Ambrose Wins The Sweet Race

By RICK SAYERS

Dan Ambrose beat Chris Horton in their super mile showdown yesterday by challenging him at his own speciality—an unbeatable finishing kick.

Ambrose, running against his toughest competition of the season, was worried about how Horton was able to sprint the last 220 yards. He didn't want to be beaten in the stretch.

So the classy Aquinas miler used a little strategy on Horton and it worked.

"He ran slow the first two laps and then really took off," said Horton as he pulled his McQuaid sweats on. "That last fast pace tired me right out of my kick."

Leading from the start, Ambrose put on a big kick of his own in the last straightaway to pull away from Horton and win by five steps in a track record time 4:22.5 at McQuaid.

Ambrose's time, his best of the season, is the sixth fastest in the state so far this year, behind the top-listed time of 4:17.0 by Alex Trammell of St. Joe's of Buffalo.

"It was a sweet race," said McQuaid Coach Bob Bradley. "Ambrose suckered Chris into running that pace. That's what it is to be a class runner."

Bradley had talked to Horton before the race and they had tried to set a pre-race strategy of their own.

"Mr. Bradley wanted me to push him hard," said Horton. "He wanted me to take a quick lead. But actually it was Dan's race. He ran it his own way and I just followed him."

Even with Ambrose in front all the way, Horton still managed to run on his shoulder as they turned splits of :65, 2:14 and 3:17.

Right down to the last curve, the crowd was waiting for Horton to fly out in the stretch, but the McQuaid junior just didn't have anything left as Ambrose outlegged him to the tape.

Ambrose, coming off the flu, had hoped to be under 4:20, but was just glad to meet Horton and is looking forward to a rematch.

"I haven't had any competition at all," said the lanky Ambrose. "I'm no where's near my peak. Even with Chris running, I had to set all the pace myself."

Ambrose liked the way he ran the race so well yesterday, he plans to stick to it . . . just keeping a pace for the first two laps and then going all-out.

"It felt good," he said later. "It was so easy, I'm not even breathing hard. I know now I have a lot more left and can open up sooner."

There are only three more regular meets left, including the Diocesan Sunday, City-Catholic League and Inter-Diocesan, yet Ambrose still hopes to reach 4:15 or better.

"The RIT track is probably worth another five-tenths of a second and if I can get some competition, I'll get it," he said. "It's so hard running by yourself all the time."

Ambrose's big goal is to qualify for the Eastern Championship Meet in New York.

"About a 4:16 ought to get me in," he said. "Another race against Chris just might be the key."

Some 30 minutes after winning the mile, Ambrose came back to win the 880 in an easy 2:03, while teammate Mark Whalen ran an area best time of 51.1 in the 440.

—Times-Union Photo—Brad Bliss
After running even for most of the mile, Dan Ambrose eyes tape and leaves McQuaid's Chris Horton behind.