

Depth will get Novi through graduation losses

By MARVIN GOODWIN
Of The Oakland Press

The slate can be wiped clean for Novi's Wildcats. The defending Kensington Valley Conference, Oakland County and Class A boys cross country state champions, who raced through a magical season, have to start all over like the rest of the teams.

But that's fine with the Wildcats, who will see whether they can duplicate last year's performance.

Here is Oakland County's pre-season top 10.

1. Novi

The Wildcats were hit hard by graduation, losing three of their top five runners, who were also three-fourths of a 3,200 relay squad that ran 7:55 in track and was second at the state meet. But the returnees include another leg of that relay, junior Chris Tuloff, and sophomore Tim Moore, the school record-holder in the 3,200. Each is a threat to win most races. They'll be helped by juniors Mark Avenius and Eric Walls. But Novi won't catch anybody by surprise this season.

"There is going to be pressure, there's no denying that," said Novi coach Robert Smith. "We knew that we'd have a bull's-eye on our back. Last year we got a charge out of coming out of nowhere. This year we have nowhere to hide, (so) we're going to go out and prove to everyone we're still here."

2. Lakeland

Novi broke the Eagles' streak of consecutive Kensington Valley Conference titles, which stretched some five seasons. The Eagles aren't mad, but they'll be competitive. "We've got a little more experience than people think we do," coach Randy Wilkins said. That includes Pat Klein, one of the top juniors in the state. "He's our main guy coming back," Wilkins said. He'll be helped by juniors Ryan Bartman, C.J. Hadding, Mat Kiley and Keith Grant. Seniors Eric Jedynak and B.J. McCool have big-meet experience, and sophomore Brian Theut, along with Ryan Woodard, a hurdler in track, could also contribute.

3. Clarkston

Although the Wolves won the OAA I title last season, they've had a hollow feeling the last couple of years because a state qualifying berth has eluded them. With

virtually their whole starting lineup returning, including six returning seniors who've been varsity runners the past couple of years, Clarkston is set to pull out all stops to get to the state meet. David Sage is one of the area's leading runners, but teammates Brett Quantz, Matt Haver, Chris Weber and Dan Burke will have to pull closer to him for the Wolves to be successful. Eric Sweeney and Brian Parker could also help, along with some unproven runners. "I've been in this position so many times," coach Mike Taylor said, "but I'm optimistic. I think we'll have another good year."

4. Milford

Losing three-fourths of the state champion 3,200 relay is cause for concern for coach Brian Salyers. But the anchor man, Tom Greenless, could be one of the best cross country runners in Oakland County.

Greenless has been an all-state runner the past two seasons. If sophomores Casey Barnes and Nick Kopezak, junior Steve Rukstelo and seniors Brett Barley, Joe Rukstelo, Mike Callahan and Bill Coggins can run in a pack behind Greenless, Milford could duplicate last season's effort. "Each have had their moments," Salyers said. "These guys have come through in different instances. It's their time to rise up and be good."

5. South Lyon

If the Lions can support a couple of returning state qualifiers — seniors Ryan Roma and Jason Pridmore — they'll be competitive. Bob Najduk could also help, along with sophomore Brian Lee. The KVC, though, is a battlefield, and the Lions will take their lumps, too.

6. Walled Lake Central

The Vikings just missed a state berth last year and will need to run like the dickens this season to qualify for state. That'll start with Todd Mobley, who after coming off a mediocre track season, is eager to prove he's the same runner



Oakland Press file photo CHARLIE CORTEZ

Walled Lake Central's Todd Mobley finished sixth at the Class A state meet last season, but had a rough year in track last spring



Greenless



Oakland Press file photo BRADLEY BAKER

Clarkston's David Sage will give the Huskies a presence at the front of most packs

who finished sixth at the Class A state meet last year. He'll be joined by Jeremy Auer, who is coming off a standout track season as one of the state's top half-milers. Jeff Eddington and Kevin Coggins will help, but Central will need more depth.

7. Oxford

The waters of the elite teams might still be too deep for the Wildcats, but they return virtually the entire starting lineup that won the Flint Metro League. Senior John Stein and juniors Dan Nelder and Mike Banachowski are tri-captains with experience. Without a top-flight runner, though, the Wildcats will have to pack them tight to be competitive. "All three

are running real well," Oxford coach Ray Sutherland said.

8. Troy

With experience returning from last year's youthful squad, the Colts probably can notch a few more victories. Sophomore Nick Gillett could be the leading runner with Rodrigo Landeros, Bryan Barnes, Adam Wagner and Paul Soucier forming a solid quartet.

9. Troy Athens

The Red Hawks lost their top two runners to graduation "but we have a ton of juniors who could really make the grade," said coach Mike Stallsmith. That includes Dan Carter, Thomas Ferri, Brandon Hanney, Ayush Batra and Mario Baumann. Sophomores Matt Rose and Phil DeCook, along with senior Victor Arena, who played football the last three years, will help. "He's as strong as a runner for his size as I've ever seen," Stallsmith said of Arena. Nearly 40 boys are out for the team.

10. Lake Orion

With the departure of its two frontrunners, Jordan Desilets and Eric Lohr, the Dragons' saving grace will be a junior varsity squad that has had some success. Senior Andrew Fons has a respectable track season, and Dane Beardsley and Spencer Astin should also contribute. Chris Morehead and sophomore Michael Colt should also help. "If we win, we'll have to win on depth," Dragons coach Stan Ford said. "They'll just have to group it up, pack it up and run tough. Somebody will step up, I think."

Trio of captains ready to take off

By JASON SCHMITT
Sports Editor

They say winning a state championship is a hard thing to do, but defending it is twice as difficult.

We'll see what the Novi boy's cross country team can do.

The team has two big things against it in its quest for a repeat. One, for the first time in five years, there will be no Kevin Avenius. The most prolific runner in Novi history, Avenius has taken a scholarship to run cross country and track at Notre Dame.

But what could possibly be a bigger problem for the Wildcats is that they are no longer the underdogs. They no longer have the element of surprise in their arsenal.

"Everyone is gunning for us now," coach Bob Smith said. "We all have bullseyes on our backs. It is much harder to stay on top than it is to get there."

But if early season workouts are any indication, the team is doing everything it can to get back to the top. Tri-captains Nick Bassitt (senior), Chris Toloff (junior) and Eric Walle (senior) got the team together and decided to begin practice on June 21, two weeks earlier than the team usually starts.

"We have to have that common goal," Walle said. "We all want to get back there and win it again. We know we have to do more this year."

"They now know what it takes to be in the big time," Smith said. "They are really, really hungry to go back. They had the best summer they've ever had."

"You sure hate to make predictions, but they sure eased the pain of graduation."

Toloff, along with returning sophomore Tim Moore, will lead the team in 1999. They have been about as close as you can be over the last two years. By pushing each other, they have become two of the best runners in the state.

"They feed off each other. They really can help each other," said Smith.

Rounding out Novi's top four runners are juniors Mark Avenius and Eric Walle. Along with Toloff, the three have been a fixture in Novi running since their freshmen year.

"These four guys are leading the charge. They're training like crazy and the dedication level has kicked up a notch," their coach said.

After that, there are seven guys vying for the last three spots on the varsity team.

Bassitt was the team's eighth man a year ago, and looks to be in a good position this season. Others fighting for a spot are juniors Steve Szwest and Dan Stevens, seniors Evan Foster and Steve Shubert and sophomores Matt Harsha-Strong and Mitch Erickson.

"These guys train with each other, and if one guy has a good race, they all step it up because they feel they can run with him," Smith said. "They are all within 30 seconds of each other."

Like always, Novi will have plenty of regular-season challenges to prepare them for the post season. Lakeland will try to regain the dominance they had in the Kensington Valley Conference for four years before Novi stomped them last season. Milford lost a lot, but have possibly the conference's best returning runner (Tom Greenless) and 50 other kids out for the team. South Lyon and Brighton each have two contenders and Smith feels the Lions are ready to take that next step up.

"We're doing more than rebuilding, we're reloading," an excited Smith said. "I can't wait for next week to begin."

The Wildcats will take on Northville in the season opener today at Cass Benton.

Oh my Captain, Captain

Most sports teams still rely on the leadership provided by the team captains

By **JASON SCHMITT**
Sports Editor

Being a captain at the varsity level isn't all it's cracked up to be.

Well that's not exactly true.

As any athlete will tell you, being voted or named captain can be as big an honor as there is. Being the one or two guys elected captain by the same peers you've shared both great moments with, as well as the bad ones, it's not that bad.

But what exactly does a captain do? Are they the lockerroom cheerleaders, the ones encouraging their teammates to play harder, longer, better?

Well yeah, they are leaders inside the lockerroom and outside of it. But often there's much more to it, even if they don't know it.

"We lead the stretching drills, organize the team dinners," senior co-captain of the football team Dan Kittle said. "Once the games get going I'll get a better feel for what it takes to be a team leader."

For now, Kittle and fellow captain Jon Cervi are spending their time leading the team by example.

"I'm not a real vocal guy, but I feel I need to set an example, especially for the younger players," he said. "I try to work extra hard to set a good example out on the field."

Bob Smith, coach of the defending state champion cross country team, said he relies heavily on his captains to lead the team through warmup drills and summer workouts.

"They have to be willing to sacrifice their summer to make sure the team practices," Smith said. "That leadership has been the secret to our success."

The cross country team has three captains this year; senior Nick Bassitt and Juniors Chris Toloff and Eric Walle. It was their decision to begin summer practice two weeks earlier than its normally scheduled start. The team was working out as early as June 21.

"We just really wanted to start the season earlier," Walle said. "Usually the more miles you put in, the easier they are to run in the season. We knew we had to do more this year because it will be tougher to defend the championship than it was to win it."

"They're my right-hand tools," Smith said. "They handle the stretching, the warmups, hydration. Sometimes they choose their own workouts. I know these three guys will take care of it."

"I give so much credit to our captains over the last two or three years."

Not all teams have captains. The football, boy's cross country, girl's tennis, boy's golf and boy's soccer teams have team-voted captains, but some other sports elect not to.

The Novi girl's cross country program, which has been to four of the last five state championships, have senior leaders rather than captains. This is a method head coach Norm Norgen thinks works best for his program.

"I demand senior leadership," he said. "They've been here before and they know what

to do. To me there's no one kid who's more important than any other one.

Regardless of the sport, it is an honor to be elected by your peers.

"I was excited because it was a high honor, and I know a lot of guys on the team respected me," Kittle said.

The football team normally selects four captains, but only two were chosen this season because of a lack of overall voting.

Walle said it shows him that his teammates listen to what he has to say.

"Coach can't be there all the time, so we basically have to push each other out there," Walle said. "It's good that we have so many good leaders on this team."

With so many swimmers on its roster, the team has three captains for the 1999 squad. Seniors Amy Hartland, Emily Nicol and Leslie Nimer have been selected by their teammates. Nimer for the second-consecutive year.

The tennis team has co-captains, with Tara Stevens and Amrutha Nagarajan leading the team.

The defending state champion soccer team has elected for three captains this year. Ryan Rzepka, Scott Jettie and Frank Raburn will try to lead the team back to the championship game.

Be it great leadership or superb coaching, something must be working. Not many schools can say they won two state championships last fall.

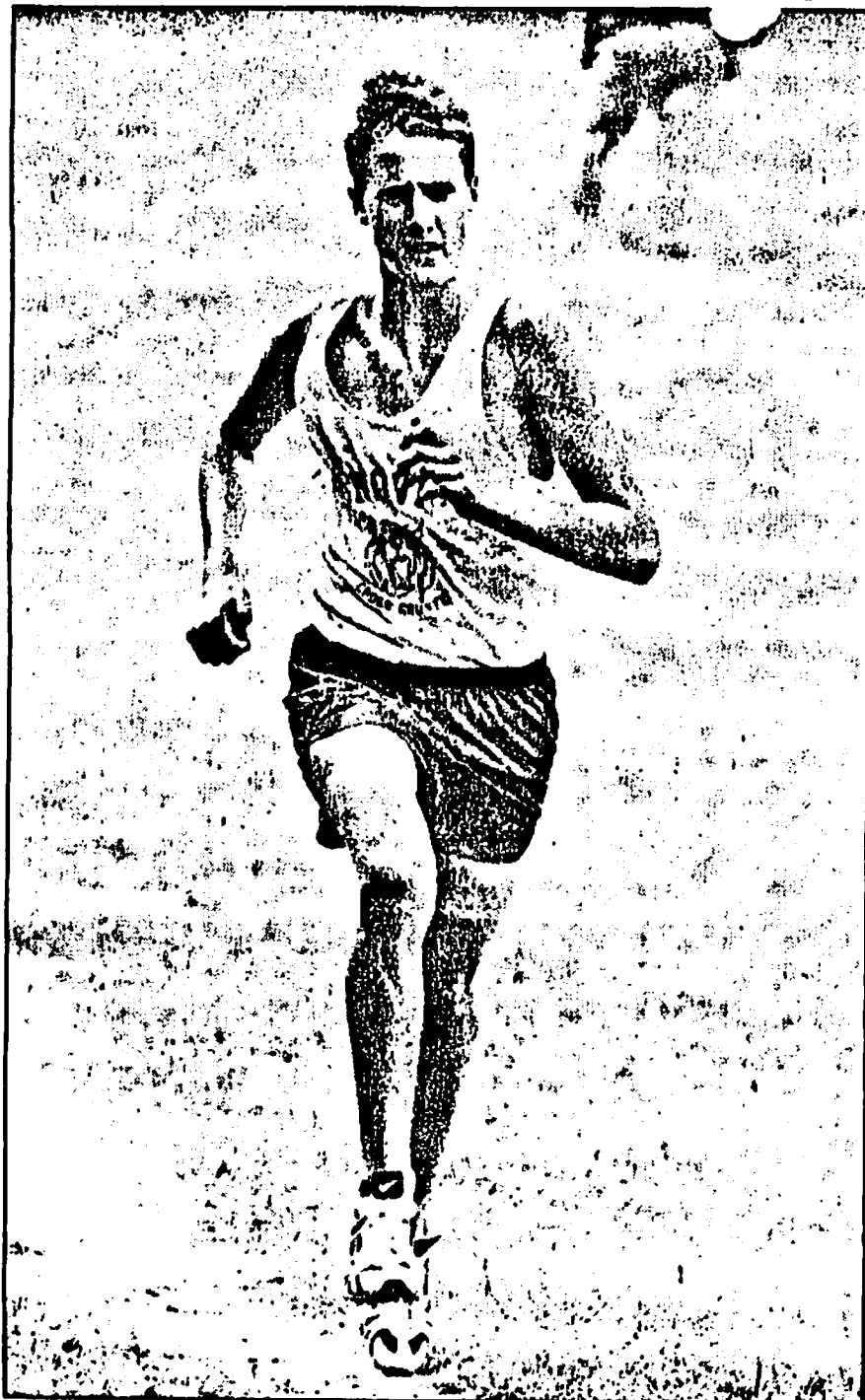


Photo by JOHN HEIDER

Novi sophomore Tim Moore (above) surprised everybody by breaking the Cass Benton school record previously held by Dan Christopherson.

Extra practice shows, pays off

By JASON SCHMITT
Sports Editor

The two extra weeks of practice the Novi boys' cross country team put in this summer seems to have paid off in the early parts to the Wildcats' 1999 season.

Novi took the top five places and seven of the top eight in a 15-48 win over Northville last Thursday. More so than the final score, the runners' times were as impressive as ever.

Every starting runner improved his time from the first race a year ago and sophomore sensation Tim Moore did more than that. He broke the school record in his first meet out.

Moore ran the Cass Benton course in a time of 16 minutes, 8 seconds,

shaving two seconds off Dan Christopherson's time of a year ago.

"He ran the race in over a minute better time than he did last year," a

stunned Novi coach Bob Smith said. "He ran a flawless race, ahead of everyone else. This was very unexpected."

Smith said that he asked all of his runners, except Moore, what their goals were for the first race of the season.

"Had I known that his goal was to break the school record, then I would have discouraged him from running all-out so early," Smith said.

With teammate Chris Toloff unable to finish the race because of a knee

injury, Moore dominated the field. He topped Novi's next finisher, Eric Walle by 1:14.

Walle was second overall in 17:22, which shaved over a minute off last year's time.

Mark Aventus was third at 17:58 and Steve Szwast (18:02) and Nick Bassitt (18:05) were close behind to round out the scoring for Novi. Mitch Erickson was seventh overall in 18:17 and Matt Harsha-Strong was eighth at 19:05.

Szwast's time was 1:52 better than last year and Bassitt knocked over :30 off of his time.

"Steve was a wannabe last year, but he's a real contender this year," Smith said. "You can tell he's focused this year. He's got fire in his eyes."

Knowing what his team had last season, Smith was just hoping to see how much farther his team was ahead of last year's pace.

"We really are looking to improve," he said. "So it's very gratifying to see the kids weren't complacent over the summer. They worked hard."

Other runners who improved their times from a year ago were juniors Ken Delgreco, Eric Saurer, sophomores Steve Duda and Todd Wasik and freshmen Tim Kava and Matt Block.

KVC ins and outs...

Brighton And the winner is Cullen Finnerty. Oh yeah, and Brighton. The Bulldogs smacked Northville 31-3 in the football opener, as Finnerty, a junior, got the call behind center. Cullen threw for 195 yards and a score. He can go...

Hartland Jeff Harris shot a 72 at the Pre-KVC, sticking him with Howell's John Kizer for the low score. Hartland finished second to Howell...

Howell The Highlanders won the Pre-KVC golf tournament with a team score of 307. That will go a ways — one third of the way, actually — towards the conference title. John Kizer led Howell with a 72...Joe Carpenter scored a touchdown, but that was it as Howell was smacked down by Grand Ledge, one of the best football teams in the Lansing area...

Lakeland Look for the Eagles' football team to have some new bodies as players return from injuries for what should be the most favorable part of Lakeland's schedule — Howell and Clio...

Milford The Redskins potent ground attack — over 400 yards rushing — ate up Walled Lake Central 28-13 in Milford's football opener...The only

KVC hoops coach not picking the Redskins to repeat as KVC champs is Milford's Don Palmer...

Novi Wildcats football coach John Osborne was comparing his signal caller, Mitch Maier, to Indiana thrill-a-minute quarterback, Antwan Randle-El, after Maier ran the option to near perfection in Novi's 20-17 win over Farmington. Many had claimed Farmington as the best team in that city. No comment from John Herrington...

Also, cross-country standout Tim Moore wasted no time going after the school record at Cass Benton. The sophomore completed the course in 16:08, eclipsing the old mark set last season by Dan Christopherson.

Moore is the third person in less than a year to hold the school record at Cass Benton. Kevin Avenius had the old mark at 16:12 before Christopherson ran his 16:10. With three full years and over 20 more meets at Cass Benton, Moore may just...?

