

Warth runs against a legend

HIGH SCHOOL REPORT

By DICK PATRICK
Times-Union



McQuaid's Tom Warth hopes to better Chris Horton's 4:09 mile record.

During the first week of track season, McQuaid Coach Bob Bradley gave Tom Warth a folder. Enclosed was the Chris Horton file, a collection of newspaper clippings and training schedules from 1973, the year Horton set the school mile record of 4:09.

"Mr. Bradley wanted me to get an idea of what we're trying to do, to understand the way you progress," says Warth.

Warth's goal at the beginning of the season was a 4:12 mile. In 1973 Horton was aiming for a 4:08 mile. The Bradley training method is the same — pace progression — running increasingly longer distances at race pace.

"That gets you mentally and physically accustomed to running at that pace," says Warth. "Mr. Bradley knows what he's doing. It's nice for me having Horton as a guinea pig."

WARTH KEEPS the Horton file at home and examines it regularly, paying particular attention to Horton's progress in workouts and races.

"He had his setbacks, too," the senior says. "I realize I can't always be concerned with time. The important thing is to be patient and keep working."

Warth hasn't had any setbacks recently. During the indoor season he won Section 5 titles in the 1,600 and 1,000 meters and finished second in the 1,600 in the state meet, running a 4:19.

His best performance came last Friday at the Penn Relays in Philadelphia. Finishing seventh in the 1,500 meters, he ran a 3:58.9, the equivalent of a 4:16 mile, one of the top times in the state this year.

"I thought I was capable of a 3:56 that day," Warth says. "But the main thing is that it's a good sign for the rest of the year."

IN CONTRAST, Horton started the 1973 season with a 4:25 mile at the Penn Relays. But saying that Warth is ahead of Horton's pace would be as

foolish as predicting that a baseball player will break Roger Maris' home run record after hitting two homers opening day.

"I'm not Chris Horton," says Warth.

Horton, who ran for Brandeis University and competed in the 1,500 in the 1980 Olympic trials, had more speed than Warth. Horton ran a 50-second 440 in high school.

The 6-2, 150-pound Warth will never be mistaken for a speedster. As a freshman he never broke 60 seconds for the 440. His personal best is a :52.7, recorded last weekend in a relay leg.

"The only thing he lacks is that burning speed," Bradley says. "What he does have is a terrific combination of speed, size and endurance. Plus, he's durable. He's never had a bad injury. He's gotten the most out of himself."

Warth has run an average of six miles a day for the last four years. Last summer he ran to and from his job as a house painter, an average of 10 miles a day.

"He's the type of person any coach would like to have," Bradley says. "He's a quality-type person."

Warth, a 91-average student and National Merit Scholarship finalist, runs for fun in addition to enjoying the challenge of competition.

"I PLAN TO RUN all my life," says Warth, who wants to compete for Notre Dame next year. "Running is enjoyable because of what a good coach Mr. Bradley is . . .

In competition Warth has done all right. He holds six school records, ranging from the indoor 600 meters to the three-mile cross-country course at Cobbs Hill. Not bad for a guy without a lot of speed.

WARTH DOESN'T FEEL that he's peaked this season. He thinks he can improve his times by running smarter races and by working on his finishing kick.

"I'm confident that the best is yet to come," he says.