

Sumner's 'conversion' puts him right on track



Julian H. Gonzalez Democrat and Chronicle

Brad Sumner's McQuaid coach, Bob Bradley, calls his middle-distance ace 'a great competitor,' who 'really likes to race.' Sumner, running indoors here, is the Knights' best from 400 meters on up through 1,600 meters.

No more baseball for McQuaid senior

By Walt Slater

Democrat and Chronicle

Brad Sumner didn't arrive at McQuaid intending to become one of the nation's top middle-distance runners.

In fact, when Sumner first showed up at the corner of South Clinton and Elmwood, running track wasn't even on his athletic agenda.

Football and baseball were his sports. Running was just a way to get to the end zone or home plate.

Establishing a national high school indoor 600-meter record (1:19.56) — as he did March 11 in the state championships at Cornell — never crossed Brad Sumner's mind back then. Earning a full track scholarship from Villanova, which he accepted last week, wasn't even a dream.

That changed when McQuaid classmate Dave Privett, a friend Sumner had grown up with in Penfield, talked him into trying indoor track.

"It was fun," Sumner said. "But I still wanted to play baseball."

So, despite having registered the second-best freshman 300 time in Section 5 (40.5 seconds, behind teammate Scott Romanowski's :39.9), Sumner spent the spring of '86 on the mound, behind the plate, and in the outfield instead of on the cinders.

He bypassed football in his sophomore year when he decided to turn pro ... as a hamburger-flipper. But he was back on the track when the 1987 indoor season began.

"My times really went down in the 300," Sumner recalled. "I ended up with a :37-flat, and I finished ninth at the (state championships)."

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