

TOP 10 RETURNING

By Jeff Theisen
SPORTS WRITER

It would be easy to think that Novi cross country could be headed for a state title. The Wildcats placed ninth at state last year and return everybody.

But the reality is the Wildcats might not even win their league.

The Kensington Valley Conference is a powerhouse of a different level. Six of the eight teams in the league finished in the top 17 at the state meet last year, and Pinckney returns everyone from a state-title team.

Despite all of this, Novi head coach Bob Smith can't wait to start the season.

"We're just running against good people week in and week out. I like it," he said. "It's tough to be prepared week after week."

Smith said that running against top-tier teams every week takes some of the edge off when they reach the state meet because they've competed against the best all year.

Whatever Smith is doing, it's working. The Wildcats have been in the top 10 at state since 1998, with two state titles. The main goal is to keep the streak alive.

"I would be disappointed if we did not match last year's performances," Smith said. "We like to think that we can reload every year."

Leading returnee for the Wildcats is first team All-League and All-Stater Mike Wheat. He ran a low time of 16:04 last year.

Other returnees in order of top



Photo by JOHN HEIDER/Novi News

Captains of the Novi High cross country team – Alex Prasad, Mike Wheat, Ricky Manza, Scott Wagner and Josh Lumley – begin a training run near the school's track.

times are Alex Prasad (16:27), Scott Wagner (16:35), Lukas Barnes (16:50), Josh Lumley (16:59) and Kenny MacDonough (17:07).

"Having the experienced guys is really, really nice. I don't have to reinvent the wheel," Smith said. "We don't need to explain things about stretching for instance. We do spend time reviewing, but we're all on the same page."

"It's really a lot of fun. The kids do not have an ego. These guys have very good chemistry. They just bear down and work hard."

Having a team full of returnees

allows Smith a rare comfort in high school sports.

"I don't think they will be making too many mistakes," he said. "Part of cross country is, yeah, you have to run fast and you have to train hard, but you also have to be mistake free. These guys are really making all the right choices."

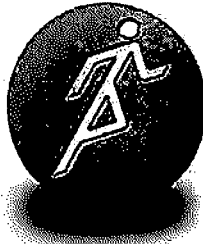
Smith shares his philosophy for getting the team to peak at the right time of the year.

"In the early season we run them very hard," Smith said. "They're starting school or maybe

the second week of school, (the runners are) very weary. They're not going to be peaking.

"As we get closer and closer to the championship season, then we'll introduce a little bit more speed to get the frequency going and peak that way. Then we'll do the third step, and that's backing down on the mileage."

Smith is always coaching with one thing in mind: "Our training is designed with Nov. 4 (state finals) in mind," he said. "Nobody wants to be the class to let the streak down."



Quick facts

Head coach: Bob Smith
Years coached: 25th
Last year's record: 5-3 in league, ninth in state
Key losses: Steve Fannon (#11 runner), Pete Andrews (#24 runner)

Incoming help: Brad Laski

Who to watch: Top 10 runners return, including Mike Wheat: All League; All-State; Scott Wagner: Second Team All League; Alex Prasad: Second Team All League; Josh Lumley: Third Team All League

Coach quote: "Having the experienced guys is really, really nice. I don't have to reinvent the wheel. We don't need to explain things about stretching for instance. We do spend time reviewing, but we're all on the same page... It's really a lot of fun. The kids do not have an ego. These guys have very good chemistry. They just bear down and work hard."

Schedule

8/24 at Northville, 3 p.m.
9/7 at Milford, 4:30 p.m.
9/9 at Britton Deerfield Relays, 9 a.m.
9/12 Pinckney, 4:30 p.m.
9/15 at Spartan Invite, TBA
9/16 W.L. Western Invite, 9 a.m.
9/19 Howell, 4:30 p.m.
9/26 at Lakeland, 4:30 p.m.
10/3 Brighton, 4:30 p.m.
10/7 Oakland County at Kensington Metro Park, 10 a.m.
10/10 at South Lyon
10/14 at Gabriel Richard Invite, Noon
10/17 Hartland, 4:30 p.m.
10/23 at KVC Championships, TBA

'Cat harriers pounce 'Stangs

By Jeff Theisen
SPORTS WRITER

Thursday's cross country meet between Novi and Northville at Cass Benton may have been scheduled as a scrimmage, but Wildcat boys coach Bob Smith treated it like the real thing.

"We had a few game plans that we're trying to see what kind of chemistry we have," Smith said. "We're rusty in terms of how to race, confidence building is real big, strategy in how to run... we accomplished a lot of those goals today."

The Wildcats responded with a finish that included the top-five finishers crossing the line about a second apart.

"That was one of our goals," Smith said of the pack-running. "There's safety in numbers, and there's victory in numbers."

"We're on target for where we should be at this time."

Joshua Lumley led the pack with Alex Prasad, David Wheat, Kenny MacDonough and Scott Wagner finishing closely behind.

Jack Dalton came in next for Northville.

Lukas Barnes and Mike Beard came in seventh and eighth for Novi, before Northville freshman Frankie Griffiths finished.

Northville's next three finishers were Jeff Girbach, Ben Marti and Nathan Lunn, giving the Wildcats a 15-48 edge.

The score could've been drastically different had Mustang star runner Jasen Turnbull and senior Charles Oehmke run. But they should be ready to go in the first scheduled meet of the year — the Corunna Invitational on 8/30.

"Overall we performed well. We ran about half of our team today, with this being a scrimmage," Northville head coach Chris Cronin said. "I was pleased with every kid who ran for us today."

Early in the day, some showers moved through the area, threatening the meet. But by 3 p.m., the skies had cleared, creating a warm but sunny afternoon.

"It's always fun to start the cross country season and have good weather," Cronin said. "It was a perfect day for August."

Novi harriers impressive at Michigan State Invite

By Jeff Theisen
NOVI NEWS

Novi boys cross country put up a strong effort against No. 1 Pinckney before capturing second place out of 42 teams at the Michigan State Invite on Saturday.

At MSU, Mike Wheat led Novi with an 11th-place finish in 16:41. Following Wheat were Alex Prasad in 14th, Kenny MacDonough in 25th, Joshua Lumley in 34th and Mike Beard in 37th.

Pinckney won the meet with its top five runners finishing in the top eight.

Novi got the ultimate test Tuesday against Pinckney, the defending state champion. The Pirates returned all of their top runners, just like Novi.

The Pirates earned a 19-37 win that was a lot closer than the score indicates.

The Wildcats' Mike Wheat broke away with Brenden Marcum out of a pack of about a dozen runners.

Marcum crossed the line first in 16:30; with Wheat claiming second in six seconds after.

The Pirates sealed the win by finishing the next four runners, but a pack of Novi runners finished just a handful of seconds after the Pirate pack.

Alex Prasad (seventh, 16:52), Kenny MacDonough (eighth, 16:58) and Josh Lumley (ninth, 17:00) finished two, eight and 10 seconds behind the Pinckney pack, respectively. Mike Beard ended the scoring for Novi in 11th place at 17:12.

"The race fulfilled all expectations for CC junkies," Novi head coach Bob Smith said.

"Both teams had something to prove. The Pirates wanted to prove that they are still the No. 1 team in the land, while our Wildcats wanted to prove that they can race with anybody.

"Although I had my belief that we were a premier team in the state this season, our per-

formance last night proved to me in my mind that we will be a top-shelf team in 2006. I can't wait until we race them again."



SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 16 2006

Pinckney's boys find their rhythm at Spartan Invite

By MARVIN GOODWIN
Of The Oakland Press

EAST LANSING — There were Top 40 Oldies and Hard Rock tunes blasting through the speakers Friday at Forest Akers Golf Course.

To be sure, hundreds of boys and girls were rockin' and runnin' at the annual Spartan Invitational cross country meet, where music permeated the air and runners from around the state rocked the course.

Defending Division 1 state champion Pinckney, which scored a miniscule 27 points to win the Division 1 boys title, was the most impressive team, although Novi's boys made their presence known finishing second with 121 points.

Meanwhile, Cranbrook-Kingswood's Nick Andersen won the boys Division 2 individual crown, Bloomfield Hills Lahser's boys were runner-up in the Division 2 race, and a trio of OAA I girls teams — Rochester Adams, Clarkston and Rochester — had top 10 finishes.

Novi's Mike Wheat (11th) and Alex Prasad (14th) led four Wildcat finishers among the top 34 placers.

"We have a lot more in us,"

predicted Novi coach Robert Smith, "but they ran well (Friday). I was very pleased with their times and their racing."

Kensington Valley Conference rival Pinckney, whose Brenden Marcum took first (16:11) and led five finishers among the top eight, amazed coach Tom Carney.

"We really haven't done a lot of work yet," he said. "That's why I'm surprised."

Devin McKeown, who placed 12th for Milford — the Mavs were ninth with 339 points — gave the KVC three top 10 teams.

Andersen's strong effort at the end earned him the title as he led the Cranes to a sixth place finish in the Division 2 race with 237 points. Forest Hills Northern won with 102 and Bloomfield Hills Lahser scored 146 for second.

"Last year I ran this race and got third," said Andersen, who clocked 16:35. "I had this breakdown (last year) and I really bombed at the state meet. (But) I ran a lot this summer. I ran with my brother (Dayton's Mike Andersen). The course ran great."

Teammate Brennan MacDonald was eighth.

"Not a lot of people realize we returned our top seven," Andersen said. "We're a really young team and we're excited."

Lahser's Nick Krol, who placed third in 16:42, and teammate Imraan Allarakhia (17th) led the Knights.