South Lyon Golfer Justin Goyt set a school record when he shot 71 over 18 holes as the Lions took second in the Farmington Invitational...Upon further review, boys' X-C coach Scott Smith admits he has high—very high—hopes for the coming season. Now for the KVC wars.



PAUL WARNER/Special to the Free Press

Rockford dynasty puttin' on the 'Ritz'

CROSS-COUNTRY

By SCOTT TALLEY
FREE PRESS SPORTS WRITER

For two years he played Robin to Jason Hartmann's Batman, but this season Dathan Ritzenhein assumes the starring role at Rockford High.

If anyone can fill the shoes of Hartmann, who won two Class A individual cross-country titles en route to earning a scholarship to Oregon, it's Ritzenhein, a junior.

In fact, at the end of last year's track season, it was hard to distinguish Batman from Robin. Ritzenhein upset Hartmann at the state meet to capture the 3,200-meter title. And two weeks later he won the same event at the Footlocker National Scholastic Championships in Raleigh, N.C.

"The sky is the limit for him if he can stay healthy," Rockford coach Mark Nessner said. "He is one of the most driven people I've ever been around."

When Ritzenhein does his best, there may be no one better in the country.

"After what I did at the end of the track season, and this summer, I think I have a good shot at winning the Footlocker in Florida," he said of the national cross-country championship. "But first I have to qualify. It's a lot harder practicing without Jason."

Expect Ritzenhein to qualify. It's also safe to expect another great season from Rockford. The Rams finished second to Novi at the Class A state championships, with Hartmann and Ritzenhein placing 1-2.

The Rams return six of their top seven runners, including senior Andy Martin, who finished 17th overall at last year's state meet and hopes to give the Rams another potent one-two punch.

"Hopefully, I can fill Dathan's role from last season," said Martin, who has a 3.6 grade-point average. "If I do that, it will put me where I want to be. Not only the state level, but also nationally."

Senior Seth Folkertsma and juniors Joe Swendrowski, Kyle Fujimoto and Brian Smith also are

expected to perform well.

"It would be nice to see our team win the state championship this season," said Ritzenhein, a 3.3 student. "Novi was great last year and will probably be our biggest competition this year."

Novi returns three top performers from last year's championship team — sophomore Tim Moore (27th) and juniors Chris Toloff (29th) and Mark Avenius (54th).

If Ritzenhein and his teammates need more motivation, they can always stop by the school trophy case and view the hardware won by the girls team — last year's state champions.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW: Ryan Shay was the first Michigan male to win four state cross-country titles, but he still had something to prove when he got to Notre Dame.

"Being in Class D I don't think it allowed me to release my potential," said Shay, who graduated from Central Lake in 1997. "A lot of the colleges look for the top Footlocker guys, and I never ran in that meet. But once I got to Notre Dame I started beating Footlocker runners, and now I think more colleges will look at the guy coming out of the smaller class."

Shay, a junior, has overtaken many runners as a member of the Irish team. He is a two-time All-Big East runner, and a two-time winner of the National Catholic Invitational.

Shay will defend that title Sept. 18 at Notre Dame in his first meet of the season.

Perhaps Shay's best performance was finishing 20th at the World Junior Cross Country Championships in Marrakesh, Morocco, last year. He was the top American in the 200-plus field.

"It was a great experience to get that international competition under my belt," said Shay, who covered the five-mile distance in 24 minutes, 20 seconds. "Not a lot of people were expecting that much from me, so I used that to my advantage."

Shay, who credits a good deal of his success to a high-mileage regimen (60-80 miles weekly) that

TOP RUNNERS

The preseason top 25 cross-country runners as selected by cross-country and track statistician Jeff Hollobaugh:

Boys

1. Dathan Ritzenhein, Rockford
2. Ryan Cole, Sanford-Meridian
3. Kurtis Marlowe, Richland Gull Lake
4. Paul Niedzweicki, Adrian
5. Tim Moore, Novi
6. Andy Martin, Rockford
7. Justin Kibbey, Maple City Glen Lake
8. John Hughes, Traverse City Central
9. Jake Flynn, Benzie Central
10. Andy Marsh, Grand Ledge
11. Tom Greenless, Milford
12. Jordan Emmorey, Gaylord
13. Pat Klein, White Lake Lakeland
14. David Sage, Clarkston
15. Shawn Edwards, Flushing
16. Mike Gray, Sanford-Meridian
17. Pat Roberts, Trenton
18. Dave Haagsma, Grand Rapids South Christian
19. Todd Mobley, Walled Lake Central
20. Tim Ross, Caledonia
21. Matt Daley, Redford Catholic Central
22. Brent Wrisley, St. Louis
23. Chris Toloff, Novi
24. Travis Crawford, Traverse City Central
25. Will Garcia, Flint Kearsley

Girls

1. Emily Anderson, Marquette
2. Kalin Toedebusch, Rockford
3. Jamie Krzyminski, Corunna
4. Katie Boyles, Rochester Adams
5. Emily B'akeslee, Rockford
6. Linsey Blaisdell, Rockford
7. Marnie Smiley, Sterling Heights Stevenson
8. Nora Colligan, Rockford
9. Lauren Fairbanks, Rogers City
10. Jenni Fitzgerald, Sterling Heights Stevenson
11. Teresa Bongiovanni, Romeo
12. Andrea Parker, Livonia Stevenson
13. Amber Culp, Ann Arbor Pioneer
14. Karen Leroy, Oxford
15. Ann Zuelke, Grand Haven
16. Jenny Irwin, Mason County Central
17. Katie Anderson, Marquette
18. Rachel Cox, Battle Creek Lakeview
19. Danielle Quisenberry, Middleville
20. Courtney Meeker, Rochester
21. Beth Aury, Grosse Pointe South
22. Kate Gaylord, Mason
23. Jordan Hartmann, Rockford
24. Caryn Waterson, Benzie Central
25. Harmony Dykhuis, Fremont

he began in high school, follows the Michigan scholastic scene closely.

"I think there are a lot of runners in Michigan with potential," said Shay, whose brother Nathan is a freshman on the Irish team. "You hear a lot about the new breed of American runners, and I think there are runners in Michigan who want to be a part of this movement. They're aspiring to make it on the international level and that's a good thing."

INGS	CON	ALL
Gold		
St. Clair Shores Lakeview	01	0-2
Warren Wood Tower	01	0-2
Silver		
St. Clair Shores South Lake	10	2-0
L. Clemens	14	1-1
At. Clemens Clintonville	14	1-1
Center Line	00	1-1
Warren Lincoln	01	1-1
St. Clair Shores Lake Shore	01	1-1
Auburn	01	1-1
Mega		
Red		
Belleville	10	2-0
Dearborn Fariborn	10	1-1
Monroe	10	1-1
Ypsilanti	00	1-1
Dearborn	01	0-2
Lincoln Park	01	0-2
Wayne	01	0-2
White		
Garden City	10	2-0
Wyandotte	10	2-0
Dearborn Edsel Ford	10	1-1
Woodhaven	00	1-1
Allen Park	01	1-1
Redford Union	01	0-2
Taylor Truman	01	0-2
Blue		
Gerard Carlson	10	2-0
Romulus	10	2-0
Tremont	10	1-1
McIntire	00	0-2
Redford Thurston	01	1-1
Southeast	01	0-2
Taylor Kennedy	01	0-2
Gold		
Highland Park	10	1-1
River Rouge	10	1-1
Willow Run	10	1-1
Inkster	00	2-0
Dearborn Mts. Ann Arbor	01	1-1
Dearborn Mts. Rochaud	01	1-1
Dearborn Mts. Crestwood	01	0-2
Metro		
GP Woods University Lippert	20	2-0
Livonia Clarenceville	20	2-0
Macomb Lutheran North	20	2-0
Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook	1-1	1-1
Harger Woods	01	0-2
Harger Woods Lutheran East	01	0-2
Lutheran Westland	01	0-2
Kummersick	01	0-2
Roch Hills Lutheran Northwest	01	0-2
Oakland Activities		
Division I		
Clarkston	00	2-0
Lake Orion	00	2-0
Troy Adams	00	2-0
Rochester Adams	00	2-0
Troy	00	2-0
Rochester	01	1-1

Cross Country: Notebook

Liggett to honor 100 years of teams

By Bev Eckman
The Detroit News

GROSSE POINTE WOODS — They've covered a lot of miles in a century of running, the cross-country teams of University Liggett.

The current version, coached by Phil Langford, will play host to a 10-school anniversary meet at 4 p.m. Sept. 16 at Schroder Field in Grosse Pointe Woods.

To celebrate this centennial season, Langford did some research and initially outfitted his boys in uniforms similar to those worn by Liggett's runners in 1899. There were just two problems.

"The shorts would ride up and bunch up between your thighs and make it uncomfortable to run," senior Shaka Bahadu said.

And the leather belts inhibited breathing. "I tried it once, and I didn't like it," he said.

University Liggett's Knights will be in their regular navy uniforms for the centennial meet.

"I don't think there's another school that's run 100 years," said Detroit Holy Redeemer Coach Patrick Irwin, whose team will participate.

Liggett School for Girls opened in 1878. Boys started running at Detroit University School in October 1899. The schools merged as University Liggett in 1969, effective in the 1970 school year.

Coming up

The traditional kickoff meet for the season is Saturday. Sponsored in the past by West Bloomfield, it will be sponsored this year by Birmingham Brother Rice because of the Jewish religious holiday Rosh Hashanah.

It's traditionally one of the biggest meets in the state. Now in its third year at Kens-

ington Metropark, it will be held at Playfield Possum Hollow.

Meet director **Bob Stark**, the Rice cross-country coach, expects 80 teams, boys and girls, for four varsity races, divided by enrollment, starting at 9 a.m. with Division I girls, smaller Class A schools and Class B schools. Division II girls (Class A) are at 9:30 a.m., followed by Division I boys at 10 and Division II boys at 10:30.

There is a \$3 weekend admission charge for cars entering the Metropark without a season pass.

... The 13th annual University of Detroit Mercy Invitational also will be Saturday at Cass Benton Park in Northville.

Meet director **Guy Murray**, the track and cross-country coach at UDM, said 11 teams entered the collegiate races.

The high school / open division early entries include Hazel Park, Plymouth Christian, Dearborn Edsel Ford, Garden City, Trenton, Warren Woods Tower, Southfield Franklin Road Christian, Southfield Christian and Novi, the defending state boys champion in A.

"It's the home course for Novi," Murray said. "Novi is definitely the class of the field."

There will be three races, starting with the high school / open division at 10 a.m.

Murray, 32, qualified for next spring's Olympic Trials in the marathon. The time required is 2:22 or less, which Murray did in June at Grandma's Marathon in Duluth, Minn., running 2:21:18.

Leave a message for Bev Eckman at (313) 222-2392 or baeckman@aol.com.

Wildcats top Brighton, Moore breaks own record

By JASON SCHMITT
Sports Editor

There's no hiding the fact that they're good. Boys' cross country coach Bob Smith knows that.

This year's team lacks the senior leadership that the state championship squad had in 1998, but each one of the returnees has the experience of 10 seniors thanks to that title. And they're showing that early.

The Wildcats beat Brighton for just the third time ever last week and went on to perform better than any other team at the University of Detroit Mercy Invitational at Cass Benton last Saturday.

No scores were kept at the Mercy Invite, but Novi placed three in the top seven and their top five among the top 21 out of more than 300 runners taking part in the race. The race was a bit unusual in that it was one big race mixing boys and girls, high school runners and non-high school runners all together.

Novi had 13 career Cass Benton personal

bests and 20 season Cass Benton personal bests. Topping it all off, sophomore sensation Tim Moore shattered his own Novi course record in a time of 15 minutes, 57 seconds. That time was 11 seconds faster than his time he ran two weeks ago and helped him to a top finish among all the runners.

Teammate Chris Toloff also ran well, running his best time of 16:13 to take third.

"If you take a look back 12 months ago, Chris would be the man," Smith said. "Over the past year, our school record has been broken three times, and Chris' 16:13 would have been a record just a year ago."

Mark Aventus was seventh overall in a time of 16:36, also a personal-best time. Eric Walle came in at 17:08, which was 13th overall in the race. Steve Szwaast rounded out Novi's top five with a 21st overall finish in 17:30. Twenty Wildcat runners finished the race.

Finishing sixth for the 'Cats was Mitch Erickson at 17:39. Rounding out the top nine were Dan Stevens (17:46), Nick Bassitt (17:47) and Evan Foster (18:02).

"Three meets in five days is just too much," Smith said. "But because of the format of this meet, we felt we could use some more big-meet experience. This meet is pretty laid-back and the kids really had fun. It's a fun way to fulfill our coaching needs."

Smith said that with the Oakland County meet coming up, the invite served as preparation for the big race.

NOVI 17, BRIGHTON 40

With Brighton's rich tradition in cross country running, Smith was pleased to get just his third win ever over the Bulldogs, again in a rout.

Novi took the top four places and showed why. Despite the loss of three of their top five runners, Novi will again be the team to

beat in the Kensington Valley Conference

Moore ran the Bishop Lake course 16:12, which was 37 seconds faster than teammate and runnerup Toloff (16:49). Walle and Aventus were the next two across the finish line in times of 17:03 and 17:07.

Brighton took the next two positions before Bassitt sealed the deal with a seventh-place finish in 17:47. Szwaast was sixth for Novi in 18:02 and Foster was seventh (18:17).

"It's always satisfying to beat Brighton," Smith said. "They've seemed to have a number for many, many years."

Novi faced South Lyon Tuesday at Cass Benton (after The Novi News' deadline) and will compete in the Walled Lake West Invitational Saturday morning at 10 a.m. Next Tuesday the team will take on Highland in a KVC matchup.

KVC ins and outs...

Brighton *No dice against Brother Rice.* Correction — the Bulldogs are merely the state's best public school soccer team. They went up against parochial power Birmingham Brother Rice last Tuesday, and lost 3-0...With a wink to the Andy Dick song, Brighton's football team kept ownership of the Little Brown Jug with its 34-0 whuppin' of Howell. "We like to win big ball games," Bulldogs coach Bill Murray said. Except in November...The two best tennis teams in the league met last Wednesday. Brighton defeated Novi 5-3, the first time that's happened in three years...

Hartland *Lawn job snow job.* Eagles football coach Tab Kellepourey had a predictable scapegoat following his team's overtime loss at Milford: The Media. Allegedly, three (former) Hartland football players almost killed a Brighton man, dragging him through the streets with their truck (resulting in severe head injuries, broken ribs, and a punctured lung). Tab said TV news types around the high school made it difficult to practice leading up to the Milford game. Meanwhile, charges against the four Hartland High 11th-graders should come as soon as their victim regains consciousness...

Howell *Back in business.* Sarah Piepho is back running point for Howell, which is bad news for the rest of the league's hoop squads. Had Piepho played last year, the Highlanders likely would've been the class of the KVC. Last Thursday in Howell's 47-37 win over Grand Ledge she scored 20 and sank five-of-six throws in crunch time...Throw the name Eric Walters in among the league's best X-C runners. He placed first in the Lansing Eastern Invite with a time of 17:05.

Lakeland *Things that make you go achoo.* File this under ironic. You'd figure the members of the Eagles' boys' cross country team, a perennial state power, would be the picture of health. And they are. Except for that darn ragweed. Lakeland coach Randy Wilkins said allergies have been slowing his

team down, with 10 kids on medication. But will the rest of the KVC spare a tissue? Doubt it. In the Eagles' first league dual meet last Thursday they beat Howell 19-40. Saturday they were third at the West Bloomfield, er. Brother Rice Invitational at Kensington, where Pat Klein placed fourth at 16:36.

Milford *It's like deja vu all over again.* The last name is the same. So is the position, as the third singles players on Milford's tennis team. And so far, freshman AnneMarie Jasienjecki is undefeated, as was older brother Kyle in his freshman year...Forgive Hartland High School if all James Bond novels are banned from the school library. They've had it up to here with Fleming. Ben, Milford's senior tight end, scored two touchdowns and deflected Hartland's final pass attempt in the Redskins 14-7, overtime win...

Novi *Is this the year?* The Wildcats edged South Lyon 13-7 after stopping the Lions' Marcus Schumelster on a 4th and 1 from the one. The win was Novi's first over South Lyon since 1994, when kicker Jon Wroe booted a 31-yard field goal to edge South Lyon 22-21... Sophomore Tim Moore continued to show why he has a legitimate shot at a top five finish at the state cross country meet this year. He bettered his own Cass Benton school record by finishing the Franklin Invite in a time of 15:57.

South Lyon *Smokin'.* After a nondescript effort in the league's preseason tournament, the Lion's golf team has blown up in the regular season. They're 3-0 in the KVC, last week beating Novi on the Wildcats' course then knocking off state-ranked Howell 153-154 at Salem Hills.

The big thing for South Lyon has been its team depth. In recent matches it has gotten big games from the likes of Justin Goyt, Dan Merritt, and Brian Downing. Goyt's 33 Monday against Redford Thurston set a school record for nine holes.

Brighton boys run to a first-place finish at the Lansing Invitational

By Scott Kelley
SPORTS EDITOR

Everybody around the Kensington Valley Conference has been saying the league is the toughest in the state when it comes to boys' cross country.

Last week at the Lansing Eastern Invitational, that was evident.

Teams expected to finish in the middle of the pack in the KVC finished first and second, out of 13 teams, at the meet.

Brighton placed three runners in the fifth through 10th spots to score 32 points and take home first place.

Howell also did well, taking the individual top spot, and finishing second place with 59 points. East Kentwood was third with 69 points.

The win for Brighton was especially satisfying, considering its lopsided loss to Novi earlier in the week.

"It was nice to bounce back after

"It was nice to bounce back after the Novi massacre."

Bob Ritsema
Brighton boys coach

the Novi massacre," Brighton coach Bob Ritsema said. "We didn't explode like I thought we would, but we packed together and got the win."

Brighton's Rich Morel led his team with a second-place finish overall at 17:13. He was followed by teammate Joe Wojle in fifth place at 17:28. Kevin Gienapp was sixth at 17:29 and Eric Malkowski in seventh for Brighton at 17:32.

For Howell, it was a great day for top runner Eric Walters. He blew

away the rest of the field to take first place overall at 17:05.

Howell also took fourth overall with Brad Morgan running a time of 17:24. Next for the Highlanders was Austin Roth in eighth place at 17:35. Jake Blakeslee was in 21st place and Chris Strook followed in 25th place overall.

In the girls' race, Brighton also put forth a great effort, but could not make it a Bulldog sweep. They were edged by Ann Arbor Pioneer for the top spot. Pioneer scored 34 points, while Brighton took second with 44 points.

The Bulldogs were led by Diana Martin with a third-place overall finish. Iris Slater began to get back to her true form as she took fourth with her best race of the young season. Sophomore Stephanie Kaulfersch finished in seventh overall and Amanda Kinneer took 14th to round out the Brighton scoring.

