best 16.7).

All four Wildcat relay teams also placed in the top six. The 400 relay (with Shawn Barthlow, Taylor, Larson and Fenchel) clocked in at a season-best 1:36.4 to place fourth. The 400 relay team (same as above) placed fifth, and so did the two-mile relay team (featuring John Crawford, Colin O'Sullivan, Brian Murphy and Rob Herman). The mile relay combo

(with Scott MacKercher, Rob Fileta, Barthlow and Taylor) was sixth in season-best time of 3:41.11.

OAKLAND COUNTY MEET: Novi qualified three tracksters for this invitational on May 25 at Waterford, Mott, but only Molloy managed to score any points. He placed fourth in the two mile in 9:41.6 to give the 'Cats four team points in this 40-team field.

Larson and Rafferty both qualified in the pole vault, but each failed to make the opening height (11'-9").

"We really put all our effort and energies into the KVC Meet, so it wasn't surprising we had some trouble at the County Meet," Smith said.

"It just goes to show how important the mental aspect of the sport is."

Larson (pole vault), Krueger (high jump) and Molloy (two-mile run) have all qualified for the MHSAA State Meet, to be held on June 2 in Midland.

FRESHMAN OAKLAND COUNTY MEET: The highlight for the Novi contingent at the Freshman Meet at Milford on May 26 was a third-place finish for the two-mile relay. The team of Tim O'Sullivan, Vince Meehan, Brian Grems and John Crawford finished in 9:47.2 despite dropping the baton during the race.