For the Division 1 girls, Milford's Carlie Green, still riding the high from last track season where she ran on the state champion 1,600 relay, clocked 18:42 for second place behind Glen Lake's Marissa Treece, who won in 18:28. "I think this was one of the best races I've ever run from the start to finish," she said. (But) she (Treece) was tough. I was impressed with her."

Adams' Rachel Patterson placed sixth in 19:01, leading the Highlanders who scored 180 points for third. Rockford won with 109, Livonia Churchill was second with 141 and Clarkston, last year's champion, was fourth with 191 points.

"Rachel is a little behind (in training) now," Adams coach Budd Ciccirelli said. "She's had some knee problems. (It was) a tough meet. The girls ran OK (Friday), but they weren't happy with their performance."

Tiffany Abrahamian led Rochester (10th place) with her seventh place finish in 19:08.

For the Division 2 girls, Birmingham Seaholm's Alex Mathews took fourth in 19:40, pacing the Maples to 10th with 290 points.

**CROSS
COUNTRY**

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PREP NOTEBOOK

Boys cross country

Defending Division 1 state champion Pinckney, with its dominating performance at the Spartan Invitational last week — the Pirates had five finishers in the top eight for 27 points — may be intimidating to some, but not to Novi coach Robert Smith.

Even though the Wildcats were far behind in second place with 121 points, Smith believes the best is yet to come for his squad, which is still a work in progress. There are still battles for supporting positions, which can only help Novi in the coming weeks.

Mike Wheat (11th) and Alex Prasad (14th) were the top finishers for the Wildcats, whose tight front five couldn't match the even tighter front five of the Pirates.

But traditionally, Novi tends to come on strong at the end of the season.

"They (the Pirates) typically start the season very strong and then we close the gap," said Smith of his KVC rival. "They'd better be looking over their shoulders."

■ Walled Lake Western's victory at its own Invitational has to be encouraging for coach Mike Formanek, whose Warriors have slumped since the graduation of Kevin and Neal Naughton, who are both are running at Eastern Michigan. The Warriors finished with 54 points, topping both district rivals. Todd Bowmar (third) and Chris Schnable (sixth) were the top finishers.

— MARVIN GOODWIN

NOVI NEWS-Thursday, September 28, 2006

Novi runners score perfect against Howell

The No. 3-ranked Novi boys cross country pulled off the perfect score Tuesday against Howell at Call Benton.

The first five runners to cross the finish line were Wildcats, creating the lowest possible score of 15 to Howell's 46 points.

Kenny MacDonough led a tight pack of runners that finished four seconds apart in 16:59. Just behind him were Mike Wheat in 17:00, Alex Prasad in 17:01, Josh Lumley in 17:02 and Mark Beard in 17:03.

"Our athletes ran a very smart race," Novi head coach Bob Smith said. "It is very gratifying to know that our athletes understand how to race and how to respond to different racing strategies. From top to bottom, our runners are getting tougher and smarter every time they toe the line."

Howell had its first runner cross in seventh place and didn't cross its fifth runner until 15th place.

"Twenty-three Wildcats set season Call Benton records," Smith said. "More importantly, nine athletes set overall personal bests, and I believe the best is yet to come."

Novi Boys Cross Country

Novi continues to prove the strength-in-numbers concept with a 15-48 win against Lakeland on Sept. 26.

Lakeland has one of the top runners in the state returning in senior Luke Heiman. He was the KVC champion last year and placed second at state.

However, an early season injury has kept him out of the sport until last week.

Heiman started out the first mile with a pack of Novi runners. Mike Wheat and Heiman broke away from the pack, but Heiman was unable to keep up with Wheat.

The rest of the Wildcat (3-1 KVC) pack poured it on and overtook Heiman, and Novi wound up placing first through fifth.

Wheat came in at 16 minutes, 43 seconds, and was followed by teammates Alex Prasad (16:59), Kenny MacDonough (16:59), Josh Lumley (17:00) and Scott Wagner (17:14).

Heiman finished in sixth at 17:18.

Two more Novi runners, Aaron Croad and Alfredo Cateriano, came across the finish line before Lakeland could post its second runner.

PREP NOTEBOOKS

Boys cross country

Novi has its sights set on Saturday's Oakland County meet where the Wildcats will be heavy favorites. Although Milford and Bloomfield Hills Lahser can run with some of the 'Cats' top runners, neither team can match Novi's deep lineup of

at least nine quality runners. Still, coach Robert Smith can recall in 1999 when the favored Wildcats were upset by Clarkston when Mark



Smith

Avenius, normally Novi's fourth runner, dropped out of the race because of a calf injury. Novi later won the state title that year. ■ Injury has shelved Bloomfield Hills Lahser's Charlie Najt, the Knights' third leading runner, for the season according to coach Nick Stratton, making the Knights chances of repeating their Oakland County title of last year much more difficult. Lahser has been among the top teams in the state the past six seasons, but graduations and injuries have hurt them this season.

■ Lakeland's Luke Heiman, last year's Division 1 state runner-up, has lost valuable time in trying to recover from a foot injury and may need several more weeks to get back into racing shape.

— MARVIN GOODWIN

Oakland County's best

By Jeff Theisen
NOVI NEWS

The Novi boys cross country team topped the 42-team Oakland County meet Saturday at Kensington Park. Novi also handed No. 10 Brighton a 19-44 loss Sept. 3 at Cass Benton.

At the Oakland County meet, Mike Wheat led the Wildcats with a third-place finish in 16:44. Alex Prasad was next in for ninth place in 16:50, followed by Josh Lumley in 14th (16:58), Kenny MacDonough in 21st (17:06) and Scott Wagner in 22nd (17:07).

All five Novi runners received medals.

"They ran their best race of the year," Novi head coach Robert Smith said. "This is a big meet. In 1999, we were state champs and didn't win this meet."

It's the third time in nine years the Wildcats have claimed the Oakland County trophy.

The Novi junior varsity also won the Oakland County meet with T.J. Butler, Mike Blaszczyk and Aaron Croad finishing 1-2-3.

Against Brighton, the Wildcats placed seven runners in the top eight with Mike Wheat crossing the finish line first in 16:48.

A Brighton runner finished one second behind Wheat, but the Wildcats placed the next seven runners to close out the win.

Prasad was third at 17:14, followed closely by teammates Lumley (17:15) and MacDonough (17:16).

Mike Beard finished out the scoring with a sixth-place finish in 17:20.

Alfredo Cateriano placed seventh in 17:28, and Scott Wagner was eighth in 17:48.

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Submitted photo
The Novi varsity cross country team shows off their trophies after winning the Oakland County Invite on Saturday at Kensington Park.



Novi News Athlete of the Week

Mike Wheat
Novi senior cross country runner

Wheat led five Wildcat runners that finished in the top 22 to win the Oakland County Invitational. Wheat placed third overall in 16:44. He also finished first against Brighton in 16:48.

Coaches: The Athlete of the Week will now run every week. Please make nominations known by Monday to Jeff Theisen at (248) 349-1700, ext. 104 or to jtheisen@gannett.com.

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Green leads Mavericks to county cross country title

SUNDAY OCTOBER 8, 2006

■ **Balanced Novi boys win county title with five finishers in the top 22; Seaholm's Howard takes overall title**

By MARVIN GOODWIN
Of The Oakland Press

MILFORD — Although Carlie Green's final strides were on wobbly legs, the Milford senior made sure she got to the finish line ahead of the others.

Green took first place at the 46th annual Oakland County Cross Country championship, leading the Mavs to the girls team title Saturday at Kensington Metropark.

CROSS COUNTRY

Novi, with five finishers among the top 22 runners, took the boys crown with 69 points while Birmingham Seaholm's Ted Howard won the boys title in 16:16, helping the Maples place first among Division 2 teams and fourth overall. Milford (114) was second, Lake Orion (197) third and Seaholm (227) followed.

The Wildcats, with the deepest team in the field, entered the meet with a quiet confidence that translated into the near-perfect race. Mike Wheat took third (16:44), Alex Prasad was ninth (16:56) and Josh Lumley (14th), Kenny MacDonough (21st) and Scott Wagner (22nd) followed as only 23 seconds separated the scoring group.

"We were respectful of what Milford and Lake Orion were bringing to the meet today," Novi coach Robert Smith said, "but it (margin of victory) was a mild surprise. This year all of our runners are healthy. Right now, we're firing on all cylinders."

Without the front runners they had in their 2006 Oakland County meet season when they swept the first three places, the Wildcats are cultivating their pack-running mentality.



The Oakland Press/MARVIN GOODWIN

Carlie Green (left) of Milford High School gets help from assistant coach Chris Ceresa shortly after crossing the finish line in first place at the 46th annual Oakland County cross country championships Saturday at Kensington Metropark. Green was timed in 18:56 for the five-kilometer course as she led the Mavericks to the team title.

"It's a great, big-meet experience," said Prasad, "and its going to come in handy at regionals ... and KVC."

Howard, who finished in 16:16, won by 14 seconds over Brother Rice's Anthony Wile. Both led the field most of the way until Howard made his move about 2½ miles into the five-kilometer race.

"I just tried to stay on Anthony's heels as long as I could," Howard said. "I felt like I could be going faster so I did. I'm walking on air, feeling great."

Teammates Michael Bender (10th) and Nathan Parker (15th) helped give the Maples their highest finish in years. "The whole team is just getting really excited," Howard said.



ATHLETES OF THE WEEK

PREP NOTEBOOKS

Football

■ There is a lot of excitement around Holly and Lakeland this week, and not just because the schools will have their respective homecomings.

Playoff fever has gripped each school, given both are in position to earn their first ever trip to the state playoffs.