Brighton girls get past first big KVC test

Two of the best cross country teams in the state — Brighton's girls and Novi's boys — strutted their stuff in Thursday's Kensington Valley Conference dual meet.

Brighton won the girls' race in a close battle at the Bishop Lake course, 23-32. In the boys' race, Novi took a convincing 17-40 victory.

"Diana Martin ran a superb race for us," said Brighton coach Gary Meehan. "We're looking forward to a good season of running."

Martin won the race, hitting

the line at 20:27. Brighton also took the fourth (Ryan Hittle, 20:44), fifth (Emily Monti, 20:53), sixth (Stephanie Kaultersch, 21:20) and seventh places (Iris Slater, 21:21).

As for the boys' race, Novi swept the top four spots en route to the easy victory.

Joe Wojcie was first for Brighton, taking fifth place overall at 17:36. He was followed by Eric Malkowski (sixth, 17:46), Brad Pero (eighth, 17:55), Rich Morel (10th, 18:05) and Kevin Gienapp (11th, 18:08).

Marian's girls like a meet in the mud

By Bev Eckman
The Detroit News

After running in the Charlevoix Classic Invitational, Birmingham Marian's team stopped at a Lake Michigan beach to wash up.

"We kind of look forward to going up north to run through the mud," team captain Kelly Waldo said this week. "You run in mud up to your waist, and then we go to a beach to wash off. It's fun."

Waldo, a junior, said she was disappointed this year when she had the flu Sept. 11 and ended up as a timer instead of a mud runner and is looking forward to the "mud meet" next year.

"We take an overnight team-bonding trip, go and get muddy and have a good time," Marian Coach John Dunn said.

The Classic's mud holes — along with 2-foot steeplechase jumps, log jumps and a hay-bale mini-maze — are deliberate.

"We are trying to show the fun of what cross country used to be, the old European-style, with barriers, obstacles, logs to jump over," meet director and Charlevoix Coach Ken Plude said. "We change it every year."

Plude sets the course up on 33 acres he's re-foresting.

The highlight, depending on one's affinity for mud, is a 20-foot hole that starts out as a water hazard and, long before all 600-plus athletes run through the knee-deep water, turns into a mud hole.

Marian finished 15th out of 19 teams.

The top Metro area girls finisher was Troy Athens senior Cathy Rin, who was ninth in 2002. The top Metro boys were also seniors: Andrew Czaplicki, Farmington, 18th in 1940; Victor Serena, Troy Athens, 30th, 1948; and Andrew Kenerson, Farmington, 30th, 2007.

Briefly

The *Michigan 1999 High School Track & Field Yearbook* is out, compiled by Jeff Hollobaugh. It is available for \$20 from Jeff Hollobaugh, 2209 Independence Blvd., Ann Arbor, 48104.

— Walled Lake Central's Todd Mobley is part of the contingent heading to Detroit Catholic Central's Shamrock Invitational Saturday at the Shamrocks' home course, Cass Benton Park in Northville. C.C. Action starts at 10 a.m.

Rankings

Compiled by the Michigan Interscholastic Track Coaches Association.

~~BOYS~~

Class A

1. Rockford; 2. Novi; 3. Grand Ledge; 4. Traverse City Central; 5. Detroit Catholic Central; 6. Saline; 7. Milford; 8. Utica Eisenhower; 9. White Lake Lakeland; 10. Portage Northern.

Class B

1. Richland Gull Lake; 2. Big Rapids; 3. Ida; 4. Stockbridge; 5. Flint Powers; 6. Holland Christian; 7. Corunna; 8. Marysville; 9. Petoskey; 10. Niles.

Class C

1. East Jordan; 2. Sandusky; 3. Benzonia Benzie Central; 4. Hemlock; 5. Sanford Meridian; 6. Breckenridge; 7. St. Louis; 8. Almont; 9. Bath; 10. Scottville Mason County.

Class D

1. Bear Lake; 2. Wolverine; 3. New Buffalo; 4. Detroit Holy Redeemer; 5. Litchfield; 6. Vanderbilt; 7. Gallien; 8. Lawrence; 9. Fowler.

~~BOYS~~

Class A

1. Rockford; 2. Sterling Heights Stevenson; 3. Ann Arbor Pioneer; 4. Livonia Stevenson; 5. Portage Central; 6. Grosse Pointe South; 7. Troy; 8. Romeo; 9. Saline; 10. Traverse City West.

Class B

1. Richland Gull Lake; 2. Flint Powers; 3. W. Branch Ogemaw Heights; 4. Whitehall; 5. Monroe Jefferson; 6. Thornapple-Kellogg; 7. Jackson Lumen Christi; 8. Parma Western; 9. Ludington; 10. Haslett.

Class C

1. Kalamazoo Hackett; 2. Benzonia Benzie Central; 3. Pittsford; 4. Blissfield; 5. Kent City; 6. Concord; 7. Kalamazoo Christian; 8. Laingsburg; 9. Grass Lake; 10. Charlevoix.

Class D

1. Bear Lake; 2. Mendon; 3. North Muskegon; 4. Fulton-Middleton; 5. Litchfield; 6. Wolverine; 7. Buckley; 8. New Lothrop; 9. Wyoming Tri Unity; 10. Atlanta.

Leave a message for Bev Eckman at (313) 222-2393 or at baeckman@aol.com.

9-24-99



Novi junior Eric Walle finished second to Chris Toloff at the Western Invite Saturday.

Novi sweeps Western Invite

Tim Moore and Chris Toloff battled neck and neck for the top spot at the Walled Lake Western Invitational last Saturday.

And both came away winners.

Moore finished first in a time of 16 minutes, 38 seconds to lead his Novi freshmen/sophomore teammates to a win in their division. Toloff, actually running in a different race, finished first in the junior/senior division in a time of 16:39. Both runners blew away their fields at the eight-team invite.

Toloff teamed up with Eric Walle, Nick Bassitt, Steve Szwest and Evan Foster to finish with 33 points, well ahead of second-place Brother Rice (82 points). Western was third with 84 points and Northville finished fourth with 99.

Walle was second in the junior/senior division in a time of 17:23. Bassitt was seventh overall in 18:08 and Szwest and Foster were 10th and 13th in times of 18:30 and 18:54.

Dan Stevens, Eric Saurer and Mark Avenius finished sixth through eighth for Novi.

In the freshman sophomore race, Mitch Erickson took third place in a time of 18:25 and Todd Foren was sixth overall in 18:47. Rounding out the scoring for Novi was Tim Kava (9th) at 19:12 and Matt Harsha-Strong (11th) in 19:15.

Derek BuWalda (17th), Steve Duda (21st) and Alex Kazanis (22nd) were Novi's 6-8 runners.

Duda's time of 20:24 was the lone season best for Novi in the meet.

"I really love this meet because it allows kids that wouldn't normally finish fourth or fifth the opportunity to do so," Novi coach Bob Smith said. "You just can't count on seven guys. If some guys get injured or are sick, we've got these guys who have been there before and can step in. Nothing beats experience."

"Toloff is a remarkable runner," said the coach. "If he and Tim would have run head to head, who knows what would have happened? A lot of people see him playing second fiddle to Tim, but as their coach, I see him being on par with Tim Moore."

NOVI 17, SOUTH LYON 48

A depleted South Lyon squad was no match for the defending state champions, but Smith found a way to make this meet worthwhile for his runners.

He tried to have as many of his runners beat South Lyon's lone returning state qualifier from a year ago, Ryan Roma.

Only Moore, Toloff and Avenius were able to, but Walle and Bassitt were not far behind. Moore won the race in 16:56, with Toloff and Avenius taking second and third in times of 17:01 and 17:12.

Roma came in fourth place at 17:22 before Walle (17:30) and Bassitt (17:34) crossed the finish line. Erickson and Szwest finished in 17:56 and 17:58 to give Novi seven runners to break 18 min-

Mach possesses a knack for knowing where to hit the ball will be. He makes great runs and does a good job of getting in position to receive the pass. From there, Mach is one of the best finishers in the league. He is already leading the team this year with ten goals in three games. Look for Mach to be a dominant player in and outside the league this year.

5. Doug Rice
Brighton senior midfielder

This player has got to be one of the best ball handlers in the state. Often in hockey a player who can handle the puck well is said to have in on a string. The same can be said when Rice has the ball. Rice does a great job of weaving in between defenders with the ball at his feet. Watching Rice with the ball is like watching

physical player. He isn't as big of an offensive threat as teammates Rzepka and Irimescu, but knows how to score.

He's one of the hardest-nosed players you'll ever meet, according to his coach.

11. Shaun Jordan
South Lyon senior defender

A senior fullback, Jordan has been an all-conference selection the past two seasons. As a junior he was honorable mention all-state. The integral piece of South Lyon's veteran defense, Jordan usually marks the opponent's top scorer, a role for which he is certainly equipped.

"He's one of the fastest players in the league," South Lyon coach Bill Stevanovic said.

9-24-99

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**McDONALD FORD
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ATHLETES OF THE WEEK**

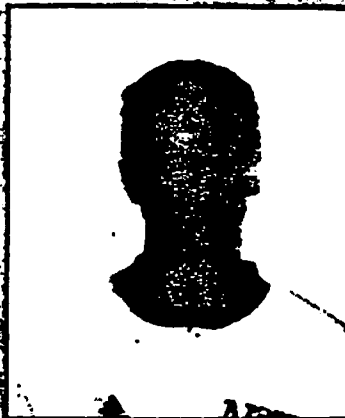
Eric Walle - Junior



Walle finished second in the junior/senior division at the Walled Lake Western Invitational this past Saturday. He was second only to teammate Chris Toloff and finished in a time of 17:23.

He finished fifth overall and fourth for Novi in a 17-46 romp over KVC rival South Lyon.

Brandon Davis - Sophomore



Davis assisted on both of Novi's goals in an important 2-0 win over Hartland last week. The win gives Novi sole possession of second place in the KVC.

He also assisted on one of Novi's three goals against Milford and scored two of his own in an 8-1 thrashing of Walled Lake Western Sept. 7.

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South Lyon ninth at Holly Invitational

South Lyon High School finished ninth out of 19 teams in the large school division of the Holly Invitational on Saturday.

Boys' Cross Country

"The competition was just incredible," South Lyon coach Scott Smith said. "It was like a who's-who of cross country in Michigan. To finish ninth was respectable. We're short a couple kids due to injuries, so this should benefit us when we get healthy."

Ryan Roma was South Lyon's top finisher with a time of 17:03.

"I was really proud of his effort," Smith said. "This is our regional course, and if Ryan duplicates that effort in October he should qualify for the state meet."

Brian Lee ran the first sub-18 minute time of his career, finishing in 17:59.

A number of South Lyon runners set personal best times at Holly, including Joe Frederick, Gary Pennala, Matt Micks and Nick Pearce.

"It was a super performance by Nick," Smith said. "He dropped 25 seconds of his P.R. to 18:16."

Micks improved his P.R. by 56 seconds to 20:26.

"We have lots of really young and first-year kids who are really doing well," Smith said. "We have more depth than we usually do at this time of the year."

Last Thursday South Lyon ran against Novi, and was reminded why the Wildcats are the defend-

"We have lots of really young and first-year kids who are really doing well. We have more depth than we usually do at this time of year."

Scott Smith

South Lyon High School
boys' cross country coach

ing state champions. Novi won 17-46.

"We took a rather predictable beating," Smith said. "Novi is looking to defend its title, and proved to be fantastic. It's an honor to compete with them."

One of those competitors was Roma, who broke up Novi's top five with a fourth-place time of 17:22. Rounding out South Lyon's top five were Lee (18:09), Pennala (18:11), Bob Najduk (18:19), and Pierce (18:41).

Paul broke the 20 minute mark for the first time, and almost beyond, with a time of 19:07.

"We knew we'd take our lumps early in the season," Smith said. "But we've maintained a good attitude and are working towards the end of the season. Our focus is on late October."

Career-best times are everywhere

By JASON SCHMITT
Sports Editor

Not every meet can be a tremendous challenge to the boy's cross country team. But every meet can be another learning experience for the team.

Such was the case last Tuesday (Sept. 21) in an 18-45 dual-meet win over Hartland. Novi coach Bob Smith knew the meet wasn't going to be close, but gave his team a game plan. And they played it out perfectly.

The Village Elementary course at Hartland was flat and fast, and because of the nice running conditions, 16 Novi runners set career-best times.

Chris Toloff won the race in a time of 15 minutes, 49 seconds and was followed across the finish line by Tim Moore, who came in at 15:52.

After Hartland's top runner squeezed in there, Nick Bassitt and Mark Avenius strolled across the finish line in 16:40 and 16:43. In the next "mini pack" was Eric Walle and Mitch Erickson at 17:05 and 17:06. Evan Foster and Steve Szwest were the next two in at 17:10 and 17:14.

"We used this meet as an opportunity to run as a unit," Smith said. "The kids have to sacrifice a little bit when you do that, and these guys were will-

THE NOVI NEWS—Thursday, September 30, 1999—3B

Toloff and Moore leading Wildcats

Continued from 1

ing to do that."

Smith said Walle sacrificed some time off of his finish to help out sophomore Mitch Erickson. The two ran together, and finished one second apart.

"Eric Walle and Mark Avenius were the unsung heroes of this meet," the coach said. "Mitch (Erickson) is our young talented sophomore, and Eric could have broken 17 minutes, but he helped Mitch along in the race. I think that's going to help Mitch out in the future."

Toloff's time was five seconds better than his previous career best set last year at the Michigan International Speedway at the state finals.

Moore's time was one second slower than his time at MIS.

"I think Tim and Chris proved themselves that they're premier runners in the state," the coach said. "They know they are top 25

runners."

Bassitt's time was a career best, as was Erickson's Foster's and Szwest's. Also setting career-best times were Todd Foren (17:46), Eric Saurer (17:47), Tim Kava (17:58), Matt Harsha-Strong (18:01), Steve Shubert (18:44), Ryan Slater (18:58), Steven Duda (19:01), Alex Kazanis (19:04), A.J. Macdonald (19:25), Derek BuWalda (19:28) and Scott Rettman (20:53).

On Tuesday, Novi competed in its toughest dual meet to this point against Milford (after The Novi News' deadline). Smith has felt that that meet may decide the winner of the regular-season KVC title.

The team will compete at the Redford Union Invitational this weekend and will take a week off competition before taking part in the Oakland County meet Saturday (Oct. 9).

Continued on 3



Evans



Toloff



Echols

BOYS SOCCER

These days, there's a lot of talk around the Waterford Kettering team about respect — or, more appropriately, a lack of respect. The state rankings come out every week and, so far, Kettering hasn't been included, despite a 9-0 record.

“One part that's motivating for them is we're an undefeated team and we're looking at local teams that have one loss and we're not ranked,” coach Peter Moraites said. “On (Thursday, Ortonville) Brandon was a ranked team. It definitely motivates us.”

Much of the Captains' power rests with a balanced attack, both offense and the backfield.

“Derek Evans is playing extremely well with 10 goals and 10 assists,” Moraites said. “Steven Dendler had seven goals and four assists and Nick Swanson has eight goals and four assists.”

Along with steady senior full-back Eric Dayringer and junior stopper Ben Sobczak, they have Kettering fighting for respect. Moraites calls Sobczak the team's rock because he clears the ball so effectively.

Two consecutive district final

appearances demonstrate the Captains' success and this week was further validation of Moraites' achievement.

“We've improved steadily since I've been there,” he said of his fourth season, “and (Thursday) night was our 50th win since I've been there. We're basically a carbon copy of last year. Against good teams, we played really well.”

Kettering's biggest problem this season has been its tendency to start slow.

“I'd like us to start off a game strong and not put pressure on ourselves in the second half,” he said.

■ Auburn Hills Avondale is also on a roll, having won a school-record five in a row. The biggest test of that streak should have come last Tuesday against Kettering.

The Yellow Jackets appeared to be up to the challenge until the rains came midway through the first half. The game was suspended with Avondale leading 1-0 and will be resumed on Oct. 21.

Avondale will also be tested today when it faces Bloomfield Hills Andover, which is rolling through OAA Division IV.

— MARK SNYDER

West Bloomfield coach battling multiple myeloma, but isn't slowing down

By MARVIN GOODWIN
Of The Oakland Press

This weekend, up to 1,000 boys and girls will compete in varsity and junior varsity competition at the 40th annual Oakland County Cross Country championships at Kensington Metropark.

On the 5,000-meter course, runners, while vying for individual and team awards, will all experience varying degrees of discomfort and pain.

It's the nature of a sport where physical exhaustion contends with comfort and complacency in a mental struggle played throughout the race.

Overcoming the pain is the key and preparing mentally is the objective, according to meet director Lee Averill.

“A lot of kids come out for high school sports and they don't expect to have any pain,” he said. “When they get some, it's a negative thing.”

Sparky Anderson, former Detroit Tigers baseball manager, once said “pain don't hurt” in a clever but clumsy oxymoron about players begging out of the lineup because of a slight injury.

But most coaches would agree. Overcoming the barrier of pain in cross country is the key to success.

Averill, West Bloomfield's cross country coach, has spent some 38 years coaching. He's been associated with the Oakland County meet almost as long and he recognizes the mental struggle of pain for runners on the course, and through his own experiences off



The Oakland Press
West Bloomfield

the course.

More than diagnosed myeloma, a “I had difficulty,” he recall the news. “I it. But my anything about ever I can't

To be sure competition, country meet will win.

“Whenever hospital) for you're getting he said. “You mentally.”

For Averill his back. His after visits to find out w illness was e

Eventually ist at the Un

CROSS COUNTRY

With performances such as at last Saturday's Redford Union Invitational, Novi cross country coach Robert Smith is feeling fairly comfortable. The Wildcats' Chris Toloff (15:57) and Tim Moore (16:14) took the first two places as Novi, the defending Class A state champion, scored 36 points.

“This was a low-key meet, but sometimes that's the best,” Smith said. “It gives us some training ideas. Our sights are really to see who's in the top seven.”

Novi had six runners among the top 16 with Mark Avenius (fourth), Nick Bassitt (14th) and Mitch Erickson (15th) completing the scoring with Steve Swast and Todd Foren close behind them. Eric Walle, who didn't compete Saturday, is also a solid runner.

They'll all be a force in the coming weeks, including at Saturday's Oakland County meet, where Novi hope to defend its title.

“We're pretty much on par as last year,” Smith said. “Oakland County will be a real good test. That will be a real barometer to see how we fare in real big meets.”

■ Novi's girls are also in the Oakland County meet title hunt. The Wildcats won the Redford Union Invitational with 41 points. Freshman Nina Schmitt took second in 20:14, but senior Kristin Echols, who took fourth in 20:30, has been a mainstay on the varsity squad since her freshman year. Her experience will be a factor in the Wildcats' fortunes the rest of the season.

