

The Four Horsemen Of Newport Harbor

by Allen Lynch

Track talent has been a part of the athletic scene at Newport Harbor High School for as long as anyone can remember. Harbor High has never has a losing season in track. It has had many great teams, but it is doubtful whether any in the past were better than this year's group, led by the relay team of Chris Corum, Steve Dawson, Wayne Kasperek, and Frank Venclik.

Last Saturday at Arcadia High School, this foursome ran the mile relay in three minutes, 19.7 seconds, the fourth fastest time in school history and one of the fastest times in the U.S. this year. It was good enough for third place in the CIF Southern Section 4-A finals, behind Fontana High and Muir High of Pasadena, the meet winner over favored Pasadena High. Fontana ran 3:18.0 and Muir 3:19.2. In addition, Venclik finished third in the 880 in 1:55.6. The Harbor foursome got seventh in the 440 relay and Kasperek was eighth in the 330 low hurdles.

The mile relay team of, in order, Dawson, Venclik, Kasperek, and Corum will compete in the Masters state qualifying meet Friday night at the Arcadia track. Venclik will compete in the 880, too, and he and the relay team are good possibilities to qualify for the state meet the following week in Bakersfield.

The Harbor High four first made their mark on the coast area track scene in the Beach Cities Invitational, the first major meet of the year. Venclik was named athlete of the meet after doubling in the 440 and 880 and helping the two relays, the 440 and mile, to victories. Corum won the 100 and 220 while Kasperek finished second in the 100 and third in the 220. Dawson won the 120 high hurdles.

Harbor High later won the Chaffey Invitational, eight dual meets, and then claimed the Sunset League championship for the second year in a row and fourth in the last five years for Harbor High.

The four relay team members are good friends who have been on winning track teams since the fifth grade. They started running track in Newport Beach Parks and Recreation programs at city parks. Corum was one of the best sprinters in the county as a sophomore and ran on the Harbor High varsity. The others joined him as juniors.

Although Kasperek had competed in track earlier, he did not go out for the varsity until his junior year. And he wasn't a hurdler and sprinter at the time; he started out as a pole vaulter.

Since their junior year, the four have been competing and winning relay races together.

They're a happy-go-lucky group

which enjoys joking with each other and having a good time. Each of them, except Venclik, has long curly hair; the others enjoy kidding him good-naturedly about it. Venclik is also the quietest of the four. Corum is, at 5'8", the shortest of the group but that doesn't stop him from setting sprinting records. Dawson is big and muscular, built like a football tight end. Kasperek is talkative, entertaining, and like the rest a terrific competitor. When they're not going through the grinding workouts at school they enjoy surfing and hanging out at the beach around the river jetty.

Each member of the relay helps the others and is dedicated to winning for the group.

"Nobody likes to lose on this team," Dawson says. "Because of that, we are all cheering for each other, trying to psyche each other up for our events. We're all good friends and we like to do well."

Bob Hailey, the longtime Harbor High coach, is the man who has developed this standout relay team. The runners describe him as a demanding coach who hates to lose.

One of the secrets to Harbor's success, Hailey says, is its unique approach.

"Most schools start with sprinters and try to make them half-milers and milers," he says. "Here at Harbor we start at the half-mile and let them try everything up and back."

This accounts for Harbor's strength overall. All of the four

sprinters ran at least three different events this year.

Workouts at Harbor, Corum says, "are killers. We run hills, stairs, distances, and 660 up-and-backs."

What are 660 up-and-backs?

"We start out by running a 100 yard dash, and then we run 220, 330, 440, 550, and 660, and then we do all of the sprints again. We rest for five minutes after the 660, and then we start back down. All that time the ratio of running to rest is probably 10 to 1."