Holly is 5-2 and can punch its inaugural ticket to the postseason on Friday with a win at home over 1-6 Flint Beecher. Adding to the intrigue is that Holly will attempt to make history in front of a homecoming crowd.

"There are definitely some distractions we have to ignore and find a way to avoid," Holly coach Mike Millhouse said. "It's homecoming which is always a distraction in itself. But our kids have been pretty good all year about staying focused."

The "P" word was first used by Millhouse and his staff last week, which ironically came before what Millhouse said was the worst game his team has played all season against Clio last week.

The Bronchos still managed to win, 35-25, but Millhouse hopes his team learned its lesson.

"We hoped it would be a motivating tool, but I think it got to them a little bit. In that they weren't focused on the other team," Millhouse said.

As for Lakeland, the Eagles find themselves with a 4-3 record going into a home game with Brighton on Friday. If Lakeland can prevail, it'll need to beat Walled Lake Northern at home in the final week of the season to clinch a playoff spot.

■ Because of a scheduling conflict with Canton's home field at Plymouth (all three Plymouth schools play home games at the same field and Plymouth has its homecoming game scheduled for Friday) the WAAA championship game between Walled Lake Central and Canton will take place at 7 p.m. today at Canton. The Vikings enter 8-1 on the season, while defending Division 1 state runner-up Canton is 7-0.

— KEITH DUNLAP

Girls basketball

■ Lo and behold, look who's unbeaten and hosting a crucial showdown for first place in Oakland Activities Association Division III tonight.

Despite not returning a lot of varsity experience, North Farmington is off to a 9-1 start, 5-0 in the league, and will host Lake Orion (9-2, 4-0) tonight for first place in the league tonight.

"A kind of look at each game as its challenge," North Farmington head coach Tim Camuthers said. "Most people thought it would be Stony Creek and Lake Orion. For us to have a chance to compete with the teams in our division, we're happy with the way it's gone."

The Raiders did have one staple returning, junior Cassie Beller, who started as a freshman and leads the team in scoring at 13.5 points per game, according to Camuthers.

However, North Farmington has also gotten contributions from a pair of dynamic freshman, Jenna Bachrouche and Lyndsey Booker.

"I knew seeing them as eighth graders that they'd be pretty good ball players," Camuthers said. "They played on a high level at AALL. They've been a great fit both personality- and basketball-wise."

As a result, the Raiders have been a hard team to guard so far this season for opponents.

"It's kind of hard to matchup with three girls who are averaging doubles and some other players who have stepped and been capable of scoring," Camuthers said.

— KEITH DUNLAP

Girls tennis

■ Neither injury nor illness could stop Royal Oak from reaching a new superlative.

In just its inaugural year as a single city high school, Royal Oak rallied to pick up its first-ever Oakland Activities Association Division III tournament title on Saturday.

The Ravens overcame internal obstacles and pulled out a one-point edge over Berkley to win the title.

Royal Oak hopes to carry that momentum into Division 1 regional play that is slated to begin this morning throughout Rochester.

"We had some injuries and illness and other girls had to play at higher positions," Royal Oak coach Tim Jankowiak said of the conference rally.

"Those girls won at those higher positions. It was a big pick-me-up for the entire team. We had two key players out in doubles and No. 4 doubles had to play at No. 3 doubles and they won out. That was a great lift for them."

Seniors Kelsey Graue and Amanda Thermen stepped up to the higher challenge to help the Ravens out last weekend.

Anything's now possible this time around.

The top two teams in each regional, plus any teams that score 18 points and victorious No. 1 singles players will get the chance to advance to the Michigan High School Athletic Association Finals which will take place Oct. 20-21.

"Last year we came in fifth at regionals," Jankowiak said. "Our No. 1 singles went to states. We're hoping to get our chance this year. We only need 18 points to do it as a team. This has been kind of a team of firsts. ... We'd like to be the first team from Royal Oak to go to states as an entire team. That's our hope. We're hoping that we can once again step up."

Of course Royal Oak will undoubtedly be challenged by West Bloomfield and Clarkston, ranked No. 9 and 10, respectively, in Division 1.

■ So close Troy fell a point short of advancing past the regional tournament last season. You can bet that the Colts will be hungry to find a way to make up for lost time.

"It's going to be about who shows up to play?"

said Troy coach Eric Sturgis. "Traditionally Troy and Grosse Pointe (South) have gone to states every year. I also hope (Troy) Athens makes it."

Troy and Athens will be the only two local representatives battling to advance in this Division 1 regional that will be played at courts in the Grosse Pointe area.

The Colts will look to No. 1 singles player Hana Suckstorff to lead the way with her 19-7 mark in her senior season.

The No. 1 doubles team of seniors Allison Ho and Sarah Camplan is 20-0 and has beaten every team in this regional for the exception of Grosse Pointe South. Ho and Camplan are 52-2 overall in the last two seasons.

"Overall, we have a pretty deep team," Sturgis said.

— CRYSTAL EVOLA

Boys golf

■ Whoever makes up the regional assignments for Division 1 clearly has a sense of humor.

That's the only reasonable explanation as to why so many state-ranked teams will be forced to compete against each other in regional play beginning today in Brighton.

"There are a lot of good teams and only three teams make it through," said long-time Birmingham Groves coach Jim Crosby, whose team was ranked No. 3 in Division 1 in the most recent poll. "You're going to have to play pretty well. Fortunately we have been playing well lately."

Winning districts with a score of 309 last weekend will seem like a breeze to the Falcons compared to regionals.

"Our regional can be pretty tough," Crosby said. "It's tough to get through."

No. 2 Northville, Groves, No. 9 Brighton, No. 10 Brother Rice and Novi Detroit Catholic Central and Milford, both of which finished in the top 10 at last year's state tournament, are among those competing to advance to next week's finals.

One stroke cost the Falcons a chance to go to the 2005 state tournament.

They hope this year is different. Seniors Bob Urso and Pat DeGregorio have been key so far.

Urso has been in the top 10 in every tournament so far. DeGregorio finished second recently in the Oakland County tourney with a 72.

"There's 10 of us and any of the 10 could be in the top three," Crosby said. "My guess is it'll come down to one shot again like it did last year."

— CRYSTAL EVOLA

Girls cross country

■ Milford's victory at last week's Oakland County meet took some of the sting out of a

Boys cross country

Mike Wheat

Novi



The senior distance runner helped lead the Wildcats to the Oakland County meet championship last week, completing the five-kilometer distance in 16:44. Wheat, who placed third overall, led five Wildcat finishers among the top 22 placers as Novi won its third county title in the last nine seasons and first since 2000.

KVC dual meet loss to rival Brighton.

"This meet restored our confidence and showed us how good we can be," meet winner Carlie Green said.

Still, a slip-up by the Mavs could've opened the door for any number of OAA I teams who were close in pursuit. Beginning with Rochester, which finished with 182 points, 20 behind Milford, OAA I teams took the next seven places. Rochester Adams (133) was a point behind Rochester and Clarkston (134) was a point behind Adams. Troy (184), Troy Athens (220), Birmingham Seaholm (271) and Lake Orion (284) took places five through eight. Clarkston lost its first four through graduation and transfers, yet still remains an area force. Starting with Kristian Smith, who finished 13th, the Wolves packed four runners among the top 30.

■ Walled Lake Northern, which finished ninth at the county meet, hopes to surge toward the end of the season as the Knights did last year to qualify for state. Northern's Rachel Quaintance took 10th at the county meet and is expected to lead another charge.

■ Erin LaFave, who lost only one race last season, is trying to come back from a stress fracture and hasn't raced since Aug. 30. Her appearance at the Oakland County meet was a surprise — she had only been training about two weeks — and her fifth place finish surprised even coach Nick Stratton.

— MARVIN GOODWIN

Boys cross country

■ It's back to the drawing board for Brother Rice's Anthony Wile, who looked so dominant in winning the West Bloomfield Invitational early last month. Normally, he feels stronger at the end of the race, but that wasn't the case when he took second to Ted Howard of Birmingham Seaholm at the Oakland County meet. Howard passed him during the last mile, the part of the race in which Wile is usually stronger.

"I felt pretty good the first two miles and felt crappy for the last mile," he said. "I had a pretty hard week of training, but no excuses. Ted had a great race."

■ Howard's Oakland County victory was believed to be the first by a Seaholm athlete since the early 1970s according to Brother Rice coach Bob Stark.

■ Milford had four runners finish among the top 27, which sparked its runner-up finish to Novi at the Oakland County meet. If the Mavs can develop a fifth runner in the next few weeks, they'll be a factor at regionals.

■ Novi's county championship team began the championship season for the Wildcats, who have an eye on the KVC meet, regionals and state meet. The Wildcats' only dual meet loss is to defending state champion Pinckney, while Novi, a traditional fast closer, is ready to take on the Pirates again.

— MARVIN GOODWIN

Thursday, October 19, 2006-NOVI NEWS

Novi Boys Cross Country

Novi cross country continued its strong pack running to bounce South Lyon 20-43 Oct. 10.

The Wildcats allowed a Lion runner to break free to work on staying together as a pack. South Lyon did place the winning runner, but Novi placed the next runners across the line, all within two seconds of each other.

Finishing in the pack were Mike Wheat, Josh Lumley, Kenny MacDonough, Alex Prasad, Aaron Croad, Mike Beard, Butler, Scott Wagner and Alfredo Cateriano, all from 17:32 to 17:34.

Pinckney, Milford win KVC cross country championships

By MARVIN GOODWIN
Of The Oakland Press

HARTLAND — Brighton's dual meet victory over Milford's girls last month was still on the minds of the Mavericks when they toed the line for Monday's Kensington Valley Conference meet at Majestic Creek Golf Course.

So when the gun fired, the Mavs were off and running with conviction.