— MARVIN GOODWIN

This guest c

Kosmo might be on to something here.

Ever since I suckered Farmington Hills Harrison girls basketball coach Pete Mantel and his coaching cronies at Warner Middle School to give me a Kosmo column, people everywhere have been clamoring for the opportunity to see Pearl Jam.

Pontiac Notre Dame and public-cross country coach Mark Murphy address announced that Pearl Jam is offering four bonus compact discs for the day. The Kosmo to be Kosmo for ever that one, but Monster was all when I called his number during 1 p.m. business hours anyone to answer also left his ho

We Rock We're Kc

By JOHN PL SHELTON a

We have of dent sections. We have school girls fall, and have respectable. It's not like Flint Metro between H (Orford) tal

NOVI pack expects another good run with new leaders

BOYS CROSS-COUNTRY

By SCOTT TALLEY
FREE PRESS SPORTS WRITER

Mark Avenius has worked at Wendy's since May, but don't ask him what the burgers taste like.

"I eat the pitas, but no burgers," Avenius said proudly. "They haven't gotten to me yet."

Drawing on that discipline, Avenius and his teammates at Novi are poised to make a run at a second consecutive Class A title.

"We have a lot to defend and this team won't be hidden like we were last year," said Avenius, who has a 8.6 grade-point average. "We worked hard last year, but we need to keep the determination."

Winning the title last year meant beating powerhouse Rockford, 82-87. It came as a surprise to some, but not to Robert Smith, who is coaching the Wildcats for the 19th season.

"We have a lot of respect for Rockford, and two weeks before the state meet they beat us at the Gabriel Richard Invitational," said Smith, a physical education and business teacher at Novi. "But we came away from that meet feeling like we could run with them. We just kept getting better, and then we had a great team effort at the state meet."

Novi has another deep team, even though it lost the seventh and eighth finishers from last year's finals — Avenius' brother, Kevin, and Dan Christopherson. Kevin went to Notre Dame and Christopherson to Michigan State.

Sophomore Tim Moore and junior Chris Toloff already have run under 16 minutes at Cass Benton Park, one of the area's most challenging courses.

Other top runners on the 26-member squad include juniors Avenius, Eric Walle

and Steve Szwast; senior Nick Bassitt; and sophomores Mitch Erickson and Todd Foren.

"Kevin Avenius really put us back on the map a couple of years ago," Smith said. "He was our go-to guy, a real big-meet runner."

"And then Christopherson really emerged last season. He never came out and said this, but he showed that hey, I can run with Kevin."

"Now we have a whole group of kids who feel that they can run with the runner in front of them, and that pushes everyone along. Our goal this year was to run as a pack."

One of the leaders of the pack is Walle, a tri-captain.

"My job as a captain is to just keep the team focused," said Walle, a 8.98 student who has been running road races since the fifth grade. "We have to remember that we cannot afford to not train hard on any given day, because that day we take off could be the state meet."

Novi is prepping for the Nov. 6 state finals with a tough dual meet schedule. Its Kensington Valley Conference rivals include White Lake Lakeland, which won Class A titles in 1996 and '97; and Brighton, the '95 Class A champion.

And it won't be easy Saturday when Novi attempts to defend its Oakland County title at Kensington Metropark.

"Winning the Oakland County championship last year really gave us a lot of confidence," Smith said. "Probably the best collection of cross-country runners in the state are in Oakland County."

Said Mark Avenius, who began training after track season and no longer resembles the mediocre runner of his middle school days: "It's a lot of hard work, but if you plow through all that, once Nov. 6 rolls around, it's all worth it."

SCOTT TALLEY can be reached at 313-222-5163.

CROSS-COUNTRY INDIVIDUAL RANKINGS

Compiled by Jeff Hollobaugh

BOYS TOP 25

1. Nathan Ritzenthal
2. Jake Flynn
3. Andy Marsh
4. Kurtis Marlowe
5. Ryan Cole
6. Chris Toloff
7. Tim Moore
8. Tim Ross
9. Todd Mobley
10. Tristen Pertberg
11. Justin Blakely
12. Tom Greenless
13. David Sage
14. Andy Martin
15. Jason Stover
16. Derek Byrne
17. Aaron Rogers
18. Mike Gray
19. Jacob Crowe
20. John Hughes
21. Paul Niedzwiecki
22. Sean Moore
23. Justin Perez
24. Jordan Emmonoy
25. Kevin Sule

- Rockford
- Benzie Central
- Grand Lodge
- Richland Gull Lake
- Sanford Meridian
- Novi
- Novi
- Caledonia
- Walled Lake Central
- Saginaw Valley Lutheran
- Big Rapids
- Millford
- Clerkston
- Rockford
- Williamston
- McBain
- Berrien Springs
- Sanford-Meridian
- Grand Lodge
- Traverse City Central
- Adrian
- Saline
- Flint Powers
- Gaylord
- Hemlock

GIRLS TOP 25

1. Emily Anderson
2. Kalin Toedebusch
3. Teresa Bongiovanni
4. Lindsey Blaisdell
5. Emily Blakelee
6. Jamie Krzyminski
7. Katie Anderson
8. Katie Boyles
9. Andrea Parker
10. Marna Smiley
11. Rachel Cox
12. Jenny Gershaen
13. Nora Golligan
14. Chelsea Loomis
15. Jeannie Sackinger
16. Danielle Quisenberry
17. Jordan Hartmann
18. Melissa Miller
19. Karen Leroy
20. Courtney Meeker
21. Michelle Suzzek
22. Lauren Fairbanks
23. Brittany Ballard
24. Ann Zuelke
25. Caryn Waterson

- Marquette
- Rockford
- Romeo
- Rockford
- Rockford
- Corunna
- Marquette
- Rochester Adams
- Livonia Stevenson
- Stirling Heights Stevenson
- Battle Creek Lakewood
- Portage Central
- Rockford
- Traverse City West
- Gull Lake
- Middleville
- Rockford
- Portland
- Oxford
- Rochester
- Alpena
- Rogers City
- Midland
- Grand Haven
- Benzie Central

Novi looks good going into OC meet

The largest high school cross country meet in the United States of America will be held this Saturday at Kensington Metropark. With nearly 50 schools competing, Lakeland boys' coach Randy Wilkins is only half-joking when he says one of the keys to the race is just not getting lost.

Lakeland has finished in the top three at the county meet since 1982. And only twice during that period have the Eagles placed third (in 1985 and 1990).

Who's the favorite on the boys' side?

"It's open," Wilkins said. "Clarkston ran pretty well last weekend. It should be them and Novi in first and second. If we had everyone healthy, we'd be right there, too. But Eric Jednyak is just getting back from a sprained ankle. He'll run this week, but he's not at full strength."

"Novi's the run-away favorite," Milford coach Brian Salyers said. "Clarkston, Lakeland, Walled Lake Central and our-

selves should make up the top five."

Novi won this meet for the first time ever last year, and went on to win the state championship.

The top individual runners on the boys' side will be Milford's Tom Greenless, Lakeland's Pat Klein, Tim Moore and Chris Toloff of Novi, David Sage from Clarkston and Todd Mobley of Walled Lake Central.

Salyers said his girls' team should finish fourth or fifth. But, without top runner Katie Kramer, it would be a difficult task to place higher than that. The best teams will likely be Troy, Lake Orion, Novi, Milford, Rochester Adams and Troy Athens.

The top individual runners look to be two-time defending state champ Katie Boyles from Rochester Adams, Courtney Mecker from Rochester, Karen Leroy of Oxford, Amanda Lee of South Lyon, Kristyn Kern from Lakeland and Novi's Kristin Echols and Nina Schmitt.

KVC ins and outs...

Brighton The Bulldogs' tennis team finished the conference regular season undefeated, with a 7-1 win over Hartland and 6-2 win over Milford last week ... Last Friday the KVC's best soccer was, Brighton and Novi, met. Nothing was decided, thanks to a 0-0 tie. What is this, the World Cup? Brighton remains undefeated in the league

Hartland Don't take Eagles soccer player Scott Greene before the House Committee on Un-American activities just yet. He may have earned his citizenship last Friday when he booted a school-record 52-yard field goal in the Eagles' 35-0 homecoming win against Lakeland.

Howell Milford football coach Mike Shearer didn't think his team did a poor job against Highlanders star running back Joe Carpenter. There was only so much they could do. "He's our game-breaker," Howell coach John Dukes said. "You get him the ball enough and he'll score." That he did, twice, with a 68-yard reception and a 38-yard run. Howell won 22-14 ...

Lakeland Since 1982 the Eagles have been one of the top

three teams at the Oakland County Boys' Cross Country Championship. Only twice during that span have they not been first or second.

Milford But things are about to get interesting for the basketball team, which is currently 10-0 but has been seriously challenged just once, by North Farmington. Now comes the bulk of the conference schedule, with three straight against Novi, Howell and Lakeland.

Novi Both the Novi boys and girls cross country teams won the Redford Union Invitational last Saturday. The meet featured seven boys' teams and six girls' squads who all call Cass Benton their home course. The girls' team won despite three of their five girls missing the invite because of homecoming activities. Chris Toloff won the boys race in a personal-best Cass record time of 15:57 ...

South Lyon Brighton is going to make the state football playoffs. Just not on the back of South Lyon. In one of the state's biggest games, the Lions knocked off undefeated Brighton 22-21. Nick Younce kicked the game-winning field goal with 3:32 to play.

Harriers topple field at Benton

By JASON SCHMITT
Sports Editor

It's hard not to compare this year's boys' cross country team to last year's state champions.

So far, though, this year's squad has performed every bit as good as last year's team. And this team has had to do it with all eyes upon them.

The Wildcats won the Redford Union Invitational in easy fashion last Saturday despite missing one of their top five runners. Eric Walle. Novi finished with a meet-low 36 points, followed by Livonia Churchill (74) and North Farmington (82). Dearborn (90), Northville (146), Redford Union (149) and Livonia Franklin (151) rounded out the seven-team field.

Chris Toloff won the race in a Cass Benton career-best time of 15 minutes, 57 seconds. It was the first sub-16 minute time at Cass Benton for the junior.

Teammate Tim Moore was second in a time of 16:15 and Mark Avenius was third on the team and fourth overall in 16:39.

With Walle out of the lineup with a tender knee, Nick Baasitt led a four-man Novi pack by finishing 14th overall in 17:16. Following him were Mitch Erickson (15th) in 17:23, Steve Szwest (16th) in 17:29 and Todd Foren (19th) in 17:27. It was Foren who found out on the bus ride over to Cass Benton that he would be running in the varsity lineup.

"I didn't let him know until the last minute," Novi coach Bob Smith said. "He stepped right in and proved he's one of the guys we're counting on in the future."

The 36 points were a bit more than the coach thought his team would score, but he didn't knock his team one bit.

"When we got there, we realized there were some quality teams at the meet," he said.

Although scores were not kept for the junior varsity race, Novi would have won that too. Evan Foster and Eric Saurer ran 1-2 for the Cats, finishing in times of 17:52 and 17:59. Tim Kava was fifth in the race (18:22), and Matt Harsha-Strong (18:30) and Derek BuWalda (18:33) were eighth and 10th in the race.

NOVI 15, MILFORD 41

In what was Novi's first "real" challenge thus far in the Kensington Valley Conference, the Redskins offered little challenge on the scoreboard when all was said and done.

"We were playing the numbers game," Smith said. "We knew that if four of their guys got ahead of our top three, we were sunk."

Fortunately for Smith, none of the Milford runners were able to get in front of Novi's top five. Tom Greenless, the Redskins' top runner, pulled out of the race at the 2 1/4 mile mark with a sore foot. That left the door open for Moore and Toloff to coast to the finish line.

Moore won the race in yet another school-record time of 15:45. It was the third time this season he's broke the record. Toloff coasted to a second-place finish in 16:21. Smith said his top two used teamwork to run against Greenless, who is ranked as high as number three in the state by cross country writers.

"They both kept up with him," Smith said. "In fact, he was never leading in the race."

Toloff took the early lead, fending off Greenless, before Moore took over midway through the race. Greenless dropped out when he started having pains in his foot due to a spike that had punctured the sole of his cleat.

"I think it really assisted in our confidence," Smith said of his kid's race against Greenless. "Now I'm feeling better that we can run with him."

"We were ready. This team has a mindset. They feel they are as good as last year's team."

Walle finished third for Novi in 16:52. Avenius (17:18) and Baasitt (17:23) rounded out the top five in the race. After a pack of four Milford runners came in, Erickson (17:57) came in and Szwest (18:02) finished 12th to round out the top seven.

The win leaves Novi a perfect 4-0 in KVC duals with only Howell and Lakeland remaining on the schedule. The team will compete in the Oakland County meet this Saturday. The team won the meet for the first time in school history last year.



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Clarkston, Adams earn county titles

Oct 10 1999 12:00AM By By MARVIN GOODWIN Sports Writer

MILFORD — Great expectations have followed Clarkston's senior-dominated boys cross country team since they were sophomores. The Wolves, though, have had more letdowns than accomplishments as the window of opportunity began closing in the successive years.

Now, in the final season for most of the group, they're beginning to assert themselves. David Sage took third place, leading five runners in the top 25, as the Wolves won the 40th annual Oakland County Cross Country championships Saturday at Kensington Metropark.

Walled Lake Central's Todd Mobley was the individual boys winner and Tom Greenless of Milford was second in the 5,000-meter race. Rochester Adams, led by three-time champion Katie Boyles, took the girls crown with 85 points and Novi, led by freshman Nina Schmitt (eighth), was second with 144.

Matt Haver took eighth, Brett Quantz was 20th, Kevin Breen was 24th and Dan Burke was 25th as Clarkston finished with 80 points, topping defending champion Novi, second with 85. Milford took third with 120.

Clarkston was self-assured when it arrived at the fog-shrouded park early in the morning. "It's probably the best team race we've ever run," Sage said, "and it shows, finally, with our group of seniors ... we're finally here at the right time and ready to do great."

Novi, whose Chris Toloff, Tim Moore and Eric Walle finished in the top 10, was set to pack another county title away. But Kevin Avenius, normally the Wildcats' fourth runner, dropped out midway through the race because of a calf injury.

"I knew we were sunk," Novi coach Bob Smith said. "You can control a lot of variables (in coaching), but you can't control injuries. "My hat's off to the Clarkston team. They've been gunning for this for years. They capitalized and they were ready."

Sage ran with a tight lead pack that included Greenless, Toloff, Moore, Mobley and Lakeland's Pat Klein until Mobley, who had shoe problems moments before the start of the race, broke free midway through the race and won in 16:00.2.

"I got to the starting line just in time," Mobley said. "The first mile seemed chaotic. I tried to calm myself down."

In the girls race, Boyles yielded an early lead to Berkley's Jaclyn House, but it lasted only about a mile. Boyles eased past House, sneaked a quick look at her opposition and stretched her lead the remainder of the race. She finished in 19:05, while Karen LeRoy of Oxford took second in 19:31 and House finished third in 19:56.

"I just wanted to see where everyone was," said Boyles, who wobbled briefly

while looking back. "I'm pretty happy. The time wasn't the best, but I can definitely go a lot faster."

It was the first girls county crown for the Highlanders since 1987, according to coach Budd Cicciarelli, who was confident the Highlanders could do well. "It surprised them, but it didn't surprise me," he said.

Shannon Stanley took ninth, Andrea Moreland was 14th, Kellie Byrne was 27th and Chelsea Gottshall was 34th to round out the Highlanders' scoring.

Courtney Meeker and Leigha Christian, who were fourth and fifth respectively, led Rochester, which finished third with 159 points.

Current Opinions

Oct, 10 1999 Mark Avenius is a vital cog in Novi's team, and with him Novi would have won the county title. But as Novi coach Bob Smith said, hats off to Clarkston and their very good team. Novi should finish 1 or 2 along with Rockford at the state meet!

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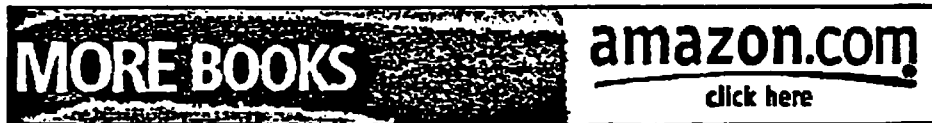
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Cross Country

Redemption Song

October 12, 1999

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Chris Toloff — Novi High cross country

HT: 5-foot-6
 WT: 117 pounds
 AGE: 17
 DOB: 8/20/82
 SIBLINGS: Sister, Amanda, 13
 YOUTH SPORTS: Soccer
 FAVORITE SCHOOL SUBJECT: Math
 FAVORITE TV SHOW: ESPN
 FAVORITE BRADY: Peter
 FAVORITE PREGAME MEAL: Oatmeal or pasta
 FAVORITE FAST-FOOD RESTAURANT: McDonald's
 FAVORITE VERSION OF POTATO: Mashed
 DREAM DATE FOR THE PROM: Singer Kelly Price
 SPORTS FIGURE YOU ADMIRE MOST: Alexei Lalas
 ELVIS — DEAD OR ALIVE: No

Last Tuesday, Novi High School harrier Chris Toloff didn't run well against Milford, the defending state champions. Toloff finished the course in 16:20 seconds, a time most prep runners would love. Nonetheless, Toloff wasn't too happy, since he was slowed by leg cramps.



So, on Oct. 2 in the Redford Union Invitational, Toloff redeemed himself.

"He broke 16 minutes on our home course, which is difficult," says Novi coach Robert Smith. "He's been running very hot."

For Toloff, the comeback performance was expected.

"Four days before, I had a bad race," says Toloff. "I just felt good (at Redford Union) and I kept my drive on. My goal was to win and win by a good amount."

Toloff isn't cocky or boisterous, he just has faith in his abilities.

"I just believe in myself and I think a lot in the pre-race," says Toloff. "I just stay confident in the race."

Success breeds confidence, and Toloff is a winner. Besides having a 15:49 personal best in cross country, he also ran one leg on Novi's 3,200-meter relay team that finished second in the state track and field meet last season. Though he's only a junior, Toloff entered this season as one of the state's top returnees in cross country.

"I look at the athletes from last year, lots of leading [runners] have graduated," says Smith. "Chris has seemed to have improved a tremendous amount. He's kicked it up a notch this year."

Toloff's formula is simple: Set achievable goals.

"You have to believe in yourself," says Toloff, "and know what goals are [reachable]."

— Eric T. Pate

+++++

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SEARCHPOLIS



Avenius drops out, Novi still finishes 2nd at Oakland

By JASON SCHMITT
Sports Editor

To win the big Invitationals, almost everything has to go right.

And everything did not go right for the Novi boys at last Saturday's Oakland County meet at Kensington Metropark.

Mark Avenius pulled up with a sore calf at the halfway point, dropping out of the race and leaving Novi with a lot of catching up to do. They made up some of the ground, but fell just short of Clarkston, who won the county title with 80 points. Novi finished second with 85 points.

