

Brighton Runners Earn Top Ranking

By Dick Kell

The week after the McQuaid boys' cross-country team finished 11th at the Eastern States Interscholastic Cross-Country Championships on Oct. 20 in New York City, Art Nelson's Brighton Barons, who has trailed the previously top-ranked Knights in the polls all season, suddenly found themselves ranked first in the state.

And although Brighton has lost to McQuaid this season at both the Newark and McQuaid invitational, Nelson feels that his team is the one to beat.

"I've told the boys that they're the top-ranked team in the state, and that if they're to lose that ranking, someone has to take it away from them," Nelson says.

The top ranking finally focuses some attention on the Brighton boys' team, which has run in the long shadows of the Brighton girls' team and the McQuaid squad for the past year or so.

Tim Heinle, the Barons' first runner all year, says, "We want to make Brighton high school known for boy's running, not just for the girls' team."

Heinle's remarks indicate no disrespect for the accomplishments of the Brighton girls or the McQuaid team, but somehow with two top-ranked teams in such close proximity, the Brighton boys have been lost in the shuffle. But now they have a chance to make their mark.

"We want to be ranked number one after the sectionals," Heinle said shortly before the Barons took the Monroe County Coaches' Invitational last Saturday at Mendon Ponds Park. Heinle, a senior, is the youngest of six boys in his family. His five older brothers all ran either track or cross-country, but none have had the success Tim has enjoyed.

Heinle set a Brighton High School record of 9:32 in the 3200 meter run last Spring, and shortly thereafter badly cut his leg in a chemistry lab accident. While his teammates and McQuaid opponents were training hard all Summer, Heinle couldn't run a step until August. Now, with the important part of the season approaching, Heinle is emerging as the man to beat in Section 5. And he gets stronger every week.

But the Brighton team certainly is not the only one to be strong.

TOP RUNNERS -- Members of the state-ranked Brighton cross-country team are, left to right: Nick Tsilibes, Mark Engerlyman, Paul Levinson, Tim Heinle, Tom Clark, and Brett Yost.

more than Heinle, Nelson says "it's probably the best team I've ever coached." That remark holds special significance in that Nelson, who has worked in the Brighton school system since 1958, has registered more than 200 victories in his coaching career. His teams have won eight divisional titles, and Brighton squads won the sectional competition in 1967, 1968, and 1971.

After Heinle, junior Paul Hutcheson, a 2:04 800 meter runner, has asserted himself as second man. "He's really stepped forward and become comfortable with running behind Timmy," Nelson says.

The third and fourth runners are usually senior Phil Levinson and junior Brett Yost. Levinson, the son of local masters runner Mel Levinson, hopes to attend the University of Oregon, to which he has traveled each of the past two Summers for a running camp conducted by Bill Dellinger. Dellinger is the Oregon head coach who also served as distance-running coach for the U.S. Olympic team in Los Angeles. Levinson apparently is a good pupil; he returned from Oregon with a variety of workouts

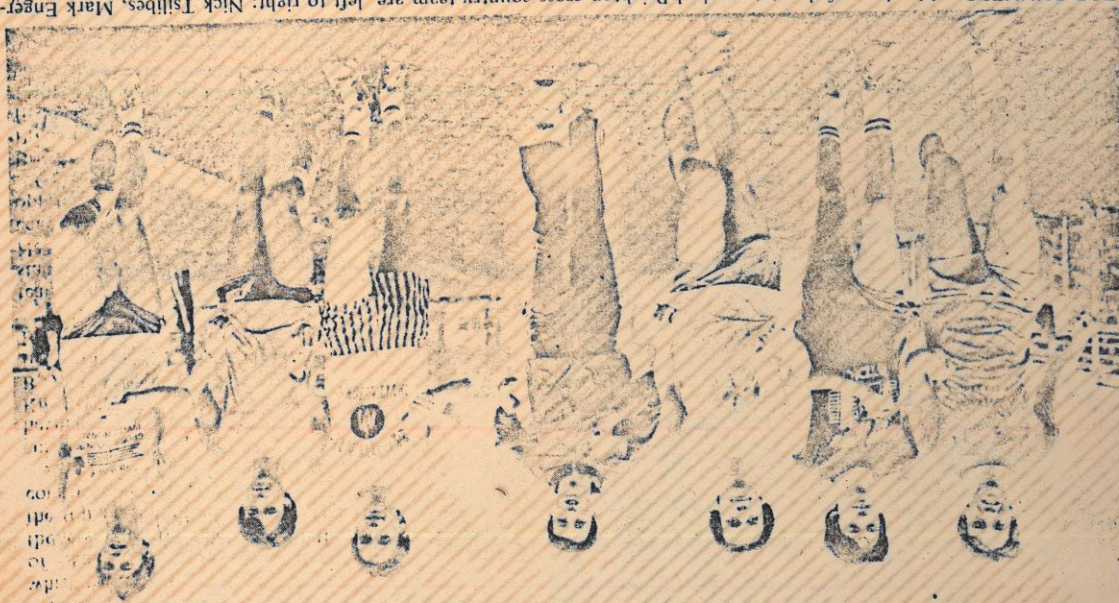
the Brighton team now uses. Yost, only a junior, seems as if he has been around forever, which is largely due to the fact that he has been burning up age-group competition in local road races for a number of years.

Two seniors, Nick Tsilibes and Mark Engerlyman, and a junior, Tom Clark, make up the final three spots on the varsity. Nelson says Clark, who has been hampered by knee problems most of the season, has been coming on strong lately. Tsilibes speaks for his teammates when he says of the Barons' current state ranking: "We don't take it that seriously."

And perhaps they shouldn't. After the Eastern meet in New York, McQuaid fell to sixth in the state polls. Brighton was vaulted to first, despite having lost to the Knights in both of their meetings this year. However, while Nelson says that his team has not run a bad race all year, he did mention that several of his runners had not managed to beat the Barons by a scant nine-point margin.

But don't look for the Barons to bow to pressure this year. That Brighton team emerged intact from last year's sectional race, and has gained strength since then. They will be favored on Saturday, but the issue means little to them. They want to avenge last year's defeat, and the two they have suffered this year at the hands of McQuaid. But as Nelson says, substantiating their state ranking means as much as anything. "We want to fight like hell to hang on to it."

The Brighton boys have succeeded in the same way as their female counterparts -- they have managed to add a real team atmosphere to what is largely an individual sport. "I've worked hard, they all have worked hard," Nelson stated. And now the Brighton boys work towards turning that hard work into a sectional victory and a continual premier ranking in the state.



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