"It (loss to Brighton) got us fired up more," said Carlie Green, who won her third straight league title in leading the Mavs to their fourth straight league title. "We wanted to compete with them. We were really excited."

Brighton, unbeaten in the dual meet schedule, finished second with 53 points and shares the league crown with Milford. Pinckney was third with 94 and Lakeland followed with 95.

On the boys side, in a conference where eight of the last large school state champions have been produced, Novi had five finishers among the top 18. But defending Division 1 state champion Pinckney had six among the top 10, including a sweep of the four places

as the Pirates won the league crown, scoring 19 points. Novi was second with 55 and Milford was third with 98.

Novi's Mike Wheat ran with the leaders for about seven minutes according to Novi coach Robert Smith. But he couldn't stop the onslaught of Pirates runners, led by Brenden Marcum, who won in 15:58. Wheat was fifth in 16:12, finishing ahead of Lakeland's Luke Heiman (16:15).

Alex Prasad (eighth), Josh Lumley (11th), Kenny MacDonough (13th) and Scott Wagner (18th) completed Novi's scoring in an effort that satisfied coach Robert Smith.

"Mike ran real well," Smith said. "He likes to go out fast and I encourage that. We (all) ran well today. They had the desire. Nobody fell asleep and everybody ran tough. (But) kudos to Pinckney. They're awesome, but we're not that far behind them."

Stephen Fuelling (12th in 16:34), Devin McKeown (14th) and Bob Feigley (15th) finished within four seconds of each other, helping Milford secure its third spot.

Heiman, last year's Division 1 state runner-up, ran with

the leaders until the last 800. The 6-foot-4 multisport athlete lost training time with a bout of tendinitis last month. The tendinitis is gone, but Heiman is in a race against time as he tries to regain his fitness. "I just don't have it (kick) yet," he said. "I think doing some speed workouts the last couple of weeks will help."

For the girls, the chilly temperatures and wind gusts did not freeze their desire to upend Brighton and the rest of the KVC.

"We've run in this weather before," Emily DeRusha said matter-of-factly.

Green clocked 18:35, finishing 20 seconds ahead of teammate Emily Morgridge, who came in second. Marissa Baranowski (ninth), Sarah Martens (11th) and DeRusha (14th) followed for Milford.

"Emily DeRusha probably ran the best league meet of her career," Mavs coach Brian Salyers said. "The kids just responded ... they were here with a purpose and they fulfilled their objective to the end."

Lakeland's Michaela Grew was third in 19:10 and teammate Becky Allor was 10th for the Eagles.



Novi's Mike Wheat, shown crossing the finish line at the Oakland County meet earlier this month, finished fifth overall at the KVC meet Monday at Majestic Creek Golf Course in Hartland.

The Oakland Press/
MARVIN GOODWIN

Boys cross country

KVC Meet
(at Majestic Creek Golf Course)

TEAMS — 1. Pinckney 19; 2. Novi 55; 3. Milford 98; 4. Brighton 120; 5. Howell 140; 6. Lakeland 151; 7. Hartland 162; 8. South Lyon 184.

INDIVIDUALS — 1. Brenden Marcum (Pinckney) 15:58, 2. Mike Kalsosma (Pinckney) 16:00; 3. David Emory (Pinckney) 16:04, 4. Brian Hankens (Pinckney) 16:07, 5. Mike Wheat (Novi) 16:12, 6. Luke Heiman (Lakeland) 16:15, 7. Matt Hooley (Brighton) 16:18, 8. Alex Prasad (Novi) 16:20, 9. Jake Heger (Pinckney) 16:24, 10. Matt Wines (Pinckney) 16:29.

LEADERS OF THE PACK

Novi seniors prove running philosophy works

Thursday, October 26, 2006

By Jeff Theisen
NOVI NEWS

Security in numbers is an old cliché, but the Novi Wildcat cross country team is proving it.

A pack mentality, or bunching up the runners, is leading Novi toward the end of the season with reasons for optimism.

"It's the best pack we've ever had," Novi head coach Robert Smith said. "We've had some championship teams and these guys are more of a unit than ever. It's paying off in big dividends.

"It's beautiful. The whole thing — the way they pack run, and the way they encourage each other."

Two front-runners for the Wildcats are seniors Mike Wheat and Alex Prasad.

Returning All-State runner Wheat said in the past he put pressure on himself to finish first or second. The depth on this team allows him to worry about the team rather than himself.

"This year, it's been a little more relaxed that we can get the pack running going," Wheat said. "I like the feeling of a victory. It doesn't matter to me whether the team wins by a point."

Prasad said one of the biggest differences from this team to last year's is experience.

"We've been through this," he said. "There were only two seniors on the team last year. We've had an opportunity to kind of lead last year, and we learned what it's like to be the main guys last year, and we did pretty well.

"This year, there's no learning curve."

Cross country mandates offseason work, as well as during the season. Smith said this team has been one of the hardest working crews he's had.

"These guys have put more miles on their shoes than I put on my car this summer," Smith said. "They have put in hundreds of miles. They run anywhere from 200 to 600 miles in the summer.

"It's our captains that run the summer program. I'm not around. I want the athletes to take ownership in the program. You have to give the captains all the credit for this summer."

KVC dominance

The hard work in the offseason has translated to success this year in an incredibly tough league. Pinckney returns everyone from a state-champion team, and is considered the top team again this year. But the rest of the KVC is no cupcake either.

Smith said since 1995, a KVC team has finished first or second at state. Teams that have won titles include Brighton, Lakeland, Milford, Novi and Pinckney.

Running in such a tough conference has built confidence in the

Wildcats heading into the postseason.

"We know that we're one of the better teams in the KVC," Prasad said. "If you're one of the better teams in the KVC, that says a lot of where you stand at state."

Smith wants to see his team keep its string going at state.

"Our goal as a team is to be top-10. We've been top-10 for the last eight years," Smith said. "I think we're capable of doing better than that. We're one of the better teams in the state. I think we're the real deal."

"We'd like to get a regional championship. That would be a three-peat for us."

The regional race is Saturday at Schoolcraft College, Northville and Catholic Central will be at the same regional.

Jeff Theisen can be reached at (248) 349-1700, ext. 104 or at jtheisen@gannett.com.

Wheat, Prasad lead Novi XC

SPORTS

noviNEWS.com

Thursday, October 26, 2006

Novi cross country blasts Hartland



NOVI NEWS

Novi Boys Cross Country

Novi runners stakes a solid claim on second place at the KVC Championship run Monday at Majestic Golf Course in Hartland.

Pinckney, the returning state champion, took first place with 19 points. Novi was next in with 55 points, well ahead of third-place Milford with 98 points.

Mike Wheat led the Wildcats with a fifth-place finish in 16:12. Alex Prasad finished eight seconds later for eighth place.

Josh Lumley claimed 11th place in 16:33, followed by Kenny MacDonough in 13th (16:35) and Scott Wagner in 18th (16:46).

The pack running came through for the Novi boys cross country team once again. The Wildcats claimed the first six places with the runners being just seven seconds apart for a 15-47 win against Hartland.

Mike Wheat and Kenny MacDonough both came in at 17:34. Alex Prasad, Josh Lumley and Aaron Croad each came in at 17:35. Alfredo Cateriano took sixth at 17:41.

XG REGIONAL CHAMPS!

SPORTS: HARRIERS TAKE REGIONALS! P. 1B; HOOPS P. 3B

NOVI NEWS

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Thursday, November 2, 2006

50 cents



Novi hoops splits vs. KVC foes P. 2B



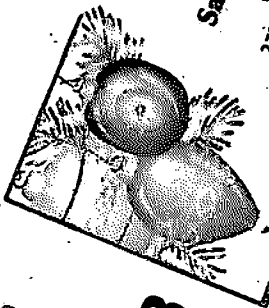
By Novi News

Bobcats sweep Braves P. 4B

SPORTS

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Chase Chandler wins MIAA defensive honor

Wildcats on mark for state run

By Jeff Thelsen
NOVI NEWS

A season's worth of hard work will be on display against the state's best Saturday at Michigan International Speedway.

And with the top five runners all returning from last year's ninth-place finish, the Wildcats are ready to make some noise.

"We're running with a lot of confidence right now," Novi head coach Robert Smith said. "We haven't run against everyone in the state, but it appears we're in a pretty good position to make a splash in the state meet.

"Having the experience is really invaluable. We have the luxury of looking back as last year being a dress rehearsal. We seem to have a really good history of running well at the state meet."

The returning runners are regional champion senior Mike Wheat, senior Alex Prasad, senior Kenny MacDonough, senior Scott Wagner and junior Josh Lumley.

"Those five runners are all better," Smith said. "They're a year stronger, they're faster. Now that they have experience, that's going to give them quite an advantage compared to most teams. You can't underestimate the value of confidence."

The Wildcats, along with the rest of the state, know who they are chasing. Pinckney returns its top runners from last year's state winning team and is again the favorite.

While beating Pinckney would take an incredible team effort, Smith just wants to see the team perform at its best on the biggest stage.

"We're just worried about what we do," he said. "We're not going to run Pinckney's race at all. It's too big of a meet and too many runners to strategize against one team."

STATE: Wildcats ready

Continued from 1B

While experience and senior leadership are big assets for Novi, what makes the team really strong is having a cluster of runners that can all run in the same range.

Junior Aaron Croad and senior Michael Beard add depth and didn't finish far off the top five at regionals.

"MIS and the number of top athletes is rather daunting," Smith said. "The fear is quite diminished when you have five or six familiar faces right with you."

"They're just really excited. They aren't out of control. They know they have a job to do this week. They have training to do. They have mental training to do."