Tim Moore and Chris Toloff finished fourth and fifth in the race and Eric Walle finished a solid seventh to give Novi the kind of start it needed.

"He was right there when Mark dropped out, and he knew he had to make up for him."

Bob Smith,
Novi boys' cross country coach

"Nick (Bassitt) really had a good race," Novi coach Bob Smith said.

"He was right there when Mark dropped out, and he knew he had to make up for him."

Bassitt finished 30th overall in a career-best time

of 17:29, eclipsing his previous best by :45 seconds. Mitch Erickson then became the No. five runner and took 39th place in a time of 17:41.

Moore and Toloff were in a pack of six elite runners, keeping pace with some of the state's best. Todd Mobley of Walled Lake Central won the race and Tom Greenless of Milford was runner-up. David Sage of Clarkston was third, followed by Novi's tandem. Moore finished in 16:12 and Toloff in 16:27.

Walle surprised many by sticking right behind the lead pack, all by himself, for much of the race.

"To be honest with you I didn't think he'd do that well," Smith said.

"But he's just improved by leaps and bounds. He was just behind that lead pack."

Steve Szwast was Novi's sixth runner and finished 56th overall in 18:00.

"This is a testimony of how good of a program we really have," Smith said about the second-place finish without one of his top runners.

"Although we finished runner-up, it's something to brag about."

Smith said that his team really wanted to win this meet, but he's happy Avenius decided to drop out instead of further injuring his leg.

Milford finished third in the race and Lakeland was fourth, showing just how strong the Kensington Valley Conference really is.

In the junior varsity race, Todd Foren finished third in 18:02, Eric Saurer was sixth overall in a time of 18:18.

Guys win Gabriel Richard Invite

By JASON SCHMITT
Sports Editor

If it's beginning to sound like a broken record that Novi continues to win, win, win all of its cross-country meets, then coach Bob Smith is hoping it becomes a classic.

The Wildcats overpowered the rest of the field at the Gabriel Richard Invitational this past weekend, knocking off tough teams such as Grand Blanc (second) and Saline (third). Novi finished with 65 points despite the fact that Mark Avenius dropped out of the race with a sore calf. It's the second-straight big meet that Avenius has pulled up hurt.

But that didn't stop Novi, who had top-notch performances from Chris Toloff (first in 16 minutes, four seconds) and Tim Moore (second in 16:05). Also grabbing a top-five finish was Eric Walle (fifth in 16:53), who has really become an elite runner for this Wildcat team over the last few weeks.

"Both Walle and (Nick) Bassitt are really kicking it up a notch lately," Smith said. "It's that time of the year where some kids make a mental decision if they want to step it up a notch or not."

Bassitt was 20th overall in a time of 17:21, while Mitch Erickson and Evan Foster finished up the varsity lineup with 37th and 52nd-place finishes. Erickson ran a 17:53 and Foster had an 18:11. Reserve runners Steve Szwast and Todd Foren ran a 17:51 and 18:06 for their team.

"We raced the second half of the race really smart," the coach said. "Our kids stayed focused and raced the whole race through. We were a little concerned about the meet because we knew very little about some of the teams that were here, teams like Grand Blanc."

There were 19 teams in all for the boys' race. Novi scored 65 points and Grand Blanc (81) and Saline (99) fell into the next two slots.

NOVI 22, HOWELL 34

Walle ran an all-time best to lead Novi to another important Kensington Valley Conference win. His time of 16:38 was his best ever and his win was the first of his career as a Wildcat. Teammates Moore and Toloff were alongside him at the finish and were a second behind officially.

Howell placed the next three runners before Novi finished it off with Bassitt taking seventh (17:24) and Foster finishing ninth (17:50). Also running varsity for Novi was Szwast (17:55) and Erickson (18:08).

The win moved Novi to a perfect 5-0 in league meets, a win above Milford (4-1) and Lakeland (4-1), who Novi faced Tuesday (after *The Novi News*' deadline). The team will have this weekend off before facing all of the KVC Monday at the conference meet. Novi will be defending their conference championship of a year ago.

TUESDAY OCTOBER 26 1999

Novi second, but defends KVC title

By MARVIN GOODWIN
Of The Oakland Press

MILFORD TWP. — As the defending boys cross country Class A state champion, Novi's reign has been shaky at times this season.

The favored Wildcats took second at the Kensington Valley Conference meet Monday at Kensington Metropark, a couple of weeks after taking second at the Oakland County meet at the same site. In both cases, most observers favored the Wildcats.

Although Lakeland won the meet title with 49 points, the Wildcats still defended their league crown with their combined dual meet performance — they were 6-0, while Lakeland was 4-2 — and league meet finish. Novi scored 61 points in the league meet.

Tim Moore was second in 16:13 for the 5,000-meter course and Chris Toloff was third in 16:39 to lead Novi.

"We would've liked to have won (the league meet)," Novi coach Robert Smith said, "but you can't hit every meet perfect. You can



The Oakland Press/BRANDY BAKER

Milford's Tom Greenless (left) and Katie Kramer both finished first

only go to the well so many times. We wanted to win the league. That was one of our objectives. How we did it, it didn't matter."

Novi lost only one meet last year, but Smith still feels confi-

dent going into Saturday's regional, particularly with Mark Avenius rounding into shape.

"(Avenius) finished his first race in four tries," Smith said. "He was really the difference."

Lakeland's boys soared as Pat Klein (fourth), Brian Theut (fifth) and C.J. Hadding (ninth) led the Eagles.

"Basically, we were looking ahead to Saturday (regionals)," Lakeland coach Randy Wilkins said. "We want to do something there. That's been our focus."

Milford's boys and girls each had the individual meet champion. Tom Greenless, who was runner-up at the Oakland County meet, toured the course in 16:09 to lead the boys, while Katie Kramer won the girls meet in 19:56. Milford's boys were third with 66 points and, combined with their 5-1 dual meet record, settled for third in the league.

Novi's Nina Schmitt took second in 20:23 and Ryan Hittle of Brighton took third in 20:29. Brighton won the meet crown with 40 points, Novi finished second with 67 points and Milford was third with 73.

Brighton, which had a 6-0 dual meet record, wound up as the league champion and Novi (5-1) and Milford (4-2) were second and third, respectively.

Thursday, October 28, 1999

MCDONALD FORD SALUTES NOVI ATHLETES OF THE WEEK

Pat Muston - Senior



A go-to-guy all year long, Muston stood out last Friday, hauling in the game-winning touchdown with 47 seconds left against Northville.

The score gave Novi a 21-17 win over the Mustangs and retained the famous "Baseline Jug" for another year.

For the game, Muston had seven catches for 104 yards and two touchdowns.

Eric Walle - Junior



The junior barrier finished seventh at the Kensington Valley Conference meet Monday afternoon.

Having really asserted himself as the number three runner over the past few weeks, he helped his team to a second-place finish at the league meet and a conference championship in the overall standings.

THURSDAY
October 28, 1999

Cat runners see streak end at meet

By JASON SCHMITT
Sports Editor

Standing there at the finish line, Novi cross country faithful saw the Wildcat's two-year unbeaten streak in the Kensington Valley Conference fall to the ground.

Lakeland won the KVC meet at Kensington Metropark Monday afternoon, but Novi still claimed the overall conference title with their second-place finish at the meet added to an unbeaten mark in the dual meet portion of the championship.

In the long run, Novi coach Bob Smith said the way things shook up at the meet might help his team. And

it may help as early as this Saturday.

Wildcat boys

Cross Country

"We had three strikes against us today," the coach said. "(Mitch) Erickson and (Nick)

Bassitt were suffering from colds that slowed them down some, and Mark (Avenius) is still recovering from a leg injury.

"If I had to choose between winning today's race and Saturday's (regional), I'd pick to have a cold today."

Smith's team won both the conference and regional titles last season en route to the state championship. He said he expects Avenius to be ready to go Saturday, at full speed.

Lakeland won Monday's meet with 49 points, topping Novi (61), Milford (66), Howell (66), Brighton

Continued on 3

Cat runners see streak stopped

Continued from 1

(133), South Lyon (139) and Hartland (161). The Eagles were third in the dual meet portion of the championship, and lost the overall title to Novi by a single point.

Tim Moore and Milford's Tom Greenless stole the show individually. Greenless broke free early, but Moore played a perfect game of catch up and evened the race out after two miles. The race stayed that way until Greenless broke free in the final mile of the race to finish as the overall champion in a time of 16 minutes, nine seconds. Moore was runnerup in 16:13.

"Tim really kept his composure when Tom took off, he didn't let it get to him," Smith said. "Greenless

just had a little bit more than Tim at the end."

Chris Toloff joined his teammate on the all-KVC team with a third-place finish in 16:39. No one else challenged Toloff for the third spot.

Eric Walle continued his torrid improvement, placing seventh and earning a spot on the first-team all-conference squad. His time of 17:16 impressed his coach, especially with the lack of practice time he's seen over the past week. Smith said his junior didn't run four days last week after banging up his knee.

Senior Nick Bassitt hung tough, finishing 21st overall in 17:52. Novi's final scorer was Evan Foster, who was 28th in 18:11. Erick-

son finished hard, taking 32nd overall in 18:19. Avenius finished the race, coming in 40th in 18:59.

NOVI 16, LAKELAND 41

The injury bug hit Lakeland in this KVC-season ending dual meet. Their top two runners, Pat Klein and Brian Theut, did not finish the race.

But it wouldn't have mattered too much, as Novi's top four finished 1-4 and the 'Cats took four of the top five placers.

Walle won the race in 16:43, but was followed closely by Toloff (16:45) and Moore (17:46). Bassitt set both season and career-best marks with his fourth-place finish in 17:02. Foster finished sixth in 17:28.

Novi boys advance, Moore wins regional

By JASON SCHMITT
Sports Editor

Over the last few weeks, the Novi boys' cross country team has had its share of health problems. And thus the team has seen the number of doubters grow when it comes to asking the question: can this Novi team repeat as state champions?

For a select group of Saline runners, the answer was obvious this past weekend at the regional meet held at Ann Arbor Pioneer High School.

The Hornets raced to a regional win, knocking the Wildcats off the pedestal, at least for a week. Saline scored a meet low 42 points, well below Novi's 74. Livonia Churchill had 112 points, which was good enough for third place and an automatic trip to this weekend's state championships at Michigan Speedway.

Despite a second-place finish, there were no runners better than Tim Moore and Chris Toloff, who took the top two spots overall. Moore won the race in 15 minutes, 36 seconds, while Toloff was second in 15:44.



Both of Tim Moore

regional champion, Paul Niedzwiecki of Adrian, who last year beat Kevin Avenius out for the title.

"They're really running fast right now," an excited coach Bob Smith said. "As fast as anyone in the state. They've really blossomed this year, and I think their best is yet to come."

Moore joined Avenius as the

only two Novi boys ever to win an individual regional title. And the 1-2 finish by Moore and Toloff is unprecedented in school history.

Eric Walle continued his impressive string of races, finishing eighth in a time of 16:37. Senior Nick Bassitt was 27th overall in 17:14 and Evan Foster rounded out the scoring with a 36th-place finish in 17:33.

With Mark Avenius missing the race due to illness and a sore calf, Mitch Erickson (41st in 17:36) and Steve Szwast (42nd in 17:38) were Novi's last two varsity runners.

"We're a big meet team this year," Smith said. "When you have two guys in the front like we do, you like the bigger invites. The better the field, the better team we are."

Smith said that although Saline's top five easily outdistanced Novi's, the points his top two runners will gain over Saline's top two will be greater at a bigger meet, like this weekend's state finals.

"At this meet, we only gained a few points on them, but at a bigger meet, there'll be a lot more placers in between us," he explained. "We're gonna have everyone healthy and fast for this meet. We'll be ready."

Rockford is the favorite to win the state title this season, as it was last year. Novi was able to knock off the Rams thanks to their fourth and fifth runners. Jason Hartmann and Dathan Ritzenhein nabbed one and two, and Kevin Avenius and Dan Christopherson were seventh and eighth. But Novi more than made up the difference with Toloff and Mike Burns easily outdistancing

Even without Avenius, runners move onward

Continued from 1

their Ram counterparts.

With the way Moore, Toloff and Walle are running, the 'Cats will rely on strong races by Mark Avenius and Nick Bassitt.

"I think Nick's ready to make a run for it," Smith said. "He's been battling the flu the last week and he's still feeling the effects of that (at the regional)."

Whoever else runs varsity at the meet (Erickson, Szwast, Foster, etc) will also play a big part in the team's success. If Novi hopes to bump off a team like Rockford, Novi's sixth and seventh runners may be needed to bump a Rockford runner or two down.

"We're a state-power team, and I think we'll go in as one of the few teams who could win it," Smith said. "We're excited about the challenge."

The Michigan cross country

state finals are being held at the Michigan Speedway in Brooklyn Saturday morning and afternoon. The boy's Class A race will begin at 1:30 p.m. Tickets to the event are \$5 and includes parking.

NOVI SECOND AT JV INVITE :
Led by Tim Kava's first-place finish, the Novi JV team took second at the Redford Union JV regional last Friday night. Detroit Catholic Central won the race handily, with 21 points. Novi was second with 81 points. Churchill was third with 129 points and Farmington (147) and Salem (164) rounded out the top five in the 11-team field.

Dan Stevens finished second on the team and 14th overall in 18:32. Derek BuWalda was 18th (18:39), Ken Delgreco was 23rd (18:53) and Steve Shubert was 25th in 18:56 to complete the scoring.

Continued on 2

HIGH SCHOOL CROSS COUNTRY

Scoreboard

CLASS A

Boys teams: 1. Novi, 68; 2. Rockford, 90; 3. Saline, 132; 4. Clarkston, 132; 5. Grand Ledge, 160; 6. Detroit Catholic Central, 178; 7. Highland Milford, 242; 8. Holland W. Ottawa, 247; 9. Lake Orion, 286; 10. Grand Rapids Christian, 313; 11. Traverse City Central, 317; 12. Troy, 332; 13. Portage Northern, 378; 14. Rochester Adams, 429; 15. Temperance Bedford, 440; 16. Utica Eisenhower, 441; 17. Dearborn, 445; 18. Livonia Churchill, 447; 19. Bloomfield Hills Lahser, 473; 20. Sterling Heights, 504; 21. Warren Mott, 550; 22. Alpena, 555; 23. Grosse Pointe South, 567; 24. Midland, 587; 25. Grosse Pointe North, 592; 26. Roosevelt, 598; 27. Midland Dow, 628.

Individuals: 1. Dathan Ritzenhein, Rockford, 15:05.40; 2. Todd Mobley, Walled Lake Central, 15:25.80; 3. Tim Moore, Novi, 15:27.00; 4. Tom Greenless, Highland Milford, 15:40.30; 5. Pat Klein, White Lake Lakeland, 15:40.80; 6. Andrew Marsh, Grand Ledge, 15:41.90; 7. Chris Toloff, Novi, 15:42.60; 8. Matt Daly, Detroit Catholic Central, 15:43.00; 9. Paul Niedzwiecki, Adrian, 15:53.20; 10. Jacob Crow, Grand Ledge, 15:54.50; 11. Andy Martin, Rockford, 15:55.80; 12. Joe Whitman, Davison, 16:03.40; 13. David Sage, Clarkston, 16:04.80; 14. Ryan Malott, Hudsonville, 16:05.10; 15. Dave Rutmven, Hudsonville, 16:05.90; 16. Luke Mortensen, Midland Dow, 16:07.30; 17. Mark Avenius, Novi, 16:09.10; 18. Seth Folkertsma, Rockford, 16:09.60; 19. Brandon Fisk, Utica Eisenhower, 16:10.90; 20. Matthew Maver, Clarkston, 16:11.50.

Boys State Finals

Novi again runs past Rockford for 'A' title

By Bev Eckman
The Detroit News

BROOKLYN, Mich — Rockford was atop the boys Class A rankings most of the season, just like last season. And Rockford was again No. 1 going into the state championships Saturday at Michigan Speedway.

And, like last season, Novi's boys picked the perfect time to peak, winning the title — with 68 points to Rockford's 90.

"It's psychological, the mind is a tremendous tool," Novi Coach Robert Smith said after the race. "We talked about how powerful the mind is coming here this morning, and they must have taken it to heart."

Leading Novi were sophomore Tim Moore, who finished third in 15:27, and junior Chris Toloff, seventh in 15:42.60.

Rockford junior Dathan Ritzenhein repeated as individual winner in 15:05.40.

"I went out harder than I wanted to, but I had a good last mile," he said. "Tom Greenless started out with me, he was right there."

Walled Lake Central senior Todd Mobley was second in 15:25.80.

"I was around 10th at the half, and I slowly moved up and passed Tom at the mile. I tried to stay with Dathan, but he slowly pulled away from me. I'm not disappointed, but I thought I'd be closer. My time is not that fast, but the

wind was pretty bad."

Detroit Catholic Central junior Matt Daly was eighth in 15:43.

Class B

Flint Powers Catholic, led by winner Justin Perez (15:19.90) took the team title with 144 points. Holland Christian was second with 162; Big Rapids third 179; and Trenton fourth 199.

Junior Pat Roberts was Trenton's fastest finisher — sixth in 15:44.70.

Class C

Senior Jake Flynn won in 15:15.60 for Benzonia Benzene Central, but Alledale took the team title with 104 points. Finishing second was defending champion East Jordan with 124.

Class D

Detroit Holy Redeemer improved its finish from seventh last year to sixth, led by freshman Raymond Perez, who was seventh overall in 17:20.40.

Sophomore Mike Putzke's first-place 16:48.90 helped team winner New Buffalo (78 points). Bear Lake was second with 87.

"I didn't do as well as I wanted, but it's a learning experience," Perez said. "Next year I will know what to expect from the competition, because I never ran against these people before."

HIGH SCHOOLS

Novi wins state title; Boyles first for third time

By MARVIN GOODWIN
Of The Oakland Press

BROOKLYN — State titles for most high school athletes are a rare commodity, but Katie Boyles is on the verge of cornering the market.

Boyles, a junior from Rochester Adams, captured her third straight Class A state cross country title Saturday at Michigan Speedway, leading the Highlanders to second place with 152 points. Rockford won its second straight crown with 40. Troy was 11th with 285 and Milford was 12th with 346.

Meanwhile, Novi enjoyed its boys Class A state title last year so much that it won it again this year. The Wildcats, who struggled at times during the season, upset favored Rockford, putting four runners among the top 22 to finish with 68 points. Rockford took second for the fourth straight year, scoring 90, Saline was third with 132 and Clarkston came in



Oakland Press file photo/CHARLIE CORIEZ

Rochester Adams junior Katie Boyles won her third straight individual state championship

fourth with 133.

Boyles joined Sterling Heights Stevenson's Christy Goodison (1991-93), Midland's Kayla Skelly

(1979-81) and Sharon Van Tuyl of Portage Northern (1994-96) as runners who've won three straight Class A crowns.