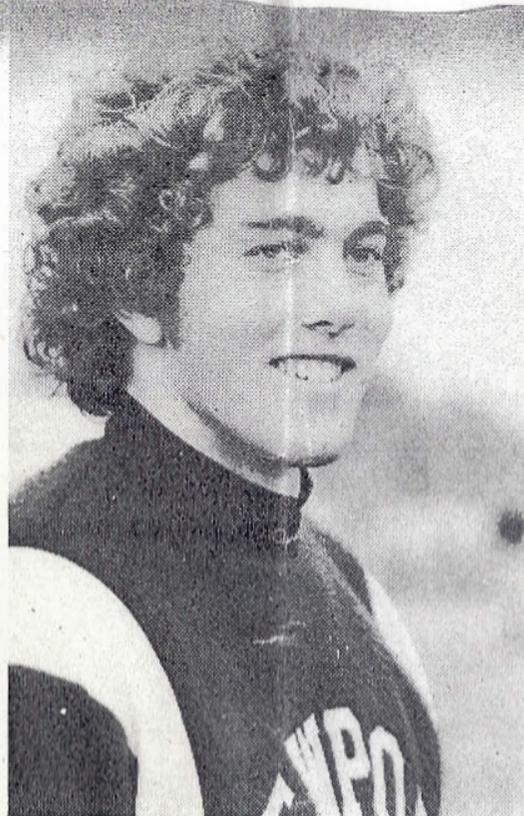
Conditioning is the key to Harbor's high finishes. Its runners don't tighten up at the end of races and die on the passes of the baton.

They can do well in the Masters and, next week, in the State meet provided they can put together four mile relay legs in the 48-49 second range. Each runner has been in that range before but they've never been able to do it all at once. Maybe they can Friday night at Arcadia.

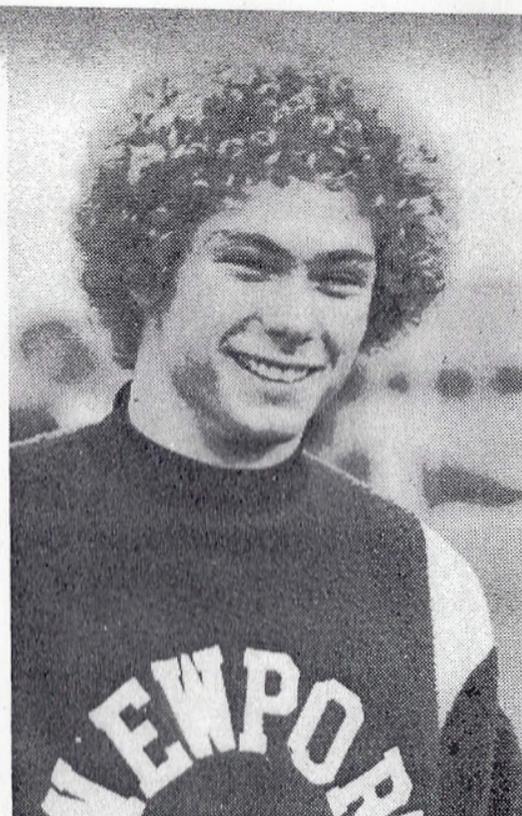
Dawson is the only one of the four who has decided on his college. He will enroll at Stanford in the fall and run track there. Corum has received letters from several top schools including Arizona and Arizona State, but hasn't made a decision and says he won't until the season is over. Kasperek is going to Weber State in Utah on a football scholarship and hasn't decided whether he will run track there. Venclik hasn't made a decision and won't until after the state meet.



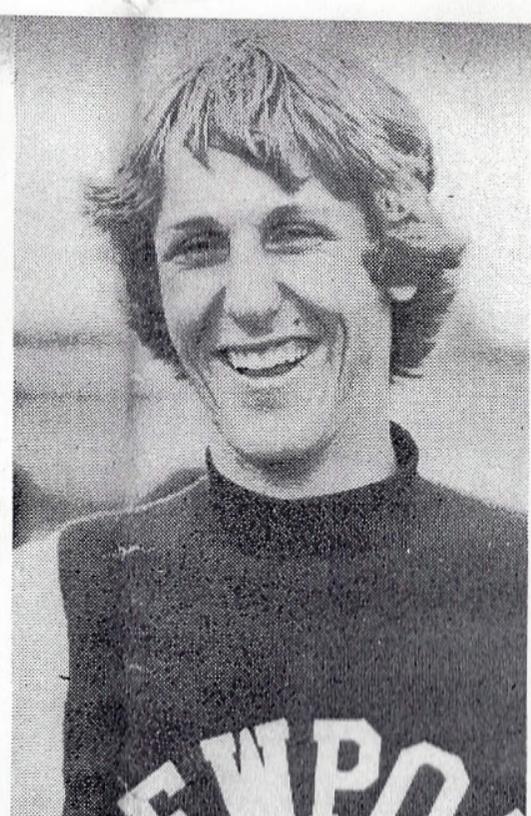
Chris Corum



Steve Dawson



Wayne Kasperek



Frank Vencik

Ensign photos.

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