Smith said he expects his team to continue to the tradition that has kept the Wildcats in the top 10 the last eight years.

Novi won the state meet in 1998 and 1999. The Wildcats also finished second in 2000.

State Cross Country:

Who: All qualifying Michigan high schools

Where: Michigan International Speedway

When: Saturday — Div. 1 boys 2 p.m.,

Div. 1 girls 3 p.m.

Wheat wins; Novi places 5 in top 10

By Jeff Thelsen
NOVI NEWS

Make it three in a row for the Novi boys cross country team.

The Wildcats won Saturday's regional meet at Schoolcraft College for their third straight regional title and a spot in the state meet.

"I think we're the only team in Novi in any sport that's done this," Novi head coach Robert Smith said of winning the third straight regional. "It's a huge, huge accomplishment."

Novi finished with 26 points, 50 points ahead of second-place Plymouth. Livonia Churchill was third with 90 points, and Catholic Central was fourth with 101. Northville finished sixth with 166 points in the 13-team meet.

"I give the credit to the athletes," Smith said. "I ask them to make sacrifices and some of the sacrifices aren't very palatable. The sacrifices is really what makes me proud of these young men."

Novi senior Mike Wheat was first across the line in 16:15.9.

"Right off the bat, he jumped out in front," Smith said. "It was a three-runner race for a while. Mike ran with all sorts of confidence. He was not going to be beat."

Alex Prasad was next in for the Wildcats in fourth place (16:31.9), followed closely by teammates Kenny MacDonough in fifth (16:35.1) and Scott Wagner in sixth (16:36.3). Josh Lumley capped Novi's scoring with a 10th-place finish in 16:41.2.

Michael Beard placed 13th (17:02.6) and Aaron Croad was 19th (17:14.5) to finish out the top seven for the Wildcats.

"We seem to be picking up a lot of steam. We seem to be gelling and peaking at the right time," Smith said. "The regional was a real nice springboard for what we're going to do this weekend."

Smith said he was very proud of the way his kids ran, but he's even prouder of how his entire team has performed on and off the beaten paths.

"We had seven guys on the start line but we had 32 there," he said. "We all came back to the school to savor the moment in our area. I'm proud of all the guys."

"They're classy guys. They're very respectful young men. They're just a pleasure to coach."

THE OAKLAND PRESS

MONDAY OCTOBER 30 2006

PREP ROUNDUP

Wheat takes crown at Division 1 regional meet

Novi's Mike Wheat took first place at the Division 1 regional at Schoolcraft College, leading five Wildcat runners in the top 10 as Novi won the meet title with 26 points and earned a berth at Saturday's state cross country championships at Michigan International Speedway.

Wheat clocked 16:15 and was followed by teammates Alex Prasad (fourth), Ken MacDonough (fifth), Scott Wagner (sixth) and Josh Lumley (10th).

Alex Toloff of Novi Detroit Catholic Central was second (16:17) but the Shamrocks placed fourth and missed a berth at state. Only the top three teams at each regional qualify for state. Novi's Andrea Kramer placed 12th and qualified for state in the girls race.

PREP SCOREBOARD

Boys cross country

Division 1 Region 4

(Saturday at Schoolcraft)

TEAMS — 1. Novi 26; 2. Plymouth 76; 3. Livonia Churchill 90; 4. Novi Detroit Catholic Central 101; 5. Canton 137; 6. Northville 166; 7. Salem 184; 8. Livonia Stevenson 206; 9. Wayne Memorial 248; 10. Livonia Franklin 261.

STATE QUALIFIERS — 1. Michael Wheat (Novi) 16:15.9, 2. Alex Toloff (Novi-Detroit Catholic Central) 16:17, 3. Anthony Scaparo (Plymouth) 16:28, 4. Alex Prasad (Novi) 16:31, 5. Kenneth MacDonough (Novi) 16:35, 6. Scott Wagner (Novi) 16:38, 7. Kevin deBear (Salem) 16:37, 8. Duncan Spitz (Canton) 16:37, 9. Brandon Grysko (Livonia Churchill) 16:40, 10. Joshua Lumley (Novi) 16:41, 11. Derek Lax (Plymouth) 16:50, 12. Mark Waterbury (Livonia Churchill) 17:02, 13. Michael Beard (Novi) 17:02, 14. Jason Turnbull (Northville) 17:03.2, 15. Chris Schotten (Livonia Franklin) 17:08.7.

Girls cross country

Division 1 Region 4

(Saturday at Schoolcraft)

TEAMS — 1. Livonia Churchill 30; 2. Northville 78; 3. Livonia Stevenson 100; 4. Plymouth 117; 5. Novi 120; 6. Canton 163; 7. Livonia Franklin 178; 8. Salem 182; 9. Westland John Glenn 206; 10. Garden City 250.

STATE QUALIFIERS — 1. Megan Macerini (Livonia Churchill) 19:00.0, 2. Alyssa Mira (Livonia Churchill) 19:09, 3. Courtney Galka (Livonia Stevenson) 19:16, 4. Hannah Cavicchio (Salem) 19:21, 5. Sara Kroll (Livonia Churchill) 19:34, 6. Rachel McFarlane (Livonia Churchill) 19:38, 7. Mary Spradler (Northville) 19:58, 8. Lindsay Hagan (Northville) 20:05.0, 9. Meghan Horgan (Livonia Franklin) 20:12, 10. Sarah Thorsaa (Canton) 20:13, 11. Beth Hekmeyer (Plymouth) 20:18, 12. Andrea Kramer (Novi) 20:18, 13. Kristin Fry (Livonia Stevenson) 20:28, 14. Courtney Plummer (Garden City) 20:30.0, 15. Danae Meier (Livonia Stevenson) 20:35.



Phots by MARK HICKS/Westside Photographic

Novi runners react as the gun is fired to begin Saturday's regional meet.



Phots by MARK HICKS/Westside Photographic

Novi runners Mike Wheat and Alex Prasad head to the front of Saturday's start.



Novi News Athletes of the Week

Novi Boys XC

The Novi boys cross country team won its third straight regional title Saturday at Schoolcraft College. Mike Wheat finished first overall, and the top five Novi runners finished in the top 10. The Wildcats will run at the state meet Saturday.



Novi News Sport

Sports writer Jeff Theise



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WILDCATS STATE BOUND



Photos by MARK HICKS/Westside Photographic

Novi runner Scott Wagner finishes in sixth place at Saturday's regional meet.

PREP CROSS-COUNTRY FINALS

BOYS
DIVISION 1

Pinckney sets state record

The new record was 28 points — and it lasted 30 minutes.

The 17-year-old record of 39 was broken by Dexter in Division 2 earlier on Saturday.

But then defending champ Pinckney broke the newly-minted record in the next race, winning another Division 1 title with 27. Its top five runners finished first, second, seventh, eighth and ninth.

"Yeah, 39 points was the record in 1989, the year I graduated; it was a real good goal for us," said Pinckney coach Tom Carney. "I'm very happy with what we have been able to accomplish."

Individual winner David Emery saved his best for last. The Pinckney senior never won a race until last week's regional, which he topped off with the state title. Emery wasn't even on the varsity squad two seasons ago and finished 54th in last year's final.

"Last year I just didn't put enough mileage in (the off-season) so this year I really tried to honor that and I really pumped it out," said Emery, who was in 10th at the one-mile mark but led at the two-mile mark. "You work all season for the state meet; you don't want to peak before that."

By Tom Lang, special writer

prefer after her second-place finish. "I don't have noise bothering me while I'm running so it helps me focus more on the race. But sometimes I try to read my coach's lips, and he's learned a few signs."

Sign in the sky

Farmington Hills Harrison had a cheerleader from above. A single-engine plane flew over MIS several times before the Division 1 race pulling a sign saying "Go Harrison Hawks."

First time for everything

The Rochester Adams girls won the Division 1 title by virtue of the sixth runner tie-breaker, the first time it's happened in girls cross-country history. The sixth-man tiebreaker has been needed three times before in the boys' finals.

What's in your stomach?

Rochester Adams senior Rachel Patterson had to wait until 3 p.m. to run her Division 1 race. She finished second but not on an empty stomach.

"This morning we ate a huge breakfast, we went to one of the girl's houses and had quiche, fruit and some coffee cake," she said. "But for lunch we just snacked on fruit, pineapple and strawberries. I stopped eating an hour and a half before the race. And I ate Frosted Mini Wheats. I eat them all day."

Novi stays near the top

Runner-up finish continues streak

DIV. 1-2 NOTEBOOK

By CHRIS SILVA, CHRIS LAU
AND TOM LANG
FREE PRESS SPORTS WRITERS

It's not their running sneakers, or something coming from the Novi water tower.

"It's just hard work on the road," Wildcats boys coach Robert Smith said.

That would be the best way to describe Novi's successful run through the last nine years of the Division 1 state finals, where the Wildcats have recorded nine consecutive top-10 team finishes.

Novi placed second this year with a team score of 140. Last year, the Wildcats placed ninth with no seniors on the roster.

"Last year was sort of a dress rehearsal," Smith said.

Since 1996, when the state finals moved to MIS, Novi has had more all-state runners (21) than any other Division 1 school. Senior Michael Wheat led the Wildcats with a time of 16:01.8 to finish 20th on Saturday.

"Our quote from last year is 'tradition never graduates,'" Wheat said. "The tradition carries on year after year. The workouts make us tough year after year."



SPENCER OLIVER/Special to the Free Press

Dexter's Dan Jackson, left, and Bobby April finished second and first, respectively, in Division 2.

Strong field

The Division 2 girls' race was stacked with 22 returning all-state runners (out of 30) from 2005, including this year's winner, sophomore Meggan Free-land of Parma Western.