She followed the same plan as in the past, concentrating on her effort rather than place.

"It really wasn't important to me (defending her title)," she said. "I came in ... to be in the top five. As long as I run my hardest and do the best I possibly can, that's good enough for me."

Boyles yielded the lead to a trio of Rockford runners and Romeo's Teresa Bongiovanni as late as two miles into the race. She was around eighth at the mile and fifth at the two-mile mark, but didn't panic. "I just kept passing people," she said. "I finally got into first with 400 or 600 (meters) to go."

From there, she held off Bongiovanni on the final stretch, punctuating her performance with a raised fist at the finish line and a resounding "Yes!" as she finished the fast, 5,000-meter

course in 17:55.5. Shannon Stanley was Adams' second runner, finishing 27th, while Andrea Moreland, Chelsea Gottshall and Kelly Byrne completed Adams' scoring.

The scores of all races were graded to include only team state qualifiers and not individual qualifiers.

"We pointed toward this," Adams coach Budd Ciccirelli said. "I really emphasize the state finals more than anything."

So did Novi coach Bob Smith, who sacrificed some earlier meets in order to prepare for the state finals. Novi had taken second at its regional, Oakland County and league meets. But the Wildcats were ready for the big one.

"One difference was Mark (Avenius)," said Smith of one of his top runners, who had stomach flu and a sore calf in the last few weeks. "He was back 100 percent."

"Another factor was our confidence. We tweaked our training procedures the last two weeks of

the season and it seemed to work."

Tim Moore was third, Chris Tbloff was seventh, Avenius was 17th, Eric Walle was 22nd and Nick Bassitt 55th for Novi's top scorers.

"It's a great feeling," said Tbloff, who was 29th last year. "A lot of people doubted us, (but) we were tough and had the confidence to win. We knew we were a good team."

Besides Moore and Tbloff, Oakland County runners grabbed six of the top 13 places.

Walled Lake Central's Todd Mobley, who planned to stay with favored Dathan Ritzenheim of Rockford — one of the top juniors in the nation — trashed that strategy. Ritzenheim maintained a maddening pace, running the first mile in 4:30 en route to 15:05.

"It was a little harder to hold that pace," said Mobley, who took second in 15:22. But Milford's Tom Greenless raced to the front

after 400 meters — "it was the only way to give myself a shot" — and had to fend off Lakeland's Pat Klein for fourth place.

"I thought I had Greenless," said Klein, who was ecstatic with his finish. "I passed him at the three-mile (mark), but he came back and got me."

David Sage (13th) in 16:04 and Matt Haver (20th) in 16:11 led Clarkston.

Milford's Katie Kramer was eighth and Oxford's Karen LeRoy placed 10th in the Class A girls race.

In the Class B girls race, Pontiac Notre Dame Prep's Megan Schneider took 26th in 19:29. In Class D girls, Michelle Rolf of Rochester Hills Lutheran Northwest placed fifth in 20:27 and Joseph Sternemann was 23rd in the boys race in 17:49. Oakland Christian's Amber Beachy was the Lancers' top finisher, coming in 32nd in 21:28.

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Sports GIRLS BASKETBALL
PUTS KVC TITLE IN NET / 1B



Photo by JOHN HEIDER

With the trophy for their second state championship title in two years raised high, the Novi High boys' cross country team takes a victory lap around their school on Monday afternoon.

Cross country team races away with second championship

By **JASON SCHMITT**
Sports Editor

With the recent construction of trophy cases aligning the Novi High School gymnasium, the boys' cross country team wasted no time in going out and getting some new hardware to show off.

The Wildcats returned home from the Class-A state meet as the best in the state, champions for the second-straight year. Novi did so by knocking off number-one-ranked Rockford, who was all but sure they'd avenge Novi's triumph from a year ago.

Sophomore Tim Moore led the charge with a third-place finish overall. Junior Chris Toloff followed that up with a seventh-place finish and both Mark Avenius (17th) and Eric Walle (22nd) also earned all-state honors.

Asked if this title was sweeter

than last year's, Novi coach Bob Smith answered with a sincere "yes."

"It was. Deep down last year I thought we were comparable with Rockford," he explained.

"This year we matched up as well, but I just had a strange feel-

ing about it."

Many expected Novi to be a major contender next year, not this year.

"We will be the best returning team in the state next season," said Walle, a junior. "But you've still got to perform. We want to

win next year ever more than this year. I don't want to go out and finish second as a senior after winning these last two years."

For more stories and pictures of Novi's state championship, please turn to page two in the sports section.

Ahhh...sweet repeat

Four all-staters lead Novi to 2nd-straight state title

By JASON SCHMITT
Sports Editor

With the smile of a young boy who had just opened up his most-anticipated Christmas present, Novi cross country coach Bob Smith beamed with joy after the unofficial state finals results had been posted at Michigan Speedway last Saturday.

His boys had defeated the rest of the 27-team field, including state favorite Rockford, to claim their second-straight Class A boys championship. It wasn't the precast of seasons for the Wildcats, but in a matter of 40 minutes on a windy, brisk afternoon in November, it suddenly became one of the best.

"My first emotion was relief," Smith said. "After last season's title, the bar had been raised so high that I wasn't sure we'd be able to win again. Most collected just 68 points, which easily outdistanced Rockford 908 and the rest of the field. Saline was third (132), Clarkston fourth (133) and Grand Ledge fifth (160)."

Sophomore Tim Moore put together his most impressive race of the season, as did junior Chris Toloff, in leading the team to the title. Moore finished the course in a career-best time of 15:22.0, 37.0 seconds, which was good for third place. Only Rockford's Dathan Rutenheim (15:05.4) and Walled Lake Central's Todd Mobley (15:25.6) finished better. Moore also defeated defending Kenansington Valley Conference champion Tom Greenlee of Midford 14th overall for the first time on his young career.

"I knew that if I ran an excellent race, I'd do that well," Moore said. "I knew I should be up there at the top."

Toloff stayed within reach of the lead pack and finished just ahead of Detroit Catholic Central's Matt

Daly for seventh place overall. His time of 15:42.00 was a career best as well.

"I was looking to be in the top seven, maybe even the top five," the two-time state medalist said. "I got out to a slow start and had to play catch up. But I did and I'm happy with my finish."

Perhaps bigger keys for Novi, however, were the finishes of Mark Avonius, Eric Wall and Nick Beasitt. As it turned out, had any of those three not finished the race, or pulled up later, Novi wouldn't have won the title.

Avonius was coming off a three-week stretch where he was suffering from a calf injury and could not race to his full potential. He went on to earn all-state honors with his 17th place finish in 16:09.1, which was perhaps the most strenuous finish of the 294 kids that completed the course.

"He was healthy enough to race at regionals, but we swallowed some pride and kept him out. He was really the wild card for us. I would not have surprised if he was our fifth or sixth man, or if he finished the race or not," said Smith. "When I heard that he was 17th, I knew we suddenly got back into the driver's seat."

Walle also made his name known, taking 22nd place and also earning all-state accolades. His time of 16:15.5 was just fast enough to keep him within the top 25 and it helped his team gain eight points on Rockford.

Novi's fifth runner, Nick Beasitt, came through with a 55th-place finish overall (16:39.0). Not only was that faster than Rockford's fifth runner, but it solidified Novi's win by gaining another 11 points on the No. 1 ranked team.

"If we add 10 seconds to his time, we may not win the team race," the coach said. "The public address announcer kept addressing the crowd by saying how far we had in the top 20, but I kept asking 'What about Nick Beasitt?'"

Dan Foster and Mitch Erickson were Novi's sixth and seventh runners. Foster's time of 17:10.1 was the fastest of his career, while Erickson's time of 17:46.9 was near his career-best effort.

Novi made it be known early that they were the team to beat, leading the race as a team from the first mile on. As the race wore on, Rockford's No. 3 runner dropped out of the race because of exhaustion. That ended Novi's lead, although the team wasn't really aware of it.

"We weren't looking at numbers or names, we were just trying to beat their jerseys," Smith said. "We knew our third man had to be in front of their third man, our fourth in front of their fourth and our fifth had to beat out their fifth man. We had to make sure they were forecasted."

"Coming in, we thought we'd win," Walle said. "The night before we all sat down and looked at Rockford's times. We all had confidence we could beat them. We had the athletes to beat them, it was a mental step we took. You have to believe."

Novi's four all-state runners were more than any other team. The Wilde had two all-state runners a year ago (Kevin Avonius-7th and Dan Christoferson-5th) on route to the program's first state title. Athletes must finish among the top 25 to earn such honors.

This year's team totaled 68 points, which best last year's total of 62. Asked if this team was better than last year's squad, Smith beamed before saying, "No comment," he joked. "I can only please half of the people by answering that."

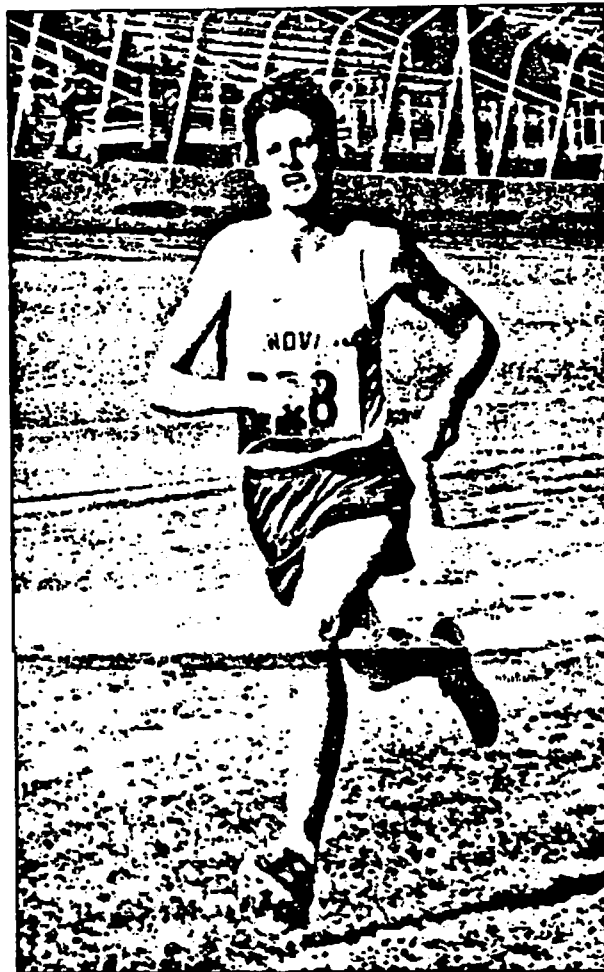


Photo by JASON SCHMITT

Sophomore Tim Moore (above) nears the finish line at last Saturday's Class-A state championship meet at Michigan International Speedway. He finished third overall in the race, helping his Novi team bring home its second-consecutive state championship.

He did say that last year's team was deeper, but that this year's team had a lot of experience back from the state meet.

Novi's title marked the fifth-straight year a team from the MVC has won the title, marking the dominance of the conference to cross-country running. Three of the top five and four of the top seven runners at this year's race were from the MVC.

AMONG THE STATES BEST

Novi took four of the top 22 positions in the Class-A boys' race, which featured 294 runners who qualified out of their regions. Here's a look at the top 25 all-staters.

Class	Runner	School	Time
1	Dathan Rutenheim	Rockford	15:05.4
2	Todd Mobley	W.L. Central	15:25.6
3	Tim Moore	Novi	15:27.0
4	Tom Greenlee	Midford	15:40.3
5	Pat Kim	Lakeland	15:40.8
6	Andy Marsh	Grand Ledge	15:41.9
7	Chris Toloff	Novi	15:42.6
8	Matt Daly	DCC	15:43.0
9	Paul Niedzwiedzki	Adrian	15:53.2
10	Jacob Coon	Grand Ledge	15:54.5
11	Andy Martin	Rockford	15:55.6
12	Joe Whitman	Devon	16:03.4
13	Dave Sage	Clarkston	16:04.8
14	Ryan Masto	Hudsonville	16:05.1
15	Dave Ruffen	Hudsonville	16:05.9
16	Luke Mortenson	Midland Dow	16:07.3
17	Max Gensau	Novi	16:09.1
18	Sam Fothergill	Rockford	16:09.6
19	Bronson Falk	U. Eatenhower	16:10.9
20	Matthew Meyer	Clarkston	16:11.5
21	Ryan Dator	Edsel Ford	16:12.5
22	Eric Walle	Novi	16:15.5
23	Nick Olsen	Toy	16:16.7
24	Doug Gibbons	DCC	16:16.8
25	Eric Westers	Hesselt	16:17.5

What a day, what a team

Having seen the boys win their second-straight cross country state title, I



JASON SCHMITT

thought I'd be able to get a little respect from the athletic community in this country. No there's no tacking, no pump fake, and no there aren't any game-winning home runs in the sport of cross country. There aren't any last-second hail Marys or buzzer heaves. As for fellow teammates, fans and coaches storming the field immediately following the game, well, no there's none of that either.

Yes, on the surface, cross country may seem boring, very monotonous. Run, run and run some more. At least to those who do not compete, watch or cover the sport that is. But as I made my third-

straight trip to Michigan Speedway last Saturday afternoon, I couldn't help but feel a bit of excitement in the air around me. There were an estimated 8,000 people in all at the raceway. That's more people than you'll see at the girls' basketball finals. And be it Rockford, Novi or even last-place Midland, the support system each team brings with it—family, friends and supporters—is incredible.

I talked with parents of Novi's top seven. I talked with parents of Novi reserves. I even talked with parents of graduated Novi runners who were there to support the team. The trip over to M15 to 75 miles — not exactly a quick jaunt to see someone else's kid race.

Since starting at the *Novi News* and the *Northville Record* in August of 1997, I've made it to six state championship events (wrestling one, swimming one, soccer one and cross country three times.) Call me crazy, call me what you will. But I think it's an exciting sport to watch.

Here are my notes:
• Coming into the race, No. 1 ranked Rockford had hoped to avenge last year's upset to Novi.

But when that didn't happen, Ram's fans were devastated. Not only did the team finish second, but one of their loyal fans suffered a brain hemorrhage and was taken to the hospital. My prayers are with him and the entire Rockford contingent.

• Sometimes doing a solid job each time out leaves you unnoticed. Such was the case for Chris Toloff and Eric Walle. In my eye, anyway, these two performed consistently strong all year long and when Tim Moore finished third, Avonius surprised everyone with a 17th place finish and Beasitt came through as a vital fifth man, they seemed to "just be there." Well, without these two, Novi wouldn't have gone anywhere. Toloff finished 29th a year ago at the same meet, where he finished seventh this year. That's over a 400 percent increase. And Walle was Novi's seventh man a year ago, finishing 117th. He was 22nd this year.

• Last season only one team had beat Novi in duals and invitational combined, and that was Rockford at a mid-season invitational. This year Novi was beaten by Lakeland, Clarkston and



Photo by JOHN NEIDER

Members of the 1999 Novi cross country team celebrate their 2nd state title on Monday.

Saline, two of which Novi defeated at the state meet (Clarkston and Saline). Lakeland failed to make the state final for the first time in 17 years.

• Is there any doubt that the Kenansington Valley Conference is the strongest cross country conference in the state? No. Novi reassured fans of that by giving the conference its fifth-

straight state title and sixth overall in the 1990s. Lakeland won titles in 1991, 1996 and 1997. Brighton edged out the Eagles in 1995 and Novi has won the last two. Brighton won the MVC's only other state crown back in 1975.

• It was a good idea to expend the school's trophy case this past season. The school's athletic program has won four state champ-

ionships within the past two years, and the number of all-state athletes continue to pile up. Toloff, Moore, Avonius and Walle were all-state runners, and will join the school's illustrious "Wall of Fame."

Jason Schmitt is the sports editor for the *Northville Record* and *Novi News*. He can be reached at jschmitt@mc.hometown.net

Lakeland

The Oakland Press

NOVEMBER 18-21, 1999



Oakland Press photo/MARVIN GOODWIN

Novi Wildcats gathered around with their second straight state championship trophy after finishing ahead of Rockford

State runners meet challenge

The best part of a distance race is...

The thousands of boys and girls who recently ran at the state cross country meet at Michigan Speedway know what the best part of a distance race.

But for those of you who don't, we'll get to that later.

For the past two seasons, the state meet has been run under near ideal conditions. No precipitation, bearable temperatures and sunny skies have been a stark contrast to other meets held during this decade.

There was the time three seasons ago when an all-day rain made the course sloppy and footing risky. But it was ideal conditions for Lakeland's boys, who thrive in adverse weather.

They won the state title. Then there was the snowstorm in 1991 near Muskegon when ice and freezing temperatures made the course hazardous, but ideal for Lakeland, which won the state title.

It isn't known if Novi, which punctuated its season with its second straight state crown, can sash through a muddy course with the same effectiveness. They haven't had to do it.

One thing for sure, the Wildcats have done their part to make sure the state title remains in the Kensington Valley Conference.

For the fifth straight year, a team from one of the state's toughest cross country conferences captured the crown. Brighton won in 1995, Lakeland won in 1996-97 and Novi has won the last two seasons.

And in almost every instance, the winning team was not favored.

But whether the course is fast, slow, slippery or sloppy, all runners ultimately face the same challenge — running the 5,000-meter course as quickly as possible.

In the biggest gathering of the best high school runners in the state, what are they thinking at the starting line?

Thoughts are racing at 90 mph in everybody's mind. There's nervousness, anxiousness, anticipation, tension, doubt and worry. There's hope, faith, aspiration and desire. Some have queasy stomachs, some want to go home. But when the starting gun fires, you've got to go.

For Walled Lake Central's Todd Mobley and Milford's Tom Greenless, it meant shooting toward the front immediately. For Novi's Chris Toloff and Tim Moore, it meant settling in a pace and holding it until a final kick could be unleashed.

And for three-time state champ Katie Boyles of Rochester Adams, it meant finding a groove and bounding the leaders before attacking with a gradual surge which reeled in everyone in her path in the final stages of the race.

Boyles happened to be the only girl who broke 18 minutes that day.

There were races within races as Oxford's Karen LeRoy and



Marvin Goodwin

Milford's Katie Kramer stayed within seconds of each other, LeRoy leading at the two-mile mark and Kramer at the mile. It was Kramer who eventually finished eighth and LeRoy who took 10th.

Nearly 13 seconds separated Megan Coughlin of Waterford-Mott and Taylor Bones of Lakeland at the two-mile mark — Bones was ahead — until Coughlin mounted a charge in the last mile to finish a second ahead of Bones. Lakeland's Kristyn Kern was seconds behind as was South Lyon's Amanda Lee.

Lakeland's Pat Klein and Greenless dueted in a furious stretch run which Greenless won to secure fourth, relegating Klein to fifth. And Moore surged at the end to finish a few meters behind Mobley, who crossed the line in second.

They finished well ahead of the rest of the runners, safe from the oncoming rain of dozens upon dozens finishing within seconds of each other.

They were all exhausted. Now, what's the best part of a distance race?

The end. (Marvin Goodwin is an Oakland Press sports writer).

In the spacious Michigan Speedway infield, Todd Mobley of Walled Lake Central (left) secured second place from a fast-charging Tim Moore of Novi as both finished within seconds of each other while the rest of the pack closes in



After a torrid stretch run where neither gave ground, Lakeland's Pat Klein (left) and Milford's Tom Greenless talk things over while recovering from the race



Milford's Katie Kramer gets a breather moments after the race

EDITORIALS

Waterford trustees earned the headaches

Waterford Township resident Robert Sharrard has been a first-class headache for township officials for several years.

Hopefully, that's not going to change anytime soon.

Sharrard is demanding that the board ante up \$12,000 — the amount of taxpayer money that's been wasted in Trustee Jean Scott's futile attempt to keep both her district court job and board seat.

The Sharrard-Scott tussle began in 1994, when Sharrard, a former trustee, challenged whether she could hold both positions since the board made decisions that impact 51st District Court. Despite opinions and rulings from Circuit Court, the Michigan Court of Appeals, the state attorney general's office and the Oakland prosecutor's office, Scott decided to keep both jobs.

And, to make matters worse, the board decided to fund the ensuing legal battles with taxpayer money. That's the money Sharrard believes trustees should pay back — \$3,000 each from the four trustees who approved the payments, including Scott.

Scott, meanwhile, retired from the District Court in September after her appeal failed, but not before upping her pension to \$790 a month. That's based on five years at the court and nearly 20 years as a trustee.

Township trustees made a mistake in authorizing the payments to defend Scott's stubbornness. They compounded the problem by continuing the payments until Scott decided to appeal the Circuit Court ruling.

We hope Sharrard makes life plenty uncomfortable for them — they've earned it.

End of construction worth bonus pay

More than a few readers' eyebrows probably were raised following The Oakland Press story about bonuses being handed out for this summer's road work.


In a nutshell: The contractors on the year's major projects — Interstate 275, I-75, I-696, I-96, the Southfield Freeway and Telegraph — stand to make at least \$4.36 million in extra pay for completing the work early. The contractors already pulled down \$177 million for the work.


Before any irate taxpayer decides to

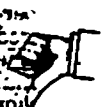
storm the Michigan Department of Transportation office to protest, consider this: 900,000 motorists traveled those six construction spots every day.


There's no question Michigan's roads never should have fallen into the state of disrepair they did. And one could argue whether the 1997 4-cent-per-gallon increase in the gas tax really was needed. However, few can question the wisdom of spending an additional \$4.36 million to end the road construction nightmare as soon as possible.

Darts and laurels

 To Waterford Township dentist Sean Stannard, who has this crazy notion that a patient's health is more important than his or her finances.

 To Michigan football coach Lloyd Carr, who plans to donate \$50,000 a year for seven years to fund a scholarship for female athletes.

 To Southfield Councilman Sidney Lantz, for his misguided threats to sue the city over absentee ballots from the Nov. 2 election.

 To Rochester Adams runner Katie Boyles and the Novi cross country team — 1999 Class A champs.

JOHN CUSUMANO

—1999—

All-Metro Cross Country Teams

COMPILED BY BEV ECKMAN | THE DETROIT NEWS

Roundup

Soul pulls

By David Goricki
The Detroit News

LIVONIA — Ama Moore sparked a 10-0 run close the third quarter and lit Southfield to a 50-34 victory over Dearborn Fordson in a Clarendon semifinal at Lady's Monday night.

Southfield (22-1) will try to earn its first regional championship against Detroit Mur Wright (16-4) Wednesday p.m.

Fordson's 6-foot-5 Miran scored inside to pull her within 20-23 with 2 min remaining in the third. Moo sophomore guard had points and two assists the quarter to help increase lead to 15, 30-23. She culminated the run by dribbling around to score a layup as time expired.

"We got points off our defensive intensity," Moore said. "quickness was the differ tonight."

Safiyah Bibbins had 14 points and six rebounds. Moo points, five assists and steals and Jennifer Kelso 10 for Southfield.

Reds had 14 points rebounds and four blocks Fordson (11-23). Jackie Pin, added 13 points.

"We felt they stayed in game by making free thro the first half, so we didn't foul them," said Soul Coach Ben Kelso. Jennifer (Reds) inside so we work in the first half, but it work like we wanted. Our was to attack the basket in third quarter and that brot game open. Amanda got the basket well tonight."

Fordson was 10-of-11 on throw attempts in the first and trailed 23-18, but made percent (11-of-33) of its from the field for the game.

When asked if he would play Detroit King was disqualified from the tournament for playing too regular season games — replied: "No, we play the way they send us. We require be moved up in the OAA Division 4) last year, but (OAA administrators) they received a lot of com; and now we're moved up divisions for next year. I expect to win anything, you to best the best. We'll play ever is on the schedule."

Class A
Belle Isle 44, Ann Arbor Pioneer South 40th, Country Club and Kings scored 11 for Dearborn. Angela Finckha had 13 for Dearborn. Martin B. Pymon, Salam 34, at Birmingham. Gryn Gryn, Andrews had 20 points for Dearborn. Andy Mazaia had 11 points for Dearborn. CD 21, Fernando 34, East Detroit 28, at Dearborn. Jason Torres 20 for Dearborn (15-4) 24th, Zabea-Nichols had 11 for Dearborn (13-11)

20th Dearborn 44, Pine Bluff 37, at Dearborn. Laura had 13 for Dearborn. Andy Mazaia had 11 for Dearborn (20-11). Mazaia scored 11 for Dearborn (11-7)

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BOYS

Mark Avenius, Novi Avenius, a junior, finished 17th in the Class A state finals in 15:09.10 for state champ Novi. "He was our wild card in the state meet, coming off an injury, and he hadn't run a race in more than a month," said Coach Robert Smith. "He was a solid third man before he went down at the Oakland County championships with a torn (right) calf muscle. He did a lot of cross-training to keep his conditioning up, swimming and bicycling. He has very fast feet, his turnover is very fast, they seem to barely touch the ground."

Matt Daly, Detroit Catholic Central: Daly, a junior, finished eighth in Class A in the state finals in 15:43.00. "Matt really developed over the summer," said Coach Tony Magni. "He was not going to be number one at the beginning of the year, but when John DiGiovanni had a stress fracture (right leg), Matt really had to do the job. He runs with his eyes focused on the leaders, and stays with them as long as he can. He knows his competition real well, so he can gauge from there how to run his race. He knew he had to be with the top runners and stay with them (at states), and he did it."

Tom Greenless, Highland Millford: Greenless, a senior, finished fourth in Class A at the state finals in 15:40.30. He ran 15:17, his personal best, at the Spartan Invitational. "Tom has been blessed with great speed, he's the anchor leg on the 3000 relay team that was state champions last spring," said Coach Brian Saylor. "He's been very aggressive. He's been blessed with tremendous leg speed, but it's his burning desire that makes him a successful cross country runner. He's an up-front runner, up at the front of the race from the gun. He gambled at the state meet, he ran to win and had to fight people off at the end."

Pat Klein, White Lake Lakeland: Klein, a junior, finished fifth in Class A in 15:40.80, his personal best. "He has a tremendous desire to win, he's just a strong competitor," said Coach Randy Williams. "He likes to get right out and run with the best kids. He has an aggressive running style. As a younger athlete, he developed his competitive drive from playing hockey. He has more drive to excel than other kids I've had. As a freshman, he came out for cross country a month and a half into the season, and ended up helping us win the state Class A title."

Todd Mobley, Walled Lake Central: Mobley, a senior, finished his career with a second in Class A at the MHSAA Lower Peninsula state finals Nov. 6 at Michigan Speedway in Brooklyns. He ran the 3.1-mile course in 15:25.80. "What made Todd unique was he was totally for the team," said Coach Carl McBride. "After he crossed

the line and got his place, he'd run back the other way to cheer his teammates on. I have not seen Todd run to exhaustion until this year. He gets out fast, stays with a top runner, then pulls away in the last mile."

Tim Moore, Novi: Moore, just a sophomore, showed promise of being next season's Metro star with a third-place finish in Class A at the state finals in 15:27.00, his personal best, for state champion Novi. "Tim Moore is a purist in terms of distance running," said Coach Bob Smith. "He likes to go out with the lead, and he busts it open and leaves everybody else grabbing for second. He can run a very good strategic race, which he did at the state meet. He went with the leaders but didn't expend any unnecessary energy. He focuses on the man in front of him, and reels him in. Tim will be there and score the point. His aerobic threshold is extremely high and he can run at a pain level most runners can't."

Pat Roberts, Trenton: Roberts, a junior, finished sixth in Class B in the state finals in 15:44.70. "He only got beat twice all year — he was fourth in the U of D Merry meet, the first meet of the year, and sixth at the state meet — other than that he won every meet he ran," said Coach Nelson MacNicol. "The reason he's good is because he's smart and committed, along with his talent. That was his season's best time. He likes to run at the front, he loves to lead. He was out in front the first 300 meters. He thinks a lot, he really analyzes his races well, so when he finishes, if he's unhappy with his time, he knows why."

David Sage, Clarkston: Sage, a senior, finished 13th in Class A in the state finals in 16:04.80. "He's a year-round athlete, he never lets himself get out of shape," said Coach Mike Taylor. "He truly enjoys running, he attends summer camps. He works at a local running-shoe store, and he's always checking on (other runners) on the computer, so he knows what's going on. He was all-league (OAA), all-county, all-state and MVP four years." Sage's best time this season was third in the Spartan in 15:38.

Chris Toloff, Novi: Toloff, a junior, finished seventh in Class A in the state finals in 15:42.60 for state champion Novi. "Chris has a tremendous amount of leg speed, he's under 2 minutes in the 800-meter run," said Coach Bob Smith. "He's a very intense runner, he loves to race and tangle with the guys. He gets out fast, goes with the lead pack for the first mile. Mile two is his for serious racing. With his leg speed, he's a real threat at the finish line. His race preparation is very complete, the intangibles as well as the warm-ups, and the variables, like his sleep habits and diet. He's fully prepared when he comes to the starting line."



Avenius



Daly



Greenless



Klein



Mobley



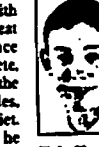
Moore



Roberts



Sage



Toloff



Bongiovanni



Boyles



Kramer



LaRoy



A. Parker



K. Parker



Saylor



Schmidt



Smiley

GIRLS

Teresa Bongiovanni, Romeo: Bongiovanni, a sophomore, finished second in the Class A finals in 18:00.40, her personal best. "She's tenacious. We both expected her to win the state meet. We were both surprised at Katie Boyles' response when Teresa made her kick about 300 yards out. For a kid to go from ninth in the state (in 1998) to second is an achievement. Her loss to Boyles was her only loss this season. She ran away from everyone up to the state meet," said Coach Tim Propst. "The style that best suits her is to lead the pack and set the pace."

Katie Boyles, Rochester Adams: Boyles, a junior, won the Class A girls race for the third straight year, in 17:35.50. She came from eighth at the 1/2-mile mark to close on the leaders, and then past them in the last 1/4-mile for Adams, runner-up to Rockford in A. "She trains hard, she has self-motivation, she's coachable," said Coach Bud Cicciarelli. "She doesn't take up for an answer, she steps up to the line and decides she wants to be a winner."

Kattie Kramer, Highland Millford: Kramer, only a freshman, finished eighth in Class A in 18:45.40, a school record. "She has the work ethic and the talent, but what sets her apart, especially from other freshmen, is her racing savvy," said Coach Brian Saylor. "She has tremendous experience for someone her age. In middle school, she raced against the boys, because they didn't have a girls team. She's an elite soccer player, and plays club soccer during the season. She is definitely a front runner, she doesn't race many girls ordinarily. She has the ability to race by herself, push herself, or compete with others."

Karen LaRoy, Oxford: LaRoy, a senior, finished 10th in the Class A final in 18:49. "She works real hard, she's very tough mentally," said Coach Ray Sutherland. "She's exceptional in the last quarter-mile. She can really get a lot out of herself. She's an aggressive, strong runner. Running at states, that was her best time this season."

Andrea Parker, Livonia Stevenson: Parker, a senior, finished 11th in Class A in 18:50.00. "She's a three-time all-stater, she's been an all-league selection four years," said Coach Paul Holmberg. "She won the Western Lakes Athletic Association in the last two years. She's an aggressive runner, she likes to get out to the lead and stay there. She won six invitationals this year. She's a very consistent runner. She really never had a bad race. She handles adversity well. You can always count on her having a good performance. When she's really on, she's as good as anybody."

Krishawna Parker, Detroit Crockett: Parker, a

sophomore, finished eighth in Class B at the state final in 18:33.90. She won the city championship at Baldock Park in 1937. "Her motivation, her drive and her love for running make her successful," said Coach LaCema Womack. "She charges to the front, maintains, and then kicks at the end. Her main strength is her kick at the end, and her stamina. She can run all day long. That was her personal best this season, at states. She realizes at this point how much talent she has, and with consistent coaching and her love of running, she has informed me she wants to make it to the Olympics, and go to college and pursue her love of running. She's going for it."

Stephanie Saylor, Romeo: Saylor, a sophomore, finished 15th in Class A in 18:56.70. "Her family members are all runners, the expectation is you'll do well when you go out and race. They moved here from Minnesota, and Romeo's running program was one of their considerations," Romeo Coach Tim Propst said. "She started out with a start-slow, finish-fast style, then she became a front runner. She got more hill work than in the past. She's in an environment with other committed runners, like Teresa (Bongiovanni) and Julia (Schmidt)." Her personal best this season was 18:34 at the Macomb Athletic Conference Red Division Meet, where she was third behind Bongiovanni and Schmidt.

Julia Schmidt, Romeo: Schmidt, a senior, finished sixth at states in Class A in 18:41.90, her personal best. "Julia is dependable, consistent, able to produce on demand," said Coach Tim Propst. "She's been the keystone of our team for the last two years, she is a complete model of everything you'd want in a cross country runner. She's a four-time all-stater (finishing in the top 25) and a three-time academic all-stater, with a 3.985 this year. Julia likes to run for the benefit of the team, leading the pack or pulling people along with her."

Marne Smiley, Sterling Heights Stevenson: Smiley, a senior, finished 17th in the Class A final in 18:57.80. "Marne's a four-time all-stater, she was Class A state 3000 meter champion as a junior (2007)," said Coach Kevin Hanson. "Her strength as a runner is that she does a good job of moving from the middle of the pack and working her way up. She's not a front runner. It's a year-round venture, she's started working for next cross country season, she understands the importance of off-season training. What separates her is her ability to train in the off-season, which a lot of people are not willing to do. Things don't happen in our sport because of luck, they happen because of hard work."

How we picked them

All-state, er, area X-C

If there's a debate you'll hear in cross country, it probably has something to do with which is the better cross-country conference in the state of Michigan.

Those from the Western side of the state will hoot and holler that the OK-Red (Ottawa-Kent) conference is the best in the state. Whereas anyone from the east side of the state will tell ya that the Kensington Valley Conference is tops.

The OK-Red conference, which consists of teams such as Rockford, Holland-West Ottawa, Grand Haven and Jenison, has eight teams in all. The KVC has teams such as Novi, Brighton, Milford and Lakeland, seven in all.

The proof is in the titles, in which the KVC has won the last five state titles and six in this decade. The OK-Red has never won a state title. The OK-Red had one runner in the top 10 (Champion Dathan Ritzenhein of Rockford).

The KVC had four of the top seven runners in the state (all of which are on HomeTown's all-area squad).

If that doesn't end the debate right there, then let's see if the OK-Red conference can put together a team that could beat the following seven athletes, which are from just five of the seven league schools. Anyone would be hard pressed to find seven better runners from any one area than we have here.

ALL-AREA CROSS COUNTRY

First Team

Name	School	Grade	Best Time (course)
Tom Greenless	Milford	Senior	15:17 (Spartan Invite)
Tim Moore	Novi	Sophomore	16:25 (MIS)
Pat Klein	Lakeland	Junior	15:40 (MIS)
Chris Toloff	Novi	Sophomore	15:42 (MIS)
Eric Walle	Novi	Junior	16:15 (MIS)
Mark Avenius	Novi	Junior	16:09 (MIS)
Brian Theut	Lakeland	Sophomore	16:24 (MIS)

Second Team

Name	School	Grade	Best Time (course)
Brian Bilyk	Northville	Junior	16:41 (MIS)
Nick Bassett	Novi	Senior	16:39 (MIS)
Brett Barkny	Milford	Senior	16:47 (MIS)
C.J. Hadding	Lakeland	Junior	17:08 (Kensington)
Jason Prkmore	South Lyon	Senior	16:32 (Centerline)
Nick Kopczyk	Milford	Sophomore	16:46 (MIS)
Mike Callahan	Milford	Senior	16:48 (MIS)

Honorable Mention

Lakeland - Eric Jodynak, B.J. McCool, Ryan Bartman
 Milford - Cassy Barnes, Tyler VanAcker
 Novi - Evan Foster, Mitch Erickson
 South Lyon - Ryan Roma, Gary Pennala, Andrew Lapham
 Northville - Phil Sarter, Ben Flood

42-consecutive wins was snapped by the Wildcats last year.

Along with Moore and Klein, Toloff will be in the hunt for an individual state championship next season.

Eric Walle Novi Junior

Two years ago, Novi had three freshmen known as the fabulous freshmen. Last year they were the super sophs. So this year, Toloff, Walle and Mark Avenius formed the jubilant Juniors. Okay, so

there's no good word to go with Junior.

Regardless, Walle became a very important member of the Wildcats this year. When Avenius was suffering from leg injuries for much of the last month of the season, it was Walle who stepped up his performances.

He finished 22nd at the state meet after finishing eighth at the regional meet. He also had top finishes at the KVC meet (seventh), the Oakland County meet (seventh) and the Gabriel Richard



Photo by JOHN HEIDER

First-team all-area cross country selections, from left, Eric Walle, Tim Moore, Mark Avenius and Chris Toloff of Class A state champion Novi, and Tom Greenless from Milford.

invite (fifth). He won the Lakeland dual race, which ended up ensuring Novi of the conference championship.

Mark Avenius Novi Junior

You could just tell how badly his team missed him in the later portion of the season. Novi finished second at the KVC meet, second at Oakland County and second at the regional. Avenius missed each of those meets, and Novi really missed having their all-state runner (17th place) in the lineup.

Actually, Avenius ran in the

KVC meet, but stopped during the race to stretch his legs. He finished 40th and Novi fell short of Lakeland. Had he been healthy, he would have needed to finish in just 17th place for Novi to win the meet.