Erin LaFave, a deaf runner from Bloomfield Hills Lahser, finished second for the second straight year and defending champ Bekah Smeltzer of Monroe Jefferson finished third.

"I accept it, even though it's frustrating," LaFave said through a sign-language inter-

Megan Carter was second in the girls Division 4 race (18:52) as she led the Eagle to 29th (291), and Royal Oak's Arnie's Alex Wilson placed second in the boys Division 4 race (16:14). Pinckney won its second straight boys Division 1 title in dominating fashion,

Patterson was stunned with her performance.

"I couldn't believe it, I was so tired my body was numb," she said. "It was surreal."

But exciting for the Highlanders, who revealed with their championship trophy.

Gally Macumber was ninth

Bekah Smeltzer, who edged her for the state title last season, by eight seconds. Parma Western's Meggan Free-land won in 18:03.

"I really wanted to catch up but she was too far ahead," said LaFave, who is hearing impaired, "but I felt I was getting closer."

Division 2, Birmingham Seaholm's Ted Howard was the area's top finisher, coming in 12th in 15:55. Bloomfield Hills Lahser's Nick Krol was 19th (16:02) and teammate Joey Grace was 27th (16:12) as the Knights managed at least a top 10 finish for the ninth straight year.

FAMOUS FINALS SCENE

SPORTS: CROSS COUNTRY TEAM RUNS WILD! P. 1B



SIDE:



Novi News

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Page 51 Number 24

Novi, Michigan

NOVI NEWS-Thursday, November 9, 2006

2006 STATE CC

Thursday, November 3, 2006

SPORTS

FOR

BRUNNENFERS

Novi finishes second to Finckney

SPORTS NEWS

Mike Wheat

Senior



State Finish

Team totals — 14th
Overall — 20th
Time — 16:01.8

Alex Prasad

Senior



State Finish

Team totals — 21st
Overall — 32nd
Time — 16:10.2

Josh Lumley

Junior



State Finish

Team totals — 24th
Overall — 41st
Time — 16:16.7

By Jeff Thelsen
NOVI NEWS

BROOKLYN, Mich. — The Novi boys cross country team was focused on keeping the tradition of state top-10 finishes alive, but they secretly wanted more.

The Wildcats wanted to set a high bar to match for future Wildcats and to finish higher than the 2004 team did, when this year's seniors were freshmen.

Mission accomplished.

The 2006 Novi team finished runner-up to KVC foe Pinckney at Saturday's Division I state cross country meet at Michigan International Speedway. The 2004 team finished in fourth place.

"As long as we're better than fourth place, we're better than 2004," Prasad said. "Any of those kids (2004 team) that read this in the paper, we're better than you. You can quote that."

"It was a heckuva season."

Mike Wheat led the way with a 14th-place finish in team scoring and 20th overall at 16:01.8.

"It's a great thing to accomplish, being better than '04. It was a goal we all had in the back of our mind, but we didn't want to admit it," Wheat said. "It was a lot of fun. It's a great experience."

Wheat receives All-State honors for finishing in the top 30.

Alex Prasad was next in line. Novi in 21st team, 32nd overall (16:10.2).

Josh Lumley, Novi's lone junior in the team's top five, finished in 24th team, 41st overall (16:16.7).

Kenny MacDonough also finished off his Novi career with a 38th-place finish for team, 59th overall (16:24.6).

"We're such tight group," MacDonough said of his teammates. "The whole team, not just the top seven, is an amazing group of guys. I wouldn't want to go through this season with any other group of guys. It's just awesome."

Senior Michael Beard finished the scoring for the Wildcats with a 43rd-place finish for team, 69th overall (16:29.3).

The other two runners were senior Scott Wagner (46th, 73rd — 16:32.3) and junior Aaron Croad (70th, 104th — 16:41.9).

"All seven guys, I think, set records for themselves today," Novi head coach Robert Smith said. "We ran the best we could."

Pinckney blew away the competition, placing its top six runners in the top 11. Senior David Emery won the meet in 15:34.8, with junior teammate Mike Katsefaras was second in 15:39.6.

Pinckney would've actually beat the rest of the state if it was considered a dual meet, 27-28.

"Pinckney is amazing," Prasad said. "Every time we think we're getting closer, we're farther away."

While Pinckney won impressively, Smith was ecstatic to receive the runner-up trophy with his team. He was thrilled to see his seniors lead the team to such an impressive finish.

"They're just phenomenal," Smith said of his seniors. "I'm hoping the '07 edition will be comparing themselves to '06."

Other local runners

Novi had one girl at the state meet, senior Andrea Kramer. She finished in 196th (20:45.3).

Kenny MacDonough

Senior



State Finish

Team totals — 38th
Overall — 59th
Time — 16:24.6

Mike Beard

Senior



State Finish

Team totals — 43rd
Overall — 69th
Time — 16:29.3

Team scores

1. Pinckney — 27 (new team state record)
2. Novi — 140
3. Traverse City Central — 231
4. Traverse City West — 231
5. Milford — 246
6. Saline — 271
7. Warren DeLaSalle — 275.
8. Portage Northern — 285
9. Ann Arbor Pioneer — 301
10. Lake Orion — 302

ATHLETES SCHOOLS

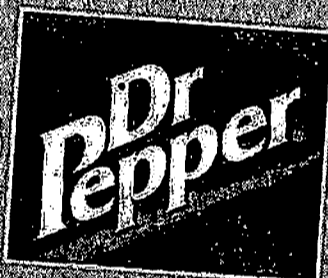
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THURSDAY NOVEMBER 9 2006

☆☆☆ PAGE B-8

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**ATHLETES
OF THE
WEEK**

Boys cross country

Alex Harris, Royal Oak Shrine



The senior distance runner placed second at the Division 4 state cross country meet in a time of 16:14 for the five-kilometer course. Harris, who also plays soccer, broke his arm in the first game of the soccer season, got the cast off in September and continued to train with good results. Harris was also won the Division 4 regional crown.

Alex Prasad, Novi



The senior was his team's second finisher as he helped the Wildcats take second place at the Division 1 state cross country meet. Prasad was timed in 16:10.2 for the five-kilometer course at Michigan International Speedway. Prasad had taken fourth at the Division 1 regional in helping Novi qualify for the state meet.

Girls cross country

Jennifer Yee, Troy



The senior turned in an inspired performance at the Division 1 state meet, as she earned All-State honors with 28th-place finish. Yee was the team's top finisher and clocked 18:39.8 for the five-kilometer course. Yee had also placed fourth at the Clarkston Division 1 regional in helping to key the Colts' state-qualifying effort.

Kristen Smith, Clarkston



The sophomore led the Wolves to a sixth-place finish at the Division 1 state cross country meet. Smith, the only returnee from last year's state championship team who competed at the state meet — Jenna Leach was injured in the last month of this season — clocked 18:28.7 for the five-kilometer course.

After finishing second at the state meet, Novi juniors realize it's up to them to keep the legacy left by this year's departing seniors

Gearing up to go again



Photos from Novi cross-country team

Novi cross-country runners ready to break out at the start of the 2006 state meet. The Wildcats' second-place finish at the Division 1 state meet Nov. 4 was the ninth straight year the team finished in the top 10. "They worked really hard for their goal, and they made it happen," said coach Robert Smith.

By CHRIS LAU
FREE PRESS SPORTS WRITER

The seniors on the Novi boys cross-country teams have left their legacy. Next fall, it'll be the current juniors' turn. And preparation is already under way.

The Wildcats' second-place finish at the Division 1 state meet Nov. 4 was the ninth straight year the team finished in the top 10.

And senior Mike Wheat's 20th-place finish was the 21st all-state performance by a Novi runner since 1996.

"We had high hopes, high dreams going in, and it seemed nothing was going to get in our way," Novi coach Robert Smith said. "They worked really hard for their goal, and they made it happen."

Wheat ran the 3.1-mile course at Michigan International Speedway in 16 minutes, 18 seconds. Senior Alex Prasad had the Wildcats' second-best finish in 16:10.2, good enough for 32nd place.

Five of Novi's top six finishers at states were seniors, leaving junior Joshua Lumley, the team's third-place runner at states, as the leader of the next season's team.

He's excited to take charge, and he sees a group of under-



State meet: Seniors Wagner, 97; MacDonough, 95; Beard, 92; Junior Joshua Lumley, at far left, will be the leader of next season's team.

studies ready to join him.

Team leaders Wheat, Prasad and Lumley ran captains' practices during the summer. And the younger runners consistently joined in.

"These captains set a path, a legacy, for future teams to follow," Smith said. "There's a certain attitude here with the team, and I think that winning attitude will stay here for a long time. I think we'll be in very good shape next year because of what the seniors did this year."

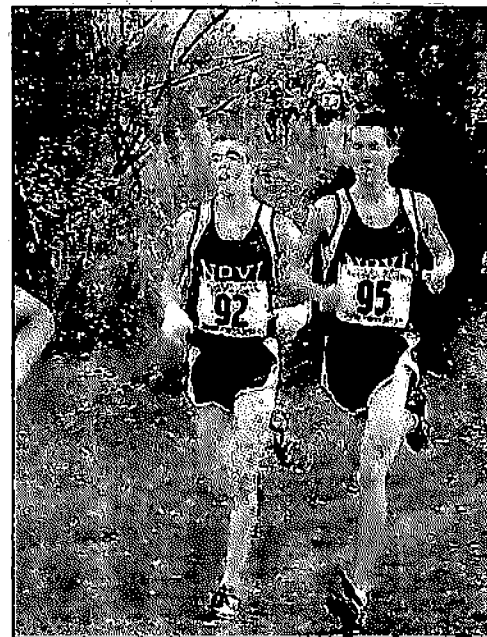
Junior Aaron Croad was Novi's seventh state runner

this year, and that's valuable experience. Sophomore Lukas Barnes was the fifth man a year ago, when the Wildcats finished ninth at states.