He was healthy for the Redford Union Invite, and it showed in his fourth-place finish.

Brian Theut Lakeland sophomore

Theut (pronounced "Toy" for you folks in Novi) was an all-conference runner (he was fifth at the KVC meet, helping the Eagles

claim the league crown) and state qualifier who finished 33rd at the Michigan Speedway. Theut took seventh-place at Springfield Oaks, the toughest regional in the state. He was 10th at the Oakland County meet and second behind Tom Greenless in the Lakeland-Milford dual.

See
next
page

Bassitt leads 2nd team

Our all-area first team reads more like an all-state team, so you better recognize the talent of the next seven. Second team, perhaps, but no slouches. South Lyon's Jason Pridmore, for instance, is a two-time state qualifier and the Lions' best runner the past two seasons. Brett Barley and Mike Callahan were key members of Milford's state-qualifying team. And if it were not for Nick Bassitt, Novi would not have won the state championship.

Nick Bassitt
Novi senior

A critical part to Novi's state championship team, Bassitt was the Wildcat's fifth man this year. He finished

55th at the state meet, after a 27th-place finish at the Ann Arbor Regional.

Bassitt was 21st at the KVC meet, and took 14th overall at the Redford Union Invite at Cass Benton. He is the lone senior in Novi's top five and one of just two seniors on Novi's varsity who will be gone next year.

Brian Bilyk
Northville junior

Unlike each of the other members of HomeTown's all-area team, Bilyk often battled the competition by himself. Unquestionably the Mustang's

Continued on 4

Novi's fifth man tops our 2nd team

Continued from 2

top runner, Bilyk ran to a 55th-place finish at the Class-A state meet in a time of 16 minutes, 39 seconds.

He qualified for the finals with a ninth-place finish at the regional meet at Ann Arbor. Bilyk was a first-team all-Western Lakes Activities Association runner (6th place) and also finished sixth in the junior/senior portion of the Walled Lake Western Invite.

Jason Pridmore
South Lyon senior

He came correct at the never easy Springfield Oaks regional, placing

ninth and qualifying for the second time, for the Class A state meet, where Pridmore finished 110th. He placed 17th at the KVC meet. Pridmore turned in his best time of the season (16:32), and placed second overall at the Centerline Invitational.

Brett Barley
Milford senior

Barley was nothing if not clutch. As a junior he was crucial to Milford's regional title. This season he was 15th at the Springfield Oaks regional, surprising everyone but perhaps his coach, teammates and himself. Every-

one knows the name Tom Greenless, but it was seniors like Barley and fellow second team member Mike Callahan that helped the Redskins become one of the best teams in the state (they were seventh at the Class A finals). Barley was named second-team all-conference.

Mike Callahan
Milford senior

Callahan was a second-team all-KVC runner as a senior, as he finished 11th at the conference meet. He was 28th at the Oakland County meet and helped the Redskins secure

an appearance in the state finals with his performance at the Springfield Oaks regional.

Nick Kopczyk
Milford sophomore

While Milford was blessed with seniors like Tom Greenless, Brett Barley and Mike Callahan, youth was served in the person of Kopczyk, a tenth-grader.

He was one of four Milford runners to place in the top 100 at the state meet. Kopczyk placed 21st at the regional, 15th at the conference meet, and 21st at Oakland County.

Moore, Toloff head up Novi quartet

Continued from 1

them back next year, don't look for an enduring Lakeland hiatus from Brooklyn.

Klein was named all-state for the second time in his two-year career. He placed in the top five in most of Michigan's elite meets: fifth at state, third at the brutal Springfield Oaks regional, fourth at the conference, second at the Oxford Invitational and fourth at the West Bloomfield Invitational. Klein was sixth at the Oakland County meet and third in Lakeland's dual meet with intradistrict rival Millford.

Chris Toloff Novi junior

If it wasn't Moore winning duals and invitationals this year, it was Toloff. The junior harrrier finished seventh at the state meet, his second-straight medal performance. He was third at the KVC meet, fifth at Oakland County, first at Redford Union and first at Gabriel Richard.

He and Moore produced the most feared 1-2 punch in the state, making it difficult to overcome Novi's top two. His Novi team has not lost a dual meet in over two years, something the KVC has not seen since Lakeland's streak of 42-consecutive wins was snapped by the Wildcats last year.

Along with Moore and Klein, Toloff will be in the hunt for an individual state championship next season.

Eric Walle Novi junior

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Photo by JOHN HEIDER

HomeTown's all-area teams had a Milford and Novi flavor to it, nabbing 10 of the 14 selections.

Novi's front four lead pack

Boy's cross country

If there's a debate you'll hear in cross country, it probably has something to do with which is the best cross-country conference in the state of Michigan.

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Tom Greenless Milford senior

Befitting the founder and CEO of the Road Runner Lawn Company, Greenless' high school career was dedicated to mowing down the competition. He concluded his career as one of the elite athletes in school history, a three-time all-state selection and the 1999

KVC Runner of the Year.

Greenless won the KVC championship, was second at the Oakland County meet, sec-

ond at the brutal Springfield Oaks regional, and fourth at the Class A state finals.

His time of 15:17 at the Spartan Invitational established not only a personal best, but a new school record.

Tim Moore

Novi sophomore

If it weren't for a certain runner from Rockford, Moore would be the overwhelming favorite to win the Class-A state title next year. But be it so, Moore will be the overwhelming top challenger to take on Ritzenheim at next year's state meet.

This season was sort of a coming-out party for Moore, who consistently placed among the top two on his team all year long. His 3rd-place finish at the state meet was the icing on a cake which included top finishes at the KVC meet (2nd overall), Oakland County (4th overall), Redford Union (2nd overall), Gabriel Richard (2nd overall) and the Ann Arbor regional (1st overall).

In two head-to-head finishes against Greenless this year, Moore was one for two, edging the Milford senior at the state meet.

Pat Klein

Lakeland junior

Though Lakeland (just barely) didn't make the state finals for the first time in, like forever, the Eagles were well-represented individually by first-team all-area members Pat Klein and Brian Theut. And with both of

Continued on 4

Tom Greenless
Milford senior

Befitting the founder and CEO of the Road Runner Lawn Company, Greenless' high school career was dedicated to mowing down the competition. He concluded his career as one of the elite athletes in school history, a three-time all-state selection and the 1999 KVC Runner of the Year.

Greenless won the KVC championship, was second at the Oakland County meet, second at the brutal Springfield Oaks regional, and fourth at the Class A state finals.

His time of 15:17 at the Spartan Invitational established not only a personal best, but a new school record.

Tim Moore
Novi sophomore

If it weren't for a certain runner from Rockford, Moore would be the overwhelming favorite to win the Class-A state title next year. But be it so, Moore will be the overwhelming top challenger to take on Rutzenhein at next year's state meet.

This season was sort of a coming-out party for Moore, who consistently placed among the top two on his team all year long. His 3rd-place finish at the state meet was the icing on a cake which included top finishes at the KVC meet (2nd overall), Oakland County (4th overall), Redford Union (2nd overall), Gabriel Richard (2nd overall) and the Ann Arbor regional (1st overall).

In two head-to-head finishes against Greenless this year, Moore was one for two, edging the Milford senior at the state meet.

Pat Klein
Lakeland junior

Though Lakeland (just barely) didn't make the state finals for the first time in, like forever, the Eagles were well-represented individually by first-team all-area members Pat Klein and Brian Theut. And with both of them back next year, don't look for an enduring Lakeland hiatus from Brooklyn.

Klein was named all-state for the second time in his two-year career. He placed in the top five in most of Michigan's elite meets: fifth at state, third at the brutal Springfield Oaks regional, fourth at the conference, second at the Oxford Invitational and fourth at the West Bloomfield Invitational. Klein was sixth at the Oakland County meet and third in Lakeland's dual meet with intradistrict rival Milford.

Chris Toloff
Novi junior

If it wasn't Moore winning duals and invitationals this year, it was Toloff. The junior harrier finished seventh at the state meet, his second-straight medal performance. He was third at the KVC meet, fifth at Oakland County, first at Redford Union and first at Gabriel Richard.

He and Moore produced the most feared 1-2 punch in the state, making it difficult to overcome Novi's top two. His Novi team has not lost a dual meet in over two years, something the KVC has not seen since Lakeland's streak of

Jason Pridmore makes second team

Continued from page 2

SECOND TEAM:
Our all-area first team reads more like an all-state team, so you

Continued on page 4

better recognize the talent of the next seven. Second team, perhaps, but no slouches. South Lyon's Jason Pridmore, for instance, is a two-time state qualifier and the Lions' best runner the past two seasons. Brett Barley and Mike Callahan were key members of Milford's state-qualifying team. And if it were not for Nick Bassitt, Novi would not have won the state championship.

Nick Bassitt Novi senior

A critical part to Novi's state championship team. Bassitt was the Wildcat's fifth man this year. He finished 55th at the state meet after a 27th-place finish at the Ann Arbor Regional.

Bassitt was 21st at the KVC meet, and took 14th overall at the Redford Union Invite at Cass Benton. He is the lone senior in Novi's top five and one of just two seniors on Novi's varsity who will be gone next year.

Brian Bilyk Northville junior

Unlike each of the other members of HomeTown's all-area team, Bilyk often battled the competition by himself. Unquestionably the Mustang's top runner, Bilyk ran to a 55th-place finish at the Class-A state meet in a time of 16 minutes, 39 seconds.

He qualified for the finals with a ninth-place finish at the regional meet at Ann Arbor. Bilyk was a first-team all-Western Lakes Activities Association runner (6th place) and also finished sixth in the junior/senior portion of the Walled Lake Western Invite.

Jason Pridmore South Lyon senior

He came correct at the never-easy Springfield Oaks regional, placing ninth and qualifying for the second time for the Class A state meet, where Pridmore finished 110th. He placed 17th at the KVC meet. Pridmore turned in his best time of the season (16:32), and placed second overall at the Centerline Invitational.

Brett Barley Milford senior

Barley was nothing if not clutch. As a junior he was crucial to Milford's regional title. This season he was 15th at the Springfield Oaks regional, surprising everyone but perhaps his coach, teammates and himself. Everyone knows the name Tom Greenless, but it was seniors like Barley and fellow second team member Mike Callahan that helped the Redskins become one of the best teams in the state (they were seventh at the Class A finals). Barley was named second-team all-conference.

Mike Callahan Milford senior

Callahan was a second-team all-KVC runner as a senior, as he finished 11th at the conference meet. He was 28th at the Oakland County meet and helped the Redskins secure an appearance in the state finals with his performance at the Springfield Oaks regional.

Nick Kopczyk Milford sophomore

While Milford was blessed with seniors like Tom Greenless, Brett Barley and Mike Callahan, youth was served in the person of Kopczyk, a tenth-grader. He was one of four Milford runners to place in the top 100 at the state meet. Kopczyk placed 21st at the regional, 15th at the conference meet and 21st at Oakland County.

C.J. Hadding Lakeland junior

While first-team all-area selections Pat Klein and Brian Theut were the stars, Hadding was a very good third runner for the Eagles. All three will be back next season. Hadding was ninth at the KVC meet — which Lakeland won — making him a second-team all-conference honoree. He also came up big at the Oakland County meet, placing 16th.

Lakeland

DECEMBER 2-5, 1999

Greenless qualifies for nationals



Todd Mobley (left) was edged out by Tom Greenless but both earned trips to the national meet

Milford senior takes seventh at regional cross country meet

Tom Greenless of Milford and Todd Mobley of West Bloomfield each had their cross country seasons extended a few more weeks.

Mobley, a senior at Walled Lake Central High School, and Greenless, a senior at Milford High, each earned berths at the Foot Locker Cross Country National Finals, which will take place Dec. 11 at Walt Disney's Oak Trail Course at Shades of Green in Orlando, Fla.

Greenless nosed out Mobley for seventh place at last week's Foot Locker Midwest Regional Championships at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside in Kenosha, Wisc.

The top eight boys and girls in the seeded races qualify for the national finals.

Greenless was timed in 15:23 for the 5,000-meter course while Mobley took eighth in 15:24. Both were in a battle for the final qualifying berths as Ryan Cole of Sanford, Mich. placed ninth in 15:25.

Dathan Ritzenheim of Rockford, the Michigan Class A state cross country champion, was the individual winner in 14:55.

Mobley was the Class A state runner-up while Greenless placed fourth at the state meet. All three landed berths on the first team of the Foot Locker All-Midwest Regional Cross Country team.

Runners in the Midwest regional came from Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma and Wisconsin.

Nearly 350 runners from those states competed at the midwest regional.

Other area runners who competed included Tim Moore of Novi, who placed 33rd in 15:49.

Michigan, which had five finishers in the top 10 for 35 points, was the team winner. Illinois was second with 53 points and Ohio took third with 77.

In the girls regional, Karen LeRoy of Oxford placed 78th out of more than 400 runners and was timed in 19:37.

Thousands of the nation's top high school runners competed in other regional meets, which included the Northeast in Bronx, N.Y., the South in Charlotte, N.C. and the West in Walnut, Calif.

HIGH SCHOOLS



Mobley



Moore



Toloff



Greenless



Sage



Klein



Haver



Gillett



Walle



Avenius



Smith

Wildcats take lead on boys team

By MARVIN GOODWIN
Of The Oakland Press

After another state cross country meet there's little doubt that some of the best distance runners in the state are in Oakland County. For the second straight year, Novi won the Class A state championship, following consecutive titles by Kensington Valley Conference rival Lakeland the previous two years. The Wildcats placed four runners on the All-county squad.

Five of the top seven finishers at the state meet were from Oakland County.

■ **Todd Mobley, Walled Lake Western:** A three-time All-County selection and a four-time state qualifier, Mobley was the county's best runner. He won Oakland County, Western Lakes Activities Association and regional crowns and was runner-up at the Brother Rice Invitational. He was unbeaten in dual meets and took second at the Class A state meet.

■ **Tim Moore, Novi:** Moore came on strong at the end of the season, punctuating a strong effort by taking third at the Class A state meet, seconds behind Mobley. Only a sophomore, Moore

was Kensington Valley Conference runner-up and regional champion. He placed fourth at the Oakland County meet.

■ **Chris Toloff, Novi:** Toloff and Moore helped give the Wildcats a strong one-two punch. Each took turns beating each other, and each were a threat to win most meets in which they competed. A junior, Toloff was Redford Union Invitational champ, was third in the KVC and was regional runner-up before taking seventh at state.

■ **Tom Greenless, Milford:** Perhaps the most feared runner because of his combination of endurance and speed — he's a sub-50-second quarter-miler in track — the senior is also a three-time All-County selection and four-time state qualifier.

Greenless is the KVC champion and was runner-up at the Oakland County and regional meets. He used his strong kick to secure fourth place at the state meet.

■ **David Sage, Clarkston:** Sage has been one of the area's top distance runners the past four years. A four-time state qualifier, Sage was OAA I champion and unbeaten in league dual meets. He won the Oxford Invitational, took third at the

Oakland County meet and was fourth at the tough regional at Springfield Oaks. The senior finished 13th at the Class A state meet.

■ **Pat Klein, Lakeland:** A strong competitor, Klein eventually began beating runners he had lost to earlier in the season. The junior finished sixth at the Oakland County meet, fourth at the KVC meet, third at the Springfield Oaks regional and second at the Oxford Invitational. He was also 10th at the Jackson Invitational and finished fifth at the state meet, seconds behind Greenless.

■ **Matt Haver, Clarkston:** Haver, along with Sage, formed a consistent duo for the Wolves, who were Oakland County and OAA I champions. Haver was third at the Oxford Invitational, eighth at the Oakland County meet and sixth at the Springfield Oaks regional. He finished sixth at the OAA I meet and placed 23rd at the Class A state meet.

■ **Nick Gillett, Troy:** One of two sophomores on the squad, Gillett was the Colts' top runner. The tall, long-striding runner was third at the OAA I meet, was Ambrose Invitational champion and was third at the Royal Oak Kimball regional. He finished

17th at the Oakland County meet and was 22nd at the state meet.

■ **Eric Walle, Novi:** Walle supported the Wildcats' effort with steady performances. He took seventh at the Oakland County meet and was eighth at the Ann Arbor Pioneer regional. Walle finished 22nd at the state meet.

■ **Mark Avenius, Novi:** Avenius overcame injuries midway through the season to run his best when it counted most. He was fifth at the Detroit Jesuit Invitational and placed 17th at the Class A state meet as the Wildcats' third finisher.

■ **Coach of the Year, Bob Smith, Novi:** With the loss of three quality seniors, including a pair of All-State runners, virtually no one gave the Wildcats a chance to repeat as state champions. Despite second place finishes at the Oakland County, regional and KVC league meets, Novi was undaunted. The Wildcats ran their best race of the season in capturing their second straight state title. Comparing last year's team times to this year's, Smith said the average time on the Wildcats' home course for the top seven runners was 16:41, the same for both years.

"I think it (state title) means

All-county Boys Cross Country

Name	School	Class	State Time
Todd Mobley	Walled Lake Western	Sr.	15:25
Tim Moore	Novi	Soph.	15:27
Tom Greenless	Milford	Sr.	15:40
Pat Klein	Lakeland	Jr.	15:40
Chris Toloff	Novi	Jr.	15:42
David Sage	Clarkston	Sr.	16:04
Mark Avenius	Novi	Jr.	16:09
Matt Haver	Clarkston	Sr.	16:11
Eric Walle	Novi	Jr.	16:15
Nick Gillett	Troy	Soph.	16:16

Second Team

Name	School	Class	State Time
Chris Gurnz	Rochester	Soph.	16:16
Andrew Bauer	Lahser	Soph.	16:20
Charlie Stamboulan	North Farmington	Sr.	16:23
Brian Theut	Lakeland	Soph.	16:24
Michael Cott	Lake Orion	Soph.	16:26
David Clingan	Waterford Motl	Sr.	16:34
Adam Frezza	Lake Orion	Jr.	17:00
Nick Bassitt	Novi	Sr.	16:39
Ben Salvette	Cranbrook-Kingswood	Soph.	16:44
Steve Smith	Birmingham Groves	Jr.	16:16*

*Done at regional meet.

Honorable Mention: Brett Quantz, Dan Burke and Kevin Breen, Clarkston; Craig Frankland and Dave deSteiger, Rochester Adams; Jason Pridmore, South Lyon; Kevin Naughton, Walled Lake Western; Charles Visconti and Mark Rappaport, Brother Rice; Nick Koczyk and Brett Barley, Milford; C.J. Hadding, Lakeland; Andy Gillett, Troy; Andrew Fons and Spencer Aston, Lake Orion; Mike Duke, Rochester; Mike Barton, Birmingham Seaholm

more (this year) because people can't say it's luck," said Smith, who has coached at Novi for 19 years. "It's more than luck, it's

more determination on their (team) part. It's really gratifying to know it's not an anomaly (and) we can do it again."