Junior Alfredo Cateriano, sophomores T.J. Butler, Jacob Carless and Justin Farooq and freshman Mike Blaszczyk are priming for the limelight, Lumley said.

"We're preparing for a great team next year, because we had a lot of underclassmen running with the top guys," Lumley said.

Novi, which won its third consecutive regional champi-



State meet: Michael Beard, left; Kenny MacDonough, right.

onship this season, has a solid foundation. The new builders are talented and motivated, and they appear to be right on schedule to complete the 10th floor by the end of next season.

"We're going to try to reload, not just rebuild," Smith said. "They guys are talking all the time and I can't help but

hear it. They're saying, 'I'm going to run 400 miles this summer,' or 'I really want to make it to the state meet. That seemed fun.' They're hungry. And they're willing to pay the price."

Contact CHRIS LAU at 248-351-3688 or clau@freepress.com.

"THESE CAPTAINS SET A PATH, A LEGACY, FOR FUTURE TEAMS TO FOLLOW."

ROBERT SMITH,
Novi coach

Novi Wildcats' rankings

How the Novi runners fared at the state meet at Michigan International Speedway Nov. 4.

Place	Name	class	time
14	Mike Wheat	Sr.	16:01.8
21	Alex Prasad	Sr.	16:10.2
24	Joshua Lumley	Jr.	16:16.7
38	Kenny MacDonough	Sr.	16:24.6
43	Michael Beard	Sr.	16:29.3
46	Scott Wagner	Sr.	16:32.3
70	Aaron Croad	Jr.	16:41.9

SPORTS

State meet memories: 'The teammates and all the fun we've had together'

Six Wildcats runners shared with us their favorite memories of the state meet, where they finished second, earning the school its ninth consecutive top-10 finish.



Mike Wheat: "My distinct memory of the state meet is, when you cross the

finish line, there weren't too many people yelling at you to keep walking. I guarantee to you, every runner hates it when you finally finish and people are yelling at you to keep walking. You're expecting it to happen and then it doesn't happen."



Alex Prasad: "The whole season, you put in all this hard work, and you have this little

voice inside of you telling you, 'You can do really well at state meet.' It's nice to have that confirmation. Finishing second was a reward and confirmation to us that our confidence was not unfounded."



Joshua Lumley: "We always run in a pack and push each other to no end. We were all just

running a huge race with 243 kids, and we really had no idea where we were, but when it finally cleared out and kids started to spread out, we were all right next to each other. Then we just packed up and kept going. That shows our team unity."



Kenny MacDonough: "You remember the race and you remember the trophy, but

what I probably will remember most is the teammates and all the fun we've had together. The night before, staying in the hotel, talking and having a good time. We watched movies, listened to music and hung out."



Michael Beard: "I had a stress fracture in my shin my sophomore year and I was plagued

with shin splints my junior year. The main thing I remembered — I was kind of afraid because this was my first state meet — and the one thing that kept me motivated was coming back from my injuries, to make sure I stayed focused and on task."



Scott Wagner: "You ran the race, and then you go up there to hold the second-place trophy, then

you remember you've been working so hard since June. This was the physical symbol to represent what you've been working so hard for."

All-county boys cross country

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 25, 2006



Wile



Howard



Duggan



Wheat



Heiman

By MARVIN GOODWIN
Of The Oakland Press

Experience and leadership characterizes this year's boys All-Oakland County cross team as seven seniors helped comprise the 10-member squad. Novi and Troy Athens each landed a pair of seniors on the squad and each team produced solid seasons. Novi won regional and Oakland County titles and Troy Athens won the OAA I crown and was a regional runner-up.

BOYS

Anthony Wile, Brother Rice — Wile had a strong season despite a performance below expectations at the Division 1 state meet. The senior won Catholic League, West Bloomfield Invitational, Wildcat Invitational and regional titles. Lost only one dual meet and placed second at the Oakland County meet. His best of 15:54 was done at regionals.

Ted Howard, Birmingham Seaholm — Had a breakout season which produced three OAA I Jamboree titles as well as Oakland County and Division 2 regional championships. The junior, who is also a top-notch club swimmer, also was the Oxford Invitational champ and placed 12th at the Division 2 state meet (15:55.6).

Neal Duggan, Troy Athens — Senior put together a season which probably surpassed his expectations. Duggan was runner-up in the first two OAA I jamborees and was third in the final one. He placed third at the Division 1 regional, placed fourth at the Oakland County meet and his fifth-place finish at the Division 1 state meet produced the area's fastest time (15:50).

Mike Wheat, Novi — A sure-fire front-runner for the Wildcats, the senior wasn't intimidated by

a fast pace. Took third at Oakland County meet, was Division 1 regional champ and placed fifth in the tough Kensington Valley Conference meet. His 20th place at Division 1 state meet (16:01.8) helped Novi finish second at state.

Luke Heiman, Lakeland — Senior ran out of time in trying to recover from tendinitis but managed to finish 11th at Oakland County meet, sixth at the KVC meet and third at the Oxford Invitational before winning the Division 1 regional under horrid weather conditions. His 21st-place finish at the Division 1 state meet (16:02.1) was notable since he did not train during the summer. He was a pitcher for the North Farmington-West Bloomfield Cobras baseball team which played in the Connie Mack World Series in New Mexico.

Chris Tassen, Troy Athens — A solid complement to teammate Neal Duggan, the senior placed fifth at the Oakland County meet, was Oxford Invitational runner-up and placed fourth at the Division 1 regional. Tassen was ninth in the first OAA I jamboree, eighth in the second jamboree and fifth in the final jamboree. He placed 24th at the Division 1 state meet (16:03.2).

Ryan Ziolk, Lake Orion — The only sophomore of the All-County group, Ziolk got better as the season progressed. He was 24th at the Oakland County meet but averaged 10th place for the three OAA I jamborees. He was third at regionals and placed 18th at the Division 1 state meet (16:01.5), fifth best of any sophomore in the race.

Nick Krol, Lahser — The senior averaged an eighth-place finish for the three OAA I jamborees and placed fourth in the Division 2 regional.

All-county second team

Name	School	Year	Best Time
Alex Harris	Royal Oak Shrine	Sr.	16:14
Alex Toloff	Catholic Central	Soph.	16:12
Jake Hill	Walled Lake Central	Sr.	16:22
Brian Schnurr	Stoney Creek	Sr.	16:27
Joey Grace	Bloomfield Hills Lahser	Jr.	16:12
Michael Bender	Birmingham Seaholm	Jr.	16:18
Nick Andersen	Cranbrook-Kingswood	Jr.	16:18
Josh Lumley	Novi	Sr.	16:16
Robert Feigley	Milford	Jr.	16:17
Thiago Olson	Stoney Creek	Sr.	16:19

HONORABLE MENTION — Dave Demres (Rochester Adams); Kenny MacDonough, Michael Beard and Scott Wagner (Novi); Jon Hordos (Troy Athens); Stephen Fuelling (Milford); Jack Bletterman (Rochester); Erik Ringo (South Lyon); Max Hock (Lake Orion); Alex Townsend (Farmington); Daniel Suber (Cranbrook-Kingswood); Todd Bowmar (Walled Lake Western); Tony Sanfilippo (Walled Lake Central); Jordan Bauss (Oakland Christian); Imraan Allarakhia (Bloomfield Hills Lahser); Andrew McKeachie (Milford); Nathan Parker (Birmingham Seaholm).

After taking fourth at the Corunna Invitational, he was the team's top finisher at the final OAA I jamboree, won by the Knights. He placed 19th in the Division 2 state meet in a time of 16:02.5.

Devin McKeown, Milford — His 14th-place finish at the KVC meet was deceiving since the conference is the toughest in the state. Still, the senior placed sixth at the Oakland County meet, 12th at regional and 30th at Division 1 state meet (16:08) in earning All-State honors.

Alex Prasad, Novi — The senior's consistent racing was another factor for the Wildcats' Division 1 state runner-up squad. After Wheat, Prasad led Novi's tight pack, placing ninth at the Oakland County meet, fourth at the Division 1 regional and eighth at the KVC meet. He finished 32nd at the Division 1 state meet (16:10).



Smith

credits the five team captains — Scott Wagner, Josh Lumley, Alex Prasad, Mike Wheat and Ricky Manza — and a pack-running mentality for the Wildcats' success this season. League-rival Pinckney was the only team to beat Novi, which had seven runners finish within 40 seconds of each other at state. "We never ran anybody else's race, we always ran our own," said Smith, a 26-year veteran who was inducted into the Alma College Athletic Hall of Fame last year.



Tassen



Ziolk



Krol



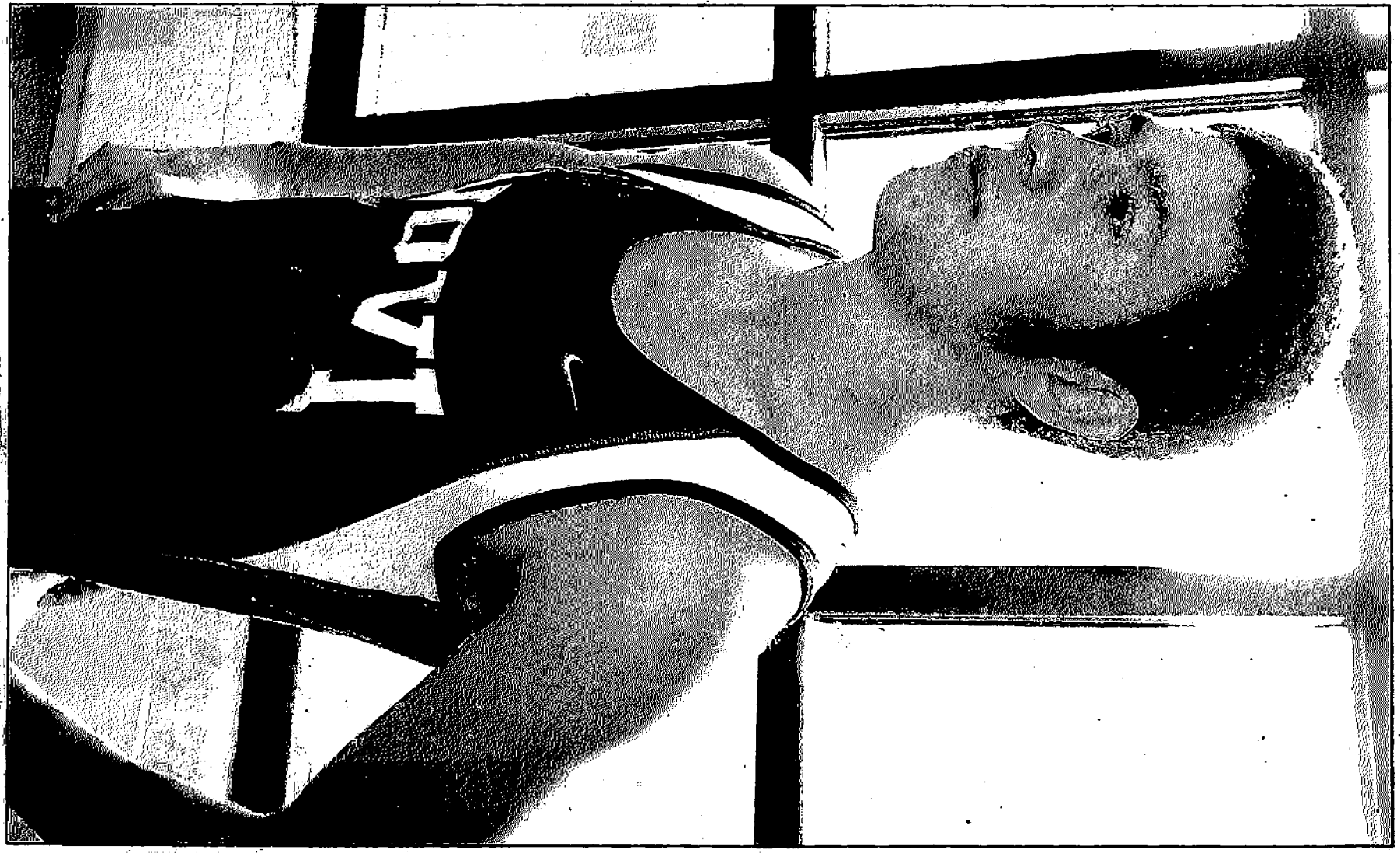
McKeown



Prasad

THE FASTEST 'CAT

Novi's Mike Wheat ran his way to the 2006 cross-country All-Area MVP.
Photo by JOHN HEIDENOV News



■ Novi's Wheat selected All-Area Cross Country MVP

By Jeff Theisen
NOVI NEWS

Any good team requires leadership, and the Novi cross country team had plenty of it.

Wildcat senior Mike Wheat led a top-seven group of upper-classmen to a runner-up finish at the Division I boys state meet.

Wheat finished in 16:01 for 20th overall to make All-State status.

"He works very, very hard," Novi head coach Robert Smith said. "He earned his honors. All summer long, he was working toward that goal. Every practice for him had meaning. There's no shortcuts for him."

Wheat's All-State run came just a week after winning the regional meet. He finished 20th overall in 16:01 at the state meet.

"He's able to go out and push the pace, right from the very beginning," Smith said. "That really, really plays havoc for the opponents."

"He has some very good speed. He's developed a nice finish kick."

While Wheat remained a top runner all season, it was his off-field leadership that help keep a tight-knit group rolling.

"He was very beneficial, and not just in scoring, which is obvious, but in being a role model," Smith said. "He was not selfish at all. He sometimes would just kind of back off and win as a group instead of going out and winning and getting individual honors."

"A lot of people just can't do that. He's really the consummate team player."

Team unity was a big phrase for the Wildcats this year with all the varsity runners returning from the previous season. Smith said this helped Wheat perform at his best because of the trust in his teammates.

"Chemistry is big," Smith said. "The bonding is evident. You tend to be more comfortable and you run with more confidence when you're with someone that you know and you feel very close to. It's a powerful weapon being able to run together."

Smith said replacing Wheat isn't something that will be easily done.

"Any time you graduate an All-Stater, you're going to have to work very hard to find a replacement," he said. "He'll be missed, not only for his running, but also for his dedication, leadership and work ethic. His work ethic is the hardest thing to replace."

First-Team All-Area

Novi teammates senior Alex Prasad, senior Kenny MacDonough and junior Josh Lumley all made First Team All-Area.

Prasad was usually the next runner behind Wheat all year for Novi. He finished in 32nd place in 16:08 at the state meet, just two spots and two seconds away from being All-State.

Smith said missing out on the All-State status was tough on Prasad, but it hardly takes away from a strong senior season.

"Alex is one that just hates to lose," Smith said. "He has a lot of pride in what he does. His intensity and the love of the sport is very evident."

Lumley finished third for the Wildcats at the state meet and 41st overall in 16:16.

He will return as the top gun for the Wildcats, heading a team that will have to fill the spots of five of the top seven runners.

MacDonough finished off his senior season with a 59th-place

■ ALL-ARE CROSS COUNTRY

continued from 1B

finish (16:24) at the state meet. He was another Wildcat runner that consistently place in the top five all year for Novi.

"Kenny is a relative newcomer to our team. He joined last year as a junior," Smith said. "He was a real fine addition. He really wants to do things the right way, so he really pays attention. He's very, very coachable."

Other first team runners include: Northville senior Jasen

Turnbull, Catholic Central sophomore Alex Toloff, Lakeland's Luke Heiman, Milford's Devin McKeown, Bob Feigley and Stephen Fuelling and South Lyon's Erik Ringo.

Make the honorable mention list are senior Scott Wagner, senior Mike Beard and junior Aaron Croad of Novi, Frank Griffiths of Northville, Lakeland's Josh Clements, Milford's Andrew McKeachie and South Lyon's Max Sadler, Zack Kadykowski and Brent Showerman.

All-Area Cross Country

MVP

Mike Wheat, Senior, Novi

First Team

Novi

Alex Prasad, Senior
Kenny MacDonough, Senior
Josh Lumley, Junior

Catholic Central

Alex Toloff, Sophomore

Northville

Jasen Turnbull, Senior

Lakeland

Luke Heiman

Milford

Devin McKeown
Bob Feigley
Stephen Fuelling

South Lyon

Erik Ringo

Honorable Mention

Novi

Aaron Croad, Junior
Scott Wagner, Senior
Mike Beard, Senior

Northville

Frank Griffiths, Freshman

Lakeland

Josh Clements

Milford

Andrew McKeachie

South Lyon

Max Sadler
Zack Kadykowski
Brent Showerman

Five WILDCAT ROAR

November 2006

Novi High School 24062 Taft Road, Novi, MI 48375

Wildcats continue success streak at States

Abaries Farhad
Staff writer

The Novi Men's Cross Country team placed second at the 2006 State Finals and was runner-up to its rival Pinckney.

The Wildcats won every meet this season and only placed second one other time to Pinckney at the Kensington Valley Conference Championships. Before the state meet, the Wildcats were confident in their abilities and believed that they could overcome Pinckney and place within the top 10.

"At KVCs no [other team] but us really believed we could beat Pinckney," senior captain Mike Wheat said. "It's like David

and Goliath ... We believe we can beat them. It didn't happen at that meet, so we hope it will happen at States."

The KVC was considered the most competitive cross country conference in the state this year. Six out of the eight conference teams qualified for the State Finals, and the remaining teams sent runners to compete. Novi's runners strove to maintain their paces at States and not be intimidated by their challengers.

"When I race...I just focus on keeping the pace up and not losing it mentally and slowing down," senior captain Scott Wagner said. "There will be times when you start thinking more about how much it hurts and not about how much you want to succeed, and you'll start to slip. I just

focus on pushing myself at all times."

The competition at the state meet was so fierce that senior captain Alex Prasad, whose ambition was to finish within the top 30, missed his all-state goal and placed 32nd. By only two seconds.

"I was a little upset. It was bittersweet on a number of levels," Prasad said. "It was our last race for the majority of guys who ran. Most of us are seniors. It was bitter on that level and bitter that I didn't get all-state, but obviously, finishing second in the state is a huge accomplishment ... [our team] is tied for the third best finish ever in Novi Cross Country history and we have a pretty rich tradition."

This season, the Wildcats also won the Oakland County and Regional meets and

were KVC Championship runners-up to Pinckney. For the last nine years they have finished within the top 10 at the State Finals. With a number of strong junior runners like Lumley, the Wildcats are striving to continue their legacy in the coming years.

"If you leave it all out there on the course, then you know you've done your best and you really can't help but be satisfied," Wagner said. "You put so much work into [your season] and you want to see it all pay off and come together in one race and know that that's the best you can do ... and that you've earned everything you've got."

The Men's Varsity Cross Country Team was named the Academic State Champions for the state of Michigan on Nov. 10. They had the highest cumulative grade point average in the State with a 3